She keeps on cooking: the gendered organization of domestic cooking among heterosexual brazilian couples in the Amazon region

Ella sigue cocinando: la organización de género de la cocina doméstica entre parejas heterosexuales brasileñas en la Región Amazónica

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ABSTRACT
This article presents an analysis of gender perspectives that organize and sustain domestic culinary work among cisgender and heterosexual couples in the Brazilian Amazon. 19 semi-structured interviews were conducted with both women and men, with a focus on gender interactions related to domestic culinary work. Our findings indicate that men and women engaged in domestic culinary work in accordance with or in contrast to their professional status, individual income, perceived time availability, culinary skills, and partner demand patterns. To illustrate, husbands assumed control of domestic cooking if he has the lower income, lower workload or are unemployed. Women who sought more equitable gender perspectives encouraged their sons to engage in domestic cooking at home, while instructing their daughter in the value of pursuing a college education and engaging in external employment. Women continued to cook at home when they had the lowest family income and were the only ones responsible for providing food to children. In contrast, men ceased cooking when they received higher wages, thereby reproducing their hegemonic masculinities through traditional family social relations. Consequently, domestic culinary work is intrinsically linked to the higher value placed on paid extra-domestic work and the general lack of prestige attached to unpaid domestic work. Ultimately, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of gender dynamics in the domestic context, highlighting the importance of recognizing and valuing domestic culinary work as a fundamental part of everyday life and gender relations.

Keywords: Domestic Cooking, Gender, Women, Men, Brazil.

RESUMO
Este artigo descreve e discute as perspectivas de gênero que organizam e sustentam o trabalho culinário doméstico entre casais cisgêneros e heterossexuais na Amazônia brasileira. Realizamos 19 entrevistas semiestruturadas com mulheres e homens, focando nas interações de gênero relacionadas ao trabalho culinário doméstico. Nossos resultados destacam que homens e mulheres conduziam o trabalho culinário doméstico de acordo ou em contraste com sua situação profissional, renda individual, percepção de disponibilidade de tempo, habilidades culinárias e padrões de demanda do parceiro. Por exemplo, maridos assumiam a culinária doméstica em períodos de menor rendimento e carga de trabalho. Mulheres que buscavam perspectivas mais equitativas de gênero incentivavam meninos a cozinhar em casa, enquanto ensinavam às meninas a valorização da educação universitária e do trabalho fora de casa. Mulheres continuavam a realizar a culinária doméstica quando eram as de menor renda familiar e as únicas responsáveis pela oferta de alimentos às crianças. Em contraste, homens deixavam de cozinhar ao receberem salários mais elevados, reproduzindo suas masculinidades hegemônicas através de relações sociais familiares tradicionais. Assim, o trabalho culinário doméstico está intrinsecamente ligado ao valor mais elevado do trabalho extradoméstico remunerado e à falta generalizada de prestígio do trabalho doméstico não remunerado. Em última análise, este estudo contribui para uma compreensão mais profunda das dinâmicas de gênero no contexto doméstico, ressaltando a importância de reconhecer e valorizar o trabalho culinário doméstico como parte fundamental da vida cotidiana e das relações de gênero.

Palavras-chave: Culinária Doméstica, Gênero, Casais, Brasil.
RESUMEN
Este artículo describe y discute las perspectivas de género que organizan y sostienen la cocina doméstica entre parejas cisgénero y heterosexual en la Amazonia brasileña. Realizamos 19 entrevistas semiestructuradas a mujeres y hombres, centrándonos en las interacciones de género relacionadas con el trabajo doméstico de cocina. Nuestros resultados ponen de relieve que hombres y mujeres realizan el trabajo doméstico de cocina en función o en contraste con su situación profesional, los ingresos individuales, la disponibilidad de tiempo percibida, las habilidades culinarias y los patrones de demanda de la pareja. Por ejemplo, los maridos se encargan de la cocina doméstica durante los períodos de menores ingresos y carga de trabajo. Las mujeres que buscan perspectivas de género más equitativas animan a los niños a cocinar en casa, mientras enseñan a las niñas a valorar la educación universitaria y el trabajo fuera del hogar. Las mujeres siguieron cocinando en el hogar cuando eran las que tenían los ingresos familiares más bajos y las únicas responsables de proporcionar alimentos a los niños. Por el contrario, los hombres dejaron de cocinar cuando percibieron salarios más altos, reproduciendo sus masculinidades hegemónicas a través de las relaciones sociales familiares tradicionales. Así, el trabajo doméstico de cocina está intrínsecamente ligado a la mayor valoración del trabajo extradoméstico remunerado y al desprestigio general del trabajo doméstico no remunerado. En definitiva, este estudio contribuye a una comprensión más profunda de las dinámicas de género en el contexto doméstico, destacando la importancia de reconocer y valorar el trabajo culinario doméstico como parte fundamental de la vida cotidiana y de las relaciones de género.

Palabras clave: Culinaria Doméstica, Género, Parejas, Brasil.

1 INTRODUCTION

Since 1960, feminist researchers have long problematized hegemonic and persistent conceptions of gender around domestic culinary work, suggesting these activities may express gender, ethnoracial, and class inequalities (Abarca, 1967; Avakian, 1997; DeVault, 1991; Fürst, 1997; Martens and Scott, 2017; Oleschuk, 2019). Further, scholars have argued that occidental domestic culinary work is invisible to economic, legal, and social systems, as it is viewed as womanly activities dedicated to family members in the name of "nature," "love," and "maternal duties" (Abarca, 1967; DeVault, 1991; Oleschuk, 2019). Fürst (1997) suggested that domestic culinary work is vital in constructing, affirming, deconstructing, and denying gender perspectives. Domestic culinary work relates to "doing gender" (West and Zimmerman, 1987). It involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast pursuits as masculine and feminine expressions.
Cairn, Johnston, and Baumann (Cairns et al., 2010) employed the "doing gender" approach in food studies to explore how masculinities and femininities negotiate in "foodie culture." These authors emphasized that "foodie" women and men enacted femininities and masculinities that could perpetuate or change the conventional gender norms related to eating and cooking food. Notoriously, they focused on a specific cultural group, the “foodies,” in which men and women have affinities with culinary practice.

Other studies have focused on the rationalities (Beagan et al., 2008; Lupton, 2000), performances (Kemmer, 1999), and arrangements (Akram-Lodhi, 1996; Warde; Hetherington, 1994) for the domestic culinary work division among cisgender individuals in heterosexual relationships. These studies suggest that women are more responsible for domestic culinary work than men. These arrangements are supported based on a host of the individual or shared rationalities regarding time availability, gender enactment, health concerns, cleanliness and cooking standards, seeking to reduce family conflicts (Beagan et al., 2008); culinary expertise, enjoyment, fairness (Lupton, 2000); and individual income (Warde; Hetherington, 1994). Overall, these research’s initially focused on gendered divisions of work rather than on how individuals perceive the effects of gender perspectives over such divisions.

While significant literature explores gendered culinary work, we know little about how individuals perceive how gender plays out in the organization and sustaining domestic culinary work. Here, we understand domestic culinary work as a component of domestic work that involves multiple physical, cognitive, and social tasks (Flagg et al., 2014) for turning food into socially and culturally appropriate meals (Janhonen; Torkkeli; Mäkelä, 2018). Thus, our study aims to describe and discuss individuals' perspectives about gendered processes that organize and sustain domestic culinary work among cisgender individuals in heterosexual relationships living in Brazilian Amazonian.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

We based on the theoretical approach of "doing gender (West and Zimmerman, 1987)" and "undoing gender (Deutsch, 2007)" to understand the organizational dynamics of domestic cooking work. Founded on these authors, we understand gender as a set of practices continually enacted through social relationships.
West and Zimmerman's (1987) "doing gender" draws attention to how gender differences are accomplished through routine social interactions. Highlighting that gender is done through a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities. A central aspect of doing gender is the idea of "accountability," whereby representations of gender are in "normative gender systems," such as the patriarchal system, which is responsible for the predominant gender order. Therefore, individuals "do" their gender through their daily, various, and manifold activities and hegemonic gender structures. Individuals are predisposed to others' attitudes, behaviors, and actions, considering normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category. In our research, doing gender allows us to assume gender as dynamic, researching with the principle that gender behaviors can change over time and space.

Doing gender emphasizes the repetition of restrictive conceptions of normativity that maintain gender-based systems of oppression. Furthermore, Deutsch (2007) uses "undo gender" to refer to social interactions that reduce gender differences. In this sense, undoing gender is an important theoretical and political project to reduce gender inequalities in society.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 STUDY DESIGN

This study is part of the "MINA-Brazil Study: Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition," a birth cohort study that aims to identify early determinants to promote proper growth and development in early childhood (Cardoso et al., 2020). As a sub-study of this cohort, we developed descriptive qualitative research (Sandelowski, 2000) and a feminist-driven research framework (Hesse-Biber, 2014) to elucidate gender dynamics related to domestic culinary work. Our research occurred during the two-year follow-up of the MINA-Brazil Study, whose cohort retention was 69.9% out of 868 eligible individuals.

3.2 STUDY LOCATION

We conducted our study in Cruzeiro do Sul, State of Acre, Brazilian Western Amazon. This municipality is located 636 kilometers from the state capital of Rio Branco.
It is Acre's second-largest city, with an estimated 87,673 inhabitants in 2018 (IBGE, 2019). Women and girls comprise half of the municipality's population (43,366 people). This municipality's Human Development Index (HDI) is 0.664, characterizing average development. The Brazilian national average is 0.759 (IBGE, 2011).

Additionally, Pessoa (2004) and Woff (1999) have suggested that gender relations in Cruzeiro do Sul are unequal because the municipality was primarily formed by men (who migrated from other Brazilian regions) to live and work in rubber extractive reserves (1942 to 1945). Some women (who migrated with their partners or were native to the region) were responsible for agricultural work and taking care of the family. Consequently, the municipality has a patriarchal and authoritarian culture regarding the treatment of the family, remaining relatively the same, despite the increasing participation of women in the world of paid work. It is essential to underline that this conclusion is related to our presence in the field and that, to our knowledge, there is no observational research in other Brazilian states or municipalities regarding this relation (Woff, 1999).

3.3 SAMPLING POPULATION

We focused on a subsample of 16 self-identified women, self-identified heterosexual, aged between 18 and 41 years old, who cooked at home at least once a day and were mothers of at least one child aged 2+ years old. We sampled our participants based on Kuzel's (1992) recommendation to achieve heterogeneity and maximum data variation with a sample of between twelve and twenty informants. From a MINA-Brazil Study pool, we stratified individuals by four educational levels. We worked with a sample of 16 participants. In addition, we invited the male partner of each married woman to participate in this study. We only received responses from five of them. Participation was voluntary and confidential after signing the Informed Consent Form.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The first author conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews from April to May 2018. Each interview addressed domestic culinary practices and the division of domestic culinary work performed by women and their husbands. Interviews with the
women were conducted separately from the men (and vice versa). On average, interviews lasted 90 minutes.

We conducted an in-depth analysis of all interviews. The first author employed a cutting and sorting technique to code the data. First, she selected relevant excerpts related to the perspectives of the interviewed women and men in terms of their perceptions of their own and their partners' domestic cooking practices, and their gendered conceptions about the interaction and division of domestic culinary work. The excerpts were then grouped according to their meanings, helping to identify the codes. Next, she constructed different codes applying Hesse-Biber's (2014) approach, first constituting descriptive codes (label for participants’ words and organizing data into topics, e.g., “I wanted to do this myself”); second, developing categorical codes (descriptive codes grouped into a more general category, e.g., “women’s perception of their culinary work”); and last doing analytical codes (comprising a more comprehensive range of meanings, e.g., “doing gender in domestic culinary practices”). Our subsequent analysis interprets a domestic culinary practice linked to doing gender’s (West and Zimmerman, 1987) and undoing gender’s (Deutsch, 2007) approach.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Women who participated in our study had, on average, 32.8 years of age; 2.3 children (aged between 2 and 17 years); 57.4% were self-reported unemployed or housewives; 48.8% were in the poorest wealth index\(^1\), and 35.7% received the monetary benefit of the Bolsa Familia program\(^2\). Moreover, the five husbands interviewed had, on average, 37 years of age; two were formal workers, one was an informal worker, one was unemployed, and one was retired; and one man had no formal education, while the other four completed high school.

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\(^1\) According to Pirani (2014), the Wealth Index is a composite measure of the cumulative living standard of a household. It is calculated using data on a household’s ownership of a selected set of assets, such as televisions, bicycles, and cars; dwelling characteristics, such as flooring material; type of drinking water source; and toilet and sanitation facilities.

\(^2\) The Bolsa Familia Program (BFP), implemented in 2003, is a social income transfer program for poor or impoverished families. The amount of money that each family receives depends on the composition and the income of the beneficiary family. It could range from R$ 41.00 (≈US$ 8.33) to R$ 89.00 (≈US$ 18.09) per person.
4.1 GENDER NORMS ASSOCIATED WITH DOMESTIC CULINARY PRACTICES

The subjects' narratives evidenced that the arrangement of domestic culinary work depends on individual understanding of the hegemonic regional gender norms. Furthermore, informants expressed that these gender norms were created by other people and survived through their repetition, as reported by Mietta (nurse, 35 years old):

A big responsibility falls upon us [women] to care for the house, our husbands, and our children. We work outside, too. However, housework is always waiting. That is very cultural. We have centuries of heritage.

As expressed by Mietta, women were required to be responsible for housework, culinary work, and children. In contrast, men were required to be responsible for the financial and material sustenance of the family, achieving this through paid work outside the home. As mentioned by Dionisio (health agent, 28-year-old):

He [the man] has more responsibility than the woman. We must pay the bills, bring food home, and help with housework, such as changing a socket and a lamp and fixing a door.

These views stress domestic culinary practices related to the personification of sociocultural identities and embodiments of female and male activities. For women, their identities as "wife," "mother," and "housewife" are informed by biological and social reproduction, which are achievable through maternity and unpaid domestic housework. From this perspective, domestic culinary work guarantees their relatives physical, psychological, emotional, and developmental care (Abarca 1967; DeVault 1991). However, participants placed little emphasis on the identities of "working women" or others related to female productive work that could, from our point of view, promote greater professional credibility and reduce their call for domestic activities in general (Deutsch, 2007).

By contrast, professional identities were safeguarded for men, along with their "father" and "husband" personas, whose performances were dedicated to the material and financial “protection” of the family and achieved through extra-household paid work that guaranteed the provision of these resources. This model of "traditional masculinity," according to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), structures and organizes a hierarchical relationship and different values to binary genders in intra- and extra-domiciliary spaces.
Schippers (2007) suggests that femininity, as found in some interviewees, was antithetical to the aforementioned "masculinity" and oriented toward accommodating the interests and desires of the men who receive greater societal power.

In the following sections, we delved deeper into these issues and presented participants' commitments to doing, redoing, or undoing regional hegemonic gender norms at the food shopping, menu decision, preparation and consumption of meals.

4.1.1 Gender-based food shopping activities

Women expressed that they are primary responsibility for shopping for food alone (n=10) or accompanied by their male partners (n=4). We identified only two male partners as solely performing this activity. Women were generally engaged in shopping because they were primarily responsible for preparing family meals and knowing the necessary ingredients. They also allegedly know or have skills to select foods better, monitor children and other family member's health, and manage domestic food stocks. In this sense, women are tasked with indicating and selecting foods during the purchase process. However, some women did not engage in the purchasing process because they found it tiring or needed someone to look after the children. Thus, male partners were responsible for this activity. In such cases, despite a woman's physical absence from food shopping, her symbolic presence is manifested through the shopping list, which she is responsible for writing.

The informants mentioned that men only engaged in food purchasing when they paid for purchases; drove their wives to the store; worked in food production; decided what foods to buy; did this after work; or were on their day off and accompanied them. We emphasize that these activities fit into the idea that masculinity is symbolized by non-household and paid work, controlling, and making financial decisions for the family, and automobile-related practices. Given this, informants also mentioned that, while shopping, male partners engaged in two behaviors that we refer to as "irresolute" and "participative." Irresolute behavior referred to husbands' lack of interference when it came to indicating, selecting, or deciding specific foods; they just "pushed the cart" or "paid for the purchases." As shared by Laudelina (nurse technician, 33 years old):

No matter [going with my husband]. He is just going to push the supermarket trolley (laughs). It is worse to go alone, and it is a talking moment for us.
By contrast, male partners exhibited participatory behaviors when contributing to the above processes, e.g., by selecting meat while the female partner chose other foods. In this example, meat is coded as masculine, and men are socioculturally viewed as able to fit them. Because of it, men that could choose vegetables had to justify their abilities based on their rural or farmer background.

Regarding purchase payments, we identified three patterns of family organization. First, individuals with the most significant financial resources were primarily responsible for financing household food purchases. When the woman earned the highest salary, she became responsible for monthly household food purchases, while her husband made smaller food purchases for the children. For these women, the male partner's involvement was a "help" but was not part of the family's financial planning because it was done sporadically and decided upon by him. In this situation, the women assumed "masculine" responsibilities through greater control over family food. Concurrently, they were required to perform femininity by leaving space for their male partners to engage in food provision.

Second, women whose salary was smaller or matched their husbands reported adding their earnings to their partners to turn this amount into "one money."

Third, few women were responsible for managing the family's money, an assignment expected of husbands (or men), because they were considered more concerned with the needs of the family (e.g., clothing, food, health). In most cases, the husband was responsible for managing the finance and deciding family expenses. Although, in all these cases, the women's work (and the resultant "masculine" attribute of earning an income) was deemed less prestigious; their financial contributions were seen as "help," such that the men could ultimately buy food for the family. In this sense, it consolidates the responsibility of financing food purchases on the husband. As exemplified in Bertha's:

We never separated my money from Adolfo's [husband] at home. I joined mine with him. I manage the money. I feel good enough to contribute to my husband in our maintenance.

Furthermore, when women were unemployed or “housewives,” husbands were fully responsible for financing food purchases as they had full purchasing power. Therefore, these financially dependent women gave the partners the most significant influence of choice, considering that the men were the "head of the family" and agreed
with women's decisions when they found them appropriate to family life, as highlighted by Nísia (unemployed, 25 years old):

We [as a couple] get what is on the list. Sometimes I want to take something extra and ask him [husband]. Usually, he decides: "let us take it" or "we cannot afford it." Then I will follow his lead.

Compared when shopping by themselves or with their husbands, women shared that the presence of a partner in the food purchase process was a "help," "good," or "rewarding," because "men hardly engage in these activities." In this sense, they reinforce that the responsibility for choosing, selecting, and purchasing food rests with the woman. However, it is the man's place to provide and manage financial resources and make the casual purchase.

Among the husbands, accompanying their wives shopping for food was viewed with indifference, but the opposite was appreciated when men were accompanied. Wives "helped them to remember" and choose food more carefully. As shared by Alvarez (retired, 51 years old):

It is indifferent to go [to the supermarket] with her [wife] or by myself. Going with her is better because she knows the products she likes to use. Because she does more of the domestic part.

We interpret Alvarez's indifference as an acknowledgment that maintaining a gendered division of culinary activities puts men in a position of privilege. They can delegate or charge others to exercise this demand (especially their wives). That gender doing supports hierarchical divisions between family members. Despite the various patterns of identified engendered power (or control based on relative income), men were viewed as having a more "rational" posture on family food expenses. Also, men's involvement in the food purchasing process resulted in a social acceptance of the non-participation of women in it since the wives participated in the stock management, purchase planning, and preparation of meals to control the family expenses and sometimes had lower individual income.

Conversely, unemployed husbands or informal workers were negatively judged when they could not raise funds or contribute less financially to purchasing food. When the women were responsible for food purchases, considered manly, they were still
charged to carry out other “feminine” culinary activities. They tended to leave space among the various tasks to justify their husband's partial forms of engagement.

4.1.2 Gende-based menu decision and meal preparation activities

Women were primarily responsible for deciding the family meal menu, with only three male partners participating. Women were usually alone or accompanied by children when deciding the menu. Men were consulted about the foods or culinary preparations they wanted to consume, or sometimes they asked for a different dish. Although some husbands claimed to decide the menus, they preferred that women take the initiative because they thought that their wives knew better the relatives' food tastes and health status, as shown by José (40 years old, snack producer):

I decide [the menu]. It is more natural for her to cook because the boys are more comfortable, and she tries to prepare the foods they like.

Given our data, the partner most sensitive to household members' needs tends to decide the menus to satisfy them. Gendered expectations appear invisible because participants actively look at family circumstances and needs. We understand this as an example of (re)doing gender. Divisions are created regarding how men and women should respond to the demands for knowledge and care. Informants inferred that women are the only ones who could/should handle multiple personal needs regarding what the family eats, as they witnessed in the gendered domestic culinary practices performed by their male parents. As exemplified in Pedro’s (31 years old, unemployed):

I am the youngest son, and I never learned to cook. My mom fed me. Felipa [wife] is like my right hand because if my wife does not cook, I do not know how to do it.

Women expressed that only four male partners participated in cooking for the family, with the woman or alone. They also took over these activities alone when the women were sick, having an at-risk pregnancy, "resguardo" (puerperium). Besides these exceptional situations, husbands understood that women did not need "help" with cooking.

The man was thus identified as a secondary or tertiary head of domestic culinary, always behind some woman. Performing extra-household paid work exempted the men from domestic work due to their provider identity to the family. Thus, the male partner
participated in domestic culinary work when he had the "opportunity," i.e., when he was at home on weekends, had no other commitment (including leisure time), and wanted to prepare meals. Rose (housewife, 33 years old) exemplified that:

My husband does not cook because he does not have much time. His free time is just on Sunday. He likes to play soccer every Sunday. If he stays at home, he does things for me.

Some couples in which men and women worked outside the home-prepared meals together. The interviewees perceived this arrangement as more egalitarian—in which case they could be undoing gender—considering that both can cook in the family environment. However, we should note that women also prepare meals the night before or on weekends, so their partners would only need to heat the culinary preparations at mealtime, creating a different gender imbalance. Consequently, outside-paid employment does not exempt women from meal preparation activities. As reported by Patricia (pedagogue, 35 years old):

Here whoever arrives first does it [prepare meal]. If he comes earlier than me, he will heat the rice and put it on the table; by the time I get there, it is almost ready. If I arrive first, I will do it.

Male partners tended to participate in meal preparations involving less engagement. When they woke up first, many prepared breakfasts for themselves and left some food ready for their wives. Conversely, women were still responsible for preparing other foods that were part of their breakfast and their children's. Women regarded their breakfast prepared by their husbands as a gesture of "love" that made them feel like their "eternal girlfriends." Thus, male love display is validated by their lesser culinary skills and broken engagement in food preparation activities, demonstrating an effort to please their wives — comparatively, women cooking displayed love through feeding, nourishing, and caring for family members. Cooking in a "masculine" way provides sporadic pleasure, while the "feminine" form represents daily care.

However, we found greater engagement among male partners in the menu decision-making process when they were responsible for preparing a "special" meal, e.g., a barbecue. In such cases, they reserved time to think about the food, preparation technique, place of consumption, and diners. Laudelina (nurse technician, 33 years old) reported:
He [husband] only [cooks] when he wants to do something special, a barbecue, a lunch. A week earlier, he said he would do it. He begins to organize himself, arrange something here, something else there.

Among those we interviewed, barbecuing stands out as a masculine-gendered culinary practice, notably on weekends and as a moment of fun and relaxation. In Brazil, Unsain et al. (2020) pointed out that barbecue is seen as a male food and activity, so men are expected to have the culinary skills to do this. We highlight these experiences of doing gender as a counterpoint to those which undo gender, as in cases when men cooked daily or instead chose vegetables for the family. When they undo gender, participants justify the actions of these men based on their professions or rural backgrounds. Consequently, participants justified men's culinary skills through differentiated socialization processes, cultural background, or a magical thought of "innate gift."

Cunningham (2005) suggests that the differences in skills result from the differentiated socialization of men and women regarding identities, traits, and preferences. As Thébaud, Kornrich, and Ruppanner (2019) highlight, men and women learned from their parents through lessons and observations, attitudes towards divisions of domestic work, and internalized notions of what is normative and expected gender. Thus, in addition to learning skills and responsibilities, the women may have internalized ideas about how domestic cooking can be done.

That can be reinforced in social interactions where cultural expectations are commonly shared for gender behavior and self-presentation (West & Zimmerman, 1987). In this sense, the recognition of the expectations of others can be a behavior motivator, highlighting the power of gender norms, even in the absence of rewards and punishments (Thébaud et al., 2019). That can be supported in social interactions where cultural expectations are commonly shared for gender behavior and self-presentation (West & Zimmerman, 1987). In this sense, the recognition of the expectations of others can be the motivator of behavior, highlighting the power of gender norms, even in the absence of rewards and punishments (Thébaud et al., 2019). Consequently, women could suffer sanctions if they do not meet the expectations of other family members and sometimes have chronic feelings of incompetence or not being a "good" mother or wife. Thus, we can say that the interviewed women tended to do gender within the hegemonic norms to avoid family conflicts.

That resonates with Rose's earlier statement regarding men's leisure activities; it seems more socially acceptable for men to participate in more recreational culinary
practices. However, female food preparation practices were associated with "ordinary life," which aligns with concerns about daily food preferences, health conditions, and the quality of the family's diet. Thus, our interviewees suggested that gender differences are constructed considering a binomial culinary practice related to leisure and care, the first being an expression of masculinity and the second of femininity. We emphasize that the former tends to be valued and appreciated, while the latter is considered a necessary obligation for maintaining the family.

From the husbands' perspectives, they considered that their wives were and should be responsible for preparing the family's food daily. That is because they believed their wives had been socialized for these activities since childhood; had excellent culinary skills; were interested in food and culinary preparations, or "enjoyed" preparing food for their husbands and the children. Álvarez (retired, 51 years old) reported:

The man works harder to keep things at home. A woman works [outside the home], but most women prefer to take care of the food and the house. The woman is constantly innovating, learning a new recipe, and the man is not. In my case, I did not care to learn how to cook, so I was not interested in recipes.

Regarding the division of domestic culinary work, the husbands presented contradictory propositions. They shared that denying that men and women should perform the same culinary activities would, at minimum, suggest a gendered mentality. However, they considered that men only should cook when they lived alone; did not work outside the home; knew how to cook; had a "talent" for preparing food; enjoyed cooking and/or had an interest in culinary practices. Given various conditions and constraints for men's participation in domestic culinary work, the husbands who cooked more frequently (e.g., two to three times a week) recognized themselves as deviant from the hegemonic norm. They were performing a feminine activity, which put them at risk of being undermined and stigmatized by other men (although they received positive reinforcement from their wives). When asked what people think when they know he cooks at home, João (nurse technician, 35 years old) reported:

Ah, most men are machista. I have never mentioned it in my friend's group [that I cook at home]. However, if someone asks me and I will say, and I will suffer discrimination, I know I will!
We emphasize that men’s engagement in meal preparation activities was related to the "supportive husband that does not burden his wife" figure. In addition, some participants believed that sharing culinary activities is a matter of fairness when both work outside the home. This rationality was mainly current in relationships where the wives earned higher incomes and had more prestigious jobs (understood as those that demanded higher education). We interpret these behaviors as men and women responding to underlying tensions regarding the division of domestic culinary work by undoing the gender they associated with their parent’s behaviors. This result is similar to those found by Kemmer (1999), who stressed that domestic activities tended to be shared relatively equally between the couple when a woman's job was of higher status and required a more significant commitment than the partner's work.

Hence, men undo gender by preparing ordinary food frequently in the home, which could be connected to a "feminine" caregiver identity. In this sense, they seek to do and reaffirm their masculine identities in other areas of culinary practices (such as food shopping or barbecuing). Notably, the male partners accept traditional masculinity but consider sharing domestic activities compatible with the status of "good husband." As a result, they contributed much less than their wives and participated in specific tasks, although they perceived their engagement to be greater than their friends or fathers.

Interestingly, partners' contributions to domestic culinary work may be interpreted, in some cases, as "doing gender," exercising the "benefit" of male domination, or receiving a "patriarchal dividend," even if they do not practice the most extreme form of masculinity. Women positively valued their partner's sporadic domestic culinary participation, even if those activities seemed limited and inconsistent. They considered that their partners performed these activities for loving and caring reasons. Hochschild and Machung (1989) refer to this as an "economy of gratitude," which results from men's view of work as a "gift." As an aside, Fürst (1997) stresses that the rationality of the gift appeals to affect/emotion over material production (meal) expected to maintain the family.

Contradictorily, different conceptions of fairness existed within families where only men worked outside the home. In such cases, informants believed it would be fairer that women do domestic cooking practices alone, whereby their gendered participation makes up for not raising money for the family. As reported by Ércilia (housewife, 24 years old):

"It is tiring [cooking every meal], but it was my choice. Because I stay at home, it is fair that I do things and take care of the house. Because I wanted to spend..."
my time with them [her two sons]. So, if I am at home, it is fair that I do housework, and we do not have a financial situation that allows us to hire a housekeeper.

Concurrently, the husbands refrain from engaging in daily meal preparation activities. They found it bad or complicated when their wives did not cook at home because they would be required to prepare their food or spend money buying ready-to-eat food. They sometimes considered fighting or verbally arguing with their wives for not fulfilling an expectation of being "wives" and "mothers" within a family context (like their mothers or the hegemonic imaginary of femaleness). Dionisio (health agent, 28-year-old) talked about what typically happens if he gets home and his wife has not prepared the meal:

The basics, right? It does not fit. I may pack her [wife] things and leave them at her mother's house (laughs). We have that fundamental disagreement, but we solve it quickly. There are eggs or canned food. Suddenly is ready [the meal].

Culinary skills were also an essential element for the division of domestic culinary activities. Women were understood as having more significant expertise than men in cooking or selecting specific foods because of the way they were socialized. Our interviewees justified the absence of men in these activities based on the belief that they have lesser or no culinary skills. Curiously, some male partners recognized themselves or were identified as having a "natural talent" for cooking, so they could work as snack producers or perform these activities on particular dates. Hence, our data suggest that men and (more) women usually recognize themselves as having some culinary skills, so they negotiate gender expectations related to using one's culinary expertise. In this sense, Dixey (1996) suggests that cooking skills for women must not be seen as part of the attempt to re-create traditional gender attitudes or behaviors.

The interviewed women expressed a constant feeling of being charged for carrying out domestic culinary practices and the demand to be a "woman," "wife," or "mother," even when they were physically unable to do so (e.g., when they were sick). In this vein, a shared sense of requiring them to neglect their desires to meet others' needs exists. They felt guilty when they could not perform these activities or somehow resigned themselves to performing domestic cooking alone. Drawing from these sentiments, they understood culinary work as a harmful activity (stressful and of lesser value), especially when they were solely responsible for preparing meals at home, cooking while simultaneously performing other housework, and
eating only their food daily. The women could identify positive aspects of domestic culinary activities (e.g., pleasant, appreciated, and de-stressful) associated with cooking sporadically, spontaneously, without pressure (e.g., time, family tastes, nutritional adequacy), and for themselves, the negative aspects prevailed.

4.1.3 Gendered-based Activities at mealtime

The women were usually solely responsible for serving and offering food to children and occasionally to their partners. The male partners consumed food either in the company of children or alone (when they arrived late from work). Women were the last to eat, even when all family members were at home, as they first served family members, offered food to children, and relied on other family members to stay with the children while they ate separately. João (nursing technician, 35 years old) exemplified that:

We need more time to get together for dinner. Because, when we eat, they [kids] want to get in there [the kitchen] to eat again and mess. So usually, I go out first, and she [wife] finishes the dinner [alone] and cleans the kitchen. We try to give the kids the meal, and then she and I have dinner.

Respondents identified one rule related to sharing food among family members: better food portions were offered first to male children, then to female infants, and the rest was shared according to the dietary preferences of the adults or in terms of "whoever catches first." Despite some women indicating that their partners gave them priority when sharing food, they always expressed consuming the less noble parts of edibles (chicken neck, for example) or whatever else remained after serving family members. They affirmed enjoying those foods, as Ercília (unemployed, 25 years old) illustrated:

It is whoever catches it first! Generally, we save the best [chicken breast] for them [two sons]. So, adults eat what they have. If there is a neck left, I will eat it because I like it.

We highlight that the women's tastes were shaped by the possibilities of food resources, family members' preferences, and their responsibilities to their families. Women's responsibility for the family's care may justify their abdication of the best parts of foods in favor of their children — although it appeared as a dietary preference. Contrarily, the male partners seemed to change their eating habits only when they wanted
to favor the women and children. We interpret the men's abstaining from foods as a beneficial consequence of their perceived power at home. Doing so allows them to show affection and love for the family, placing more value on the gesture than on the social value of the shared food.

From these findings, we can see that a heterosexual frame supports a discursive and epistemic model of gender intelligibility, which legitimates social arrangements based on gender category and reproduces their asymmetry in face-to-face interaction (West & Zimmerman, 1987). As suggested by Schilt and Westbrook (2009), the process of "doing gender" could attempt to repair potential ruptures of "undoing" or "redoing" gendered performances.

Moreover, employment status seems vital for dividing domestic culinary work, given individuals' available time and how that time should be used (Beagan et al., 2008; Kemmer, 1999). These results are like the ones found in Beagan et al. (2008), who showed that even among couples employed full-time and with similar schedules, women did most of the food work, using their weekends to prepare meals for the week.

5 CONCLUSION

We observed that the women interviewed were primarily responsible for domestic culinary work of buying food, deciding menus, preparing and offering meals to family members, and cleaning the dishes and kitchen. At the same time, their partners were less engaged and poorly participated in specific activities, such as food shopping and food preparation. Within the range of domestic culinary work activities, we observed different modes of family organization. All this depended on the work of the women and their male partners, availability of time at home, financial resources, and perceptions of their male partner's culinary skills and standards.

Our results highlight that woman and their partners founded the organization of domestic culinary work on their gendered perspectives, which affected intrafamily relations. The domestic culinary work we presented was related to the higher value of paid extra-household work performed by men and a general lack of prestige of unpaid domestic work performed by women. For those worker women, domestic culinary practices presented themselves as an intentional gender redoing and accountability of restoration of femininity perceived as lost in moving away from the home environment, as these women
were pressured to reconcile family life with professional life. That gender redoing as a traditional perspective was maintained even for women who worked outside the home.

We argue that gender relations do not always occur on an equal basis. Since the women performed domestic culinary work to meet prospects of femininity, they performed the most routine, non-discretionary, family-oriented, and time-consuming activities. On the other hand, men were also involved in domestic culinary work, performing these activities to meet traditional masculine perspectives, performing discontinuous, less time-consuming, and more flexible domestic culinary work.

Finally, our results suggest that domestic culinary work comprises a symbolic and political arena actively performed by the participants (both men and women) who negotiate to implement gender models and housework organization appropriate to their current life situations. Moreover, gender injustices related to domestic culinary practices have a twofold dimension. On the one hand, they are linked to society's political and economic structure, rooted in differences in social classes and the sexual/gender division of work, among others. However, on the other hand, they are associated with the symbolic cultural devaluation of women and their identities that deviate from hegemonic gender norms.

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