

DOING, UNDOING, AND COOKING GENDER:  
MAPPING THE MASCULINITIES OF WHITE-COLLAR MEN  
IN THE HOME KITCHEN

by  
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**DOING, UNDOING, AND COOKING GENDER:  
MAPPING THE MASCULINITIES OF WHITE-COLLAR MEN  
IN THE HOME KITCHEN**

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## ABSTRACT

### DOING, UNDOING, AND COOKING GENDER: MAPPING THE MASCULINITIES OF WHITE-COLLAR MEN IN THE HOME KITCHEN

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Quantitative data such as time-use surveys indicate that women in Turkey continue to devote a disproportionate amount of time to unpaid domestic labor. According to these statistics, the kitchen is one of the primary spaces where unpaid domestic labor is unequally distributed. Literature often focuses on this inequality through social norms, especially the role of women as the feeder of the family. Nevertheless, current data, while somewhat limited, indicate an increase in men's involvement in home kitchens. These behaviors that can be considered out of the norm may be more egalitarian, as in the debate on inclusive masculinity, or they may be maneuvers that may hide and deepen inequalities, as in the debate on hybrid masculinities. In this research, I examine the masculinities constructed by white-collar men in Turkey who take active responsibility in home kitchens from the perspective of Critical Masculinity Studies. For this purpose, I conducted a total of 51 semi-structured in-depth interviews with men and their partners who have been sharing the same house for at least 2 years. The most important finding that emerged as a result of my thematic analysis is that men's participation only in kitchen activities, without producing multidimensional egalitarian behaviors that affect all activities requiring unpaid domestic labor, creates a suitable environment for hybrid masculinity maneuvers. This situation can act as a driving force for the emergence of new inequalities and social pressures on their partners.

## ÖZET

### CİNSİYETİ YAPMAK, BOZMAK VE PİŞİRMEK: BEYAZ YAKALI ERKEKLERİN EV MUTFAKLARINDAKİ ERKEKLİKLERİNİ HARİTALAMAK

OĞUZ CAN OK

TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYET ÇALIŞMALARI DOKTORA TEZİ, NİSAN 2023

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Ev İçi Ücretsiz Emek, Eleştirel Erkeklik Çalışmaları, Hibrit Erkeklikler, İçerimli Erkeklikler, Yemek ve Toplumsal Cinsiyet

Türkiye’de halen kadınların ücretsiz ev içi emek kapsamında daha fazla zaman ayırdıkları zaman kullanım anketleri gibi nicel verilere bakıldığında görülebiliyor. Bu verilere göre ücretsiz ev içi emeğin eşit dağılmadığı en temel mekanlardan biri de ev mutfakları. Literatür yaşanan bu eşitsizliği toplumsal normlar üzerinden özellikle kadınlara yüklenen “aileyi besleyen kişi” olma rolü üzerinden sıklıkla odağına almakta. Öte yandan güncel nicel verilerde limitli olsa da erkeklerin ev mutfaklarındaki görünürlüklerinin arttığını görebiliyoruz. Norm dışı sayılabilecek bu davranışlar içerimli erkeklik tartışmasında olduğu gibi daha eşitlikçi davranışlar olabileceği gibi, hibrit erkeklikler tartışmasında olduğu gibi eşitsizliklerin görünmez kılınmasına ve eşitsizliklerin derinleşmesine yol açabilecek manevralar da olabilir. Bu araştırmada Türkiye’de ev mutfaklarında aktif sorumluluk alan beyaz yakalı erkeklerin inşa ettikleri erkeklik temsillerini Eleştirel Erkeklik Çalışmaları perspektifinden inceliyorum. Bu amaçla, partnerleriyle en az 2 yıldır aynı evi paylaşan erkekler ve partnerler ile toplamda 51 yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine görüşme gerçekleştirildim. Yaptığım tematik analiz sonucunda ortaya çıkan en önemli bulgu, erkeklerin ev içi ücretsiz emek gerektiren tüm faaliyetlere etki edecek şekilde çok boyutlu eşitlikçi davranışlar üretmeden sadece mutfak aktivitelerine katılmalarının hibrit erkeklik manevraları için uygun ortam oluşturduğudur. Bu durumsa partnerleri üzerinde yeni eşitsizliklerin ve toplumsal baskıların oluşması için itici güç rolü oynayabiliyor.

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At the end of a long and transformative journey for me, I cannot thank enough the people who made this journey unique. This doctoral study was a journey in which I sailed into the infinite unknown, thinking that I had to search for my own voice.

In this process, I have to thank my thesis advisor Ayşecan Terzioğlu, who *opened a space for me to find my voice*. The space she opened for me to leave the traditions behind and find a unique voice for myself was very valuable. I am grateful to Ayşecan for being a real advisor, allowing me to create original work and pave my own way. Likewise, I owe endless thanks to Selin Akyüz, who has constantly *encouraged me to search for my own voice* since my master's thesis. Selin taught me how to stand up by being by my side in many moments when I hit rock bottom, often putting aside her own troubles. She is a mentor, teacher, guide, friend, and companion that one can find extremely difficult in life. I am also grateful to Ayşe Gül Altınay, who *made me believe that one can have a voice of one's own in academia* while starting many things from scratch and sailing into the unknown during the Ph.D. As important as it is to *search* for one's own voice, it is equally important to have *hope* that one can *find* it. Every meeting I had with Ayşe Gül increased this hope. She showed me that curiosity in academia does not only have to be grey, but that there can be colorful and vibrant curiosities in academia. I also owe a great debt of gratitude to Zafer Yenil and Candan Türkkan, who accompanied me on this journey in my jury. With the questions they asked, they constantly diversified the map of where I could go in my academic journey. It is as important to organise dreams as it is to expand them. Thanks to Zafer Yenil, I often learned how to draw my route more clearly, so that I could conduct a more painless Ph.D. research. Candan Türkkan was the last person to be involved in my research process, but probably one of the people who contributed the most to my academic and intellectual world. Thanks to her, I learned how important it is to ask about the dynamics behind the things that everyone takes for granted in academia and everyday life. In short, my jury was not only a group that evaluated the quality of the material I produced academically, but they were also very influential people who contributed to my personality at different points. I am glad they exist.

The field of this project was completed thanks to the 1002 support provided by TÜBİTAK. The project coded 121K698 perhaps helped me to go through this pro-

cess more comfortably. But the most important contribution of this project was to work with two very valuable assistants. Defne Talya Boyar provided the most professional and meticulous support I have ever seen in this process. It was impossible for me to find another undergraduate assistant with Talya's level of responsibility. I am confident that she will be very successful in her future career as well. Likewise, I would like to thank Fırat Deniz, who was involved in a short portion of my research. Fırat made the process from the project to the thesis easier with the support he provided during the finalizing phase of the project.

The people I shared the same ship with on this journey were my biggest supporters as I docked at the doctoral harbor today. Aslı, with whom I had a Ph.D process like the Cif-domestos duo, contributed a lot. We may be opposite in character, but this contrast has brought a great balance. Ankara, pastries, bread, academia, systems, games, social media, people, coffee, worries, hopes, etc., it will continue to be a great pleasure to work and talk with Aslı on every subject. (PS: She is probably annoyed with me for writing such a long acknowledgment, so mission accomplished!). Fulya, my other companion, was the one who brought up the topic of this thesis. This is Fulya's real magic. She is a magician of calmness and problem solving, and often doesn't even realise she is doing it. If things are going smoothly for the people around her, it is thanks to Fulya. And another companion on this path was Damla. As Oğuz-Fulya-Damla trio, I am very lucky to have gone through every step together without leaving anyone behind. Aslı has always been the chosen member of this cohort. I am glad to have them all.

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My family walked this process with me as much as my journey mates. For more than 10 years, Özlem, my real family, has been one of the architects of this story. For 10 years, I have been learning with her, changing with her, and struggling with her. Together we have overcome many difficulties, experienced many joys, and shared many burdens. Good days are beautiful when shared, yes, but the important thing is to have someone to fight shoulder-to-shoulder on difficult days. Regardless of the outcome of the struggle, it feels good to be shoulder to shoulder. I hope these 10

years have been good for her too. I am lucky that she exists.

My extended family may not have been with me during all of these processes, they may not have been aware of most of the difficulties, or I may not have been able to share the excitement with them often. But I have to admit that it is thanks to their devotion that this thesis is finished today. When I was an undergraduate student, a Ph.D student, whose name I do not remember, said "doing a Ph.D and academic career is class-based, if you are disadvantaged in terms of class, this path will wear you out". Whether they realised it or not, the sacrifices of my family during this process enabled me to take a step in this class struggle. Even though I don't often agree with them, their solidarity makes me feel good. Kübra, Mine and Ramazan, I am glad they all exist. Likewise, my new family members who entered my life with Özlem were involved in the doctoral process. Their belief and support were invaluable. Maybe my father-in-law Aytekin could not see the result of this journey in this world, but I believe that if there is anyone happier than me that this journey has been completed, it is Aytekin somewhere in the universe.

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At the end of this very long closing, I need to thank myself. As I mentioned above, I have realised how classist the academy is since my master's degree. Since the sophomore year of my bachelor's degree, I have been trying to earn money on the one hand and pursuing my academic curiosities on the other. I have embarked on many different adventures. Sometimes I received a lot of support, sometimes I received no support at all. Sometimes the scholarships of institutions opened a window of opportunity for me to break this class circle; sometimes these scholarships came back as uninsurance, unemployment, precariousness, and penalties. I received a lot of support from people, I cannot deny that. But there were times when I was alone. At the end of the day, I survived. At the end of the day, I created this thesis that you are holding in your hands. Good, bad, inspiring, incomplete, exciting, or ordinary. Whatever you want to call it. The best thesis is the finished thesis. I thank myself for being able to produce this thesis without exhausting myself and for not compromising my curiosity for anything else. As I move forward in these steps, I would like to end this long thank you section with the phrase that has become a personal slogan for me;

*What's next?*

*To the women who have allowed me to be a part of their lives:  
Özlem, Kübra, Mine*

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>Eurostat</b> European Statistical Office .....	10
<b>LGBTIQ+</b> Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, and + people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression who identify using other terms .....	16
<b>TÜİK – TurkStat</b> Turkish Statistical Institute .....	8

## 1. ENTERING THE KITCHEN - AN INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Basic Ingredients of This Research

*"What does the kitchen tell us about gender equality?"*

This question was the first stone on the road of hundreds of questions that led to this research. Therefore, it deserves to be the first sentence of this thesis. In gender studies, we look for inequalities in a variety of settings, both local and global. These spaces can be public, like workplaces, streets, public transportation, and schools, or private, like one's own room at home. Gender-based inequalities cannot be reduced to a single dimension because they occur on multiple dimensions across space and time. Inequality that begins in school does not stop there. People may come across these inequalities on the street the same day, or they may come across them again at work years later. This does not, however, preclude the use of spaces as a context for understanding gender inequalities. Different spatial focuses that take this multidimensionality into account, on the other hand, tell us something that helps us better understand the roots of inequalities.

For the reasons stated above, I argue that it is critical to listen to the space and what it tells us, as well as the voices of people situated in this space. Based on this idea, the first question I asked within the scope of this research, as I mentioned at the beginning, was "What does the kitchen tell us about gender equality?".

On the other hand, I would naturally expect the first question of someone reading this research to be "Why the kitchen and not any other space related to the home?". The kitchen was placed at the center of this question because I think it serves multiple functions in the home. Basically, there are four key differences that I have observed distinguish the kitchen from other areas of the home. Firstly, the kitchen is strongly intertwined with the act of eating, which all humans must perform with

certainty (and sometimes multiple times per day) in order to survive. Because of this fundamental human need, the kitchen is a place where people interact at least once a day (even if it is just to put ready-to-eat food on the plate or to drink water). Secondly, unlike bedrooms, it is a space that does not directly belong to one or two people (ignoring hidden ownership of spaces, which is also one of the subjects of this research), and it is where common encounters within the household occur. Thirdly, it is a space within the home where both production and consumption occur. Finally, it is a space that is constantly in contact with the public space through actions such as garbage disposal and grocery shopping.

Sociologists and architects who work directly with space conduct more technical and in-depth research on the kitchen's placement at home. These were the main subjective observations I made when I started this research. Because of these factors, I made the decision to examine inequality in the home from the perspective of the kitchen. At the same time, my personal relationship with the kitchen played a significant role in determining the topic of this study. The research and the researcher's position were important in this study, as they were in many other studies. As a result, you can find my notes on my personal positionality in relation to the research in Chapter 2's "Positionality of the Researcher" section.

As previously stated, the kitchen is one of the spaces in which people in the household interact with one another. In a space where human relations occur, it is not difficult to find various inequalities, conflicts, and compromises, particularly gender-based inequalities. The existing literature frequently discusses how the kitchen is gendered and the role of women in home kitchens. This literature provided valuable insights for my research. Existing literature, in particular, frequently focuses on women as victims of these inequalities. However, it should not be forgotten that in a context where there are those who are exposed to inequalities, there are also those who directly/indirectly or willingly/unwillingly benefit from these inequalities. For this reason, it would be useful to read this literature together with other kinds of literature such as Critical Masculinity Studies. The literature part of this chapter goes into detail about how my research relates to and situates itself in the existing literature.

After reviewing the available literature, I asked myself, "Where are men in the kitchen, and how do they relate to the kitchen?" This was the second overarching question that guided my investigation. In particular, the literature on Critical Masculinity Studies, which questions men's role in gender inequality, helped me to dig deeper into this issue. Moreover, while designing this research, I was guided to turn these questions into research questions by the fact that men's relations with the



kitchen have become visible, especially on social media. In addition to the initial inquiries, the study is guided by four primary research questions:

- "What does the kitchen tell us about gender equality?"
- "What motivates men to participate in kitchen and cooking-related activities?"
- "Which masculinities are constructed as a result of men's increased engagement with kitchen and cooking-related issues?"
- "How are masculinities challenged and transformed when men are more engaged in kitchen and cooking-related issues in the private space?"

Based on these questions, I identified my priorities and designed my research. (*Feminist Curiosity*, borrowing from Cynthia Enleo (2004; 2016), is one of the most important aspects of my research. In addition to my main research questions, there were many topics about which I was curious throughout this research. As a result, I tried to keep the research as a living organism in parallel with these curiosities throughout the pathway. In this way, I attempted to transform my research from a static to a dynamic and living entity. In this context, in addition to the basic research questions I designed, there were four main areas that I tried to understand based on the assumptions I gained from the literature at the beginning of the study.

The first of these areas was to identify the types of engagement with the kitchen and food in the private space of men who have been sharing the same house with their partner for at least 2 years. At the same time, determining the patterns of these men's cooking and their relationship with the kitchen; and determining which tasks they perform and how often, especially when married men are associated with the kitchen, were the sub-themes I researched under this theme.

Identifying the main sources of motivation of men who voluntarily engage more frequently with kitchen and food-related issues in the private space was the second area I looked at in this context. In particular, I tried to explore the motivations of men who step outside the widespread traditional norm that 'it is women's duty to prepare meals', understand the masculinities that men construct outside of norms, and investigate the fundamental motivations underlying this non-normative behavior.

My third focus was to examine whether there are intersectional aspects to the sources of these behaviors of men who engage with the kitchen. I tried to examine this issue on many different levels, such as the patterns of involvement or non-involvement of family elders in kitchen-related processes, economic and cultural differences, and how they present their involvement with the kitchen to outsiders.

According to the literature I discuss in the following sections, there may be many reasons for men's presence in the field they have previously avoided. While these reasons can sometimes be progressive and egalitarian, sometimes they can be observed as strategic maneuvers to expand the lost privileges of the hegemonic understanding of masculinity. For this reason, as a final area, I looked at the kitchen to understand whether the behavior of men who behave outside the norm moves in a more egalitarian direction or in a direction that makes inequalities even more invisible and deeper.

I designed my field around this framework and designed this research as a project under the TÜBİTAK 1002 (project number: 121K698) program in order to conduct more extensive research. Within the scope of the support I received, I carried out the fieldwork of my research as a project coordinator at the same time. Fifty-one people participated in semi-structured interviews, and twenty men participated in a study I called a Kitchen Diary. You can find more detailed information on how the field design was realized, how things changed during my research journey, the demographic profiles of the participants, the basic structure of semi-structured interviews, how I as a researcher related to this research, the process of Kitchen Diaries, the limitations of the research and the effects of these limitations on the outcomes of this research in the "Chapter 2: Cooking A Research: Methodology, Limitations and Positionality" chapter.

In addition to discussing the important findings of this study, it is important to note that this study has some limitations. The participant profile, which allowed me to gain important insights for upper-middle class white-collar working men, was the most fundamental limitation of the research, but also a strength. Some efforts to raise awareness about gender inequalities may begin with the mistaken belief that this is now a problem of the lower-middle class and groups with low levels of education. Regardless of class or education, many groups continue to face gender inequalities. Even if class inequality takes different forms, we can still say that we are a long way from eliminating inequalities. As a result, it is critical to investigate gender inequalities while taking into account a wide range of variables such as different groups, classes, spaces, and backgrounds. This will make it easier to comprehend intersectional experiences and seek solutions for a more equal future. This research, while limited to the participant group, attempts to understand the experiences of upper-middle class white-collar men and their partners at this point.

Following the literature and methodology chapters, I will present the main findings of my research in this thesis under four main headings. In "Chapter 3: Looking at Gender Inequalities from Home Kitchens" I will first look at how the cooking act

actually happens in homes. I will explain how cooking is more than just cooking food on the stove, and how it happens in six steps. After in-depth travel on the six steps of cooking, in “Chapter 4: Looking at Gender Inequalities from Home Kitchens”, I will look at how divisions of labor are formed, conflicts and compromises, invisible mental loads, and who owns the kitchen in the home. In “Chapter 5: Men’s Relationship With The Kitchen During Periods of Transformation in Their Lives” I will look at how men’s relationships with the kitchen change during significant life transitions. First, I will examine how the Covid-19 pandemic affected the processes talked about in the previous chapter, and then I will demonstrate how these processes changed in families with children after they had children. “Chapter 6: A Recipe for Cooking Masculinity in the Kitchen: Masculinities, Masculinity Performances, and the Kitchen” will concentrate on masculinities. In this chapter, I will discuss my findings in the context of Critical Masculinity Studies literature. The discussions on Hybrid and Inclusive Masculinities will serve as the foundation for my discussions in this chapter. In this way, I will discuss whether men’s engagement in kitchen-related issues is in a more egalitarian direction or in a direction that opens the door to new inequalities. Finally, in “Chapter 7: When Men Leave the Kitchen: New Spaces of Inequality for Women”, I will try to understand men’s relationship with the kitchen from the perspective of women. The main skeleton of this chapter will be how women who are partners of men who behave outside the norm are treated in society. At the same time, I will also discuss in this chapter how the ostensibly egalitarian behavior of men in the previous chapter is reflected in women’s kitchen experiences.

## **1.2 Literature Review**

### **1.2.1 Unpaid Domestic Labor**

Gender inequalities and their emergence in various contexts have been researched and discussed in the literature for many years through various studies. In this context, gender inequality research frequently focuses on spaces. We are confronted with an ever-expanding literature on how gender inequalities are produced, how these inequalities affect people, and how these inequalities can be overcome at the end of the day, particularly in public and private spaces. The public space is studied in a variety of contexts, from education to the workplace, from the street to politics. The private space, on the other hand, has been the subject of extensive research for decades, encompassing everything from daily housework to the rights to one’s own

body. In particular, the recognition of unpaid domestic labor as a type of work and making labor in this private sphere visible within economic systems are pioneering works in this field (Akram-Lodhi 1996; Folbre 1994; Himmelweit 1995; Power 2004; Ungerson 1997). Further studies are critical for identifying the problem correctly and eliminating gender inequalities. For example, Singh and Pattanaik's study examines the effects of domestic labor on women's careers and work lives (2020). The literature extensively examines the connection of unpaid domestic labor not only to professional work but also to many different and layered issues, such as women's mental well-being (Seedat and Rondon 2021). These studies frequently intersect with care work and advocate for the development of social policies centered on unpaid domestic labor in order to achieve gender equality (Baxter and Tai 2016; Carrasco and Domínguez 2011; Miranda 2011; Tripathi, Azhar, and Zhai 2022). The Covid-19 pandemic has sparked a debate about unpaid domestic labor. The main research areas of these studies included factors such as an increase in unpaid domestic labor and people staying at home due to the pandemic. According to these studies, this new need for unpaid domestic labor has emerged as a burden on women (Farré et al. 2022; Seedat and Rondon 2021).

This interest in gender dynamics and inequalities in public and private spaces in global literature is also reflected in Turkish literature. At this point, we can see that the emerging literature rises around three groups. The first group is studies that look mainly at the dynamics in the public space. In the field of education, for example, Acar and Ayata investigate how different types of high schools in Turkey influence the construction of gender identity (2002), whereas Erdol and Gözütok conduct a needs assessment for a gender equality curriculum for secondary education in Turkey (2017). In the workplace, Culpan, Akdağ, and Cindoğlu investigate how women experience the banking sector (1992), Çınar, Akyüz, Uğur-Çınar, and Öncüler-Yayalar concentrate on women's empowerment through women's cooperatives (2021), Beşpınar investigates women's strategies for inclusion in the workplace (2010), and İlkcaracan and Selim study the causes of gender pay gaps in Turkey (2007).

The second group of studies clusters around the transitions between the private and public spheres. These studies focus on the public space as well as those that focus on the private space and gender inequalities in the private space. However, determining where the private space begins can be challenging. Because many points that we can define as public and private spaces are intersectionally in contact with one another. For example, Erman and Kara (2018) and Bora (2005) focus on the experiences of women day laborers and reveal the transitivity between the public and private spaces. Similarly, Özbay discusses the domestic repercussions of Turkish

modernization (1999). Furthermore, we can see that studies focusing on space in gender debates also emphasize the dimension of intersectionality. In particular, the migration from Syria to Turkey has paved the way for this kind of work. For example, in their recent studies, Terzioğlu (2022) and Akyüz and Tursun (2019) examine the migration experiences of women who migrated from Syria to Turkey, particularly their experiences of gendered space.

The last group of studies that build bridges between gender and space in Turkey are those that directly focus on the private sphere. When examining gender-based inequalities through the lens of the private space, studies can sometimes begin by examining these inequalities through the home or the individual's body. For instance, researchers such as Cindoğlu and Ünal (2017) and Aygüneş and Golombisky (2020) examine gender dynamics through the body in relation to topics such as virginity. Alternatively, studies focusing on gender-based inequalities in the private space through the home can focus on the reproduction of gender roles within the family, as Çelik and Lüküslü do through the concept of "House Girls" (2010). On the other hand, a significant body of research focusing on the private space examines women's unpaid domestic work. Aycan and Eskin examine support mechanisms in childcare labor (2005), whereas Başak, Kingır, and Yaşar examine the unpaid domestic labor provided by working women in Turkey via the concept of "Second Shift" (2013). In this regard, *Women from a Woman's Perspective in 1980s Turkey*, edited by Tekeli, is a significant work on Turkey (1995). In the book, Özbay focuses on the changes in women's domestic and recreational activities over time (1995), while Bolak examines the dynamics between men and women in the home and discusses the effects of societal changes on the home over time (1995). In the book, Sirman looks at women's struggle for domestic empowerment in rural life (1995), while Yalçın-Heckmann discusses women's domestic labor in nomadic and semi-nomadic communities (1995).

With the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2019, there has been a diversification of the conversations that take place in the private space regarding unpaid domestic labor. In particular, major lockdowns, the development of work-from-home models, and the forced increase in the amount of time spent at home have paved the way for these studies by creating a suitable ground for them. For example, İlkaracan and Memiş examine the transformation of unpaid labor at home in terms of time use with the pandemic (2021), while Parlak, Çelebi-Çakıroğlu, and Öksüz-Gül (2021) discuss the increase in the weight of domestic labor processes in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic by looking at a specific group such as women academics. Specifically, İlkaracan and Memiş's research demonstrates that, due to the pandemic, it is necessary to refocus on unpaid domestic labor debates and reevaluate

the changes in this process in terms of gender inequities (2021).

When examining these studies that focus on the home as a private space, it is often possible to discern that issues such as unpaid domestic labor are examples of gender inequality in the private space. There are numerous ways to define the emergence of inequalities based on unpaid domestic labor. In light of these studies, if I had to define gender inequality in unpaid domestic labor, I would say that the total minimum time and effort that should be spent on unpaid work to meet the basic care needs of the household (such as cleaning or cooking) is not distributed equally or fairly among the members of the same household, based on their gender. Studies in this field, such as the ones I presented above, frequently examine various variables, such as the employment status of household members, and discuss whether there is an equal share and the resulting inequalities. Specifically, these and other studies reveal that women are subject to gender-based inequality in cleaning, cooking, caring for children, and maintaining the household's daily routine (Basak, Kingır, and Yaşar 2013; Ilkcaracan and Memiş 2021; Kongar and Memiş 2017; Ozbay 1995). Multiple studies indicate that the assumption that women are traditionally responsible for domestic work in societies contributes to domestic and other inequalities (Sakallı-Uğurlu et al. 2021).

We cannot assume that inequalities in the private space do not affect the public space. In the gender statistics book of the Turkish Statistical Institute TÜİK – TurkStat, we can see that data is collected on why people are not participating in the labor force (Figure 1.1: Reasons of not being in labor force, 2015-2021 | Screenshot from the official statistical book of TÜİK – TurkStat). According to this data, nearly 31 million people are not participating in the labor force in Turkey in 2021. The category of being too busy with housework is one of the reasons for not participating in the labor force. According to this category, nearly 10 million people are unable to work because they are preoccupied with housework. When we look at the breakdown of this category by gender, we see that all of the people in this category are women, with no men. While this category is referred to as being busy with housework (*ev işleriyle meşgul olma*) in Turkish, the official English translation is *housewives*<sup>1</sup> (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu 2022a). This demonstrates that being preoccupied with housework is still considered to be women's work, even in the eyes of the state's official statistical agency. As a result, more in-depth research in this field will enable us to see the problem's precise dimensions. Similar data is also reflected in the "Women's Empowerment Strategy Document and Action Plan" prepared by the General Directorate on the Status of Women of the Ministry of

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<sup>1</sup>In Turkish, *ev kadını – ev hanımı* (housewife) is a woman who performs all household chores but does not earn an income outside the home.

Family and Social Policies for the years 2018-2023. In this document, one of the sections where the problems and obstacles faced by women are discussed is the reasons why women do not participate in employment. Using the 2017 results of the same data on not participating in employment from the Turkish Statistical Institute, the relevant policy document draws attention to the fact that housework is one of the reasons why women do not participate in the labor force. According to this document, 55.4% of women who do not participate in the labor force do not do so because they are engaged in housework (Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı Kadının Statüsü Genel Müdürlüğü 2018).

Figure 1.1 Reasons of not being in labor force, 2015-2021 | Screenshot from the official statistical book of TÜİK – TurkStat (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu 2022a)

**İşgücüne dahil olmama nedenleri, 2015-2021**

Reasons of not being in labour force, 2015-2021

[15+ yaş-age]

(Bin kişi-Thousand people)

Yıl Year	Neden-Reason								
	İşgücüne dahil olmayan nüfus Population not in labour force	İş bulma ümidi olmayanlar Discouraged	Diğer <sup>(1)</sup> Other <sup>(1)</sup>	İş arayıp işbaşı yapamayacak olanlar Seeking work but not available	Ev işleriyle meşgul Housewife	Eğitim/ Öğretim Education/ Training	Emekli Retired	Çalışamaz halde old, ill etc.	Diğer Other
<b>Toplam-Total</b>									
2015	28 176	676	1 820	-	11 498	4 486	4 082	3 878	1 736
2016	28 185	658	1 851	-	11 098	4 541	4 160	4 036	1 843
2017	28 251	637	1 712	-	11 133	4 467	4 366	4 009	1 926
2018	28 380	546	1 779	-	11 061	4 472	4 536	4 040	1 944
2019	28 920	627	1 762	-	11 359	4 375	4 959	3 906	1 932
2020	31 706	1 369	2 957	-	10 309	4 513	4 886	4 868	2 803
2021	30 989	1 629	1 546	100	9 917	4 879	4 995	4 998	2 925
<b>Erkek-Male</b>									
2015	8 120	416	608	-	0	2 211	3 156	1 351	377
2016	8 133	406	608	-	0	2 220	3 201	1 351	345
2017	8 166	370	563	-	0	2 204	3 322	1 317	390
2018	8 206	311	567	-	0	2 148	3 406	1 344	429
2019	8 509	368	547	-	0	2 089	3 710	1 279	517
2020	9 851	756	1 138	-	0	2 105	3 605	1 555	691
2021	9 377	798	504	54	0	2 259	3 710	1 528	523
<b>Kadın-Female</b>									
2015	20 056	260	1 212	-	11 498	2 275	926	2 527	1 359
2016	20 052	252	1 241	-	11 098	2 320	958	2 685	1 498
2017	20 085	267	1 150	-	11 133	2 263	1 045	2 692	1 535
2018	20 174	236	1 212	-	11 061	2 324	1 130	2 696	1 515
2019	20 411	259	1 215	-	11 359	2 286	1 250	2 626	1 416
2020	21 855	613	1 820	-	10 308	2 408	1 281	3 313	2 112
2021	21 612	831	1 042	46	9 917	2 620	1 285	3 470	2 401

TÜİK, Toplumsal Cinsiyet İstatistikleri, 2021

TurkStat, Gender Statistics, 2021

Kaynak: TÜİK, İşgücü İstatistikleri, 2015-2021

Source: TurkStat, Labour Force Statistics, 2015-2021

Not. Tablodaki rakamlar, yuvarlamadan dolayı toplamı vermeyebilir.

Note. Figures in table may not add up to totals due to rounding.

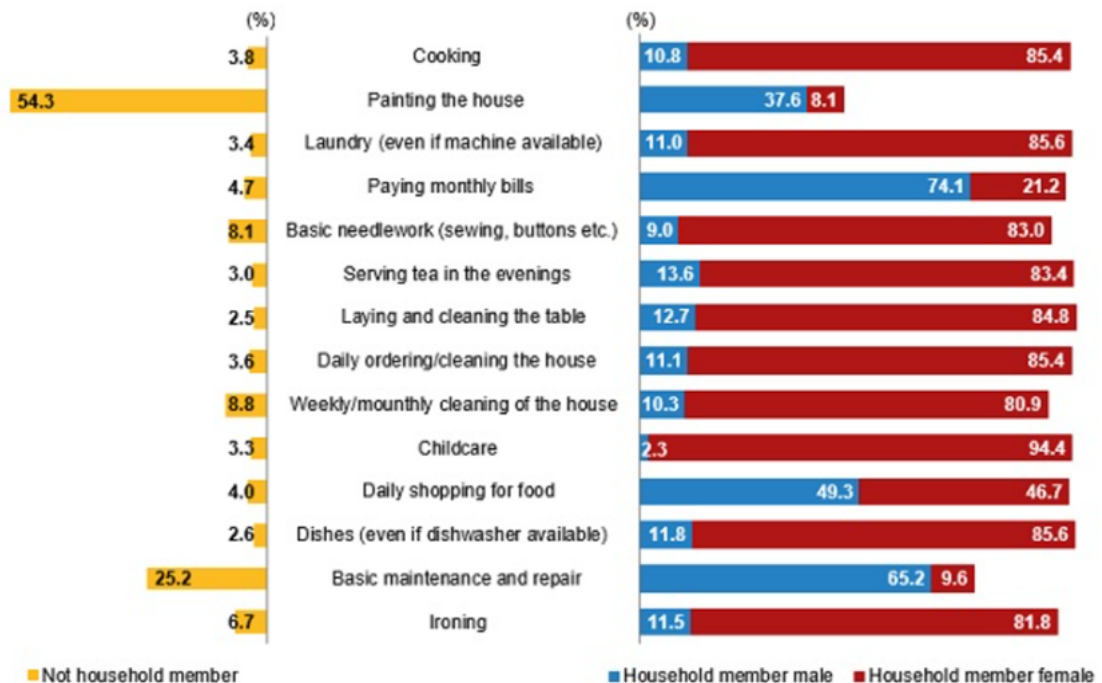
(1) Mevsimlik çalışma, ev kadını olma, öğrencilik, irad sahibi olma, emeklilik ve çalışamaz halde olma gibi nedenlerle iş aramayıp işbaşı yapmaya hazır olduğunu belirten kişilerdir.

(1) These were the persons who were not seeking a job for reasons such as being seasonal workers, busy with household chores, student, property income earner, retired or disabled, but available to start a job.

It is crucial to understand the various types and specifics of housework, which is a barrier to employment for more than 10 million women. Working women in fam-

ilies spent an average of 4 hours and 3 minutes per day on household and family care activities in 2006, according to the Turkish Statistical Institute’s Time Use Survey (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu 2022a), while working men spent 43 minutes per day. This figure was 3 hours and 31 minutes per day for working women and 46 minutes per day for working men in 2015, the most recent version of the same survey. According to Eurostat data, women in Turkey spent an average of 2 hours and 4 minutes per day on cooking/preparation and dish washing in 2010, while men spent an average of 9 minutes per day on these tasks (Eurostat 2018). The 2021 Turkey Family Structure Survey provides us with information on which tasks are undertaken by men and which tasks are undertaken by women in the household. According to the survey, cooking is performed by men in the household 10.8% of the time, while 85.4% of the time it is performed by women in the household. 3.8% of the time it is performed by someone outside the household. When we look at the act of washing dishes, we see that this act is performed by men 11.8% of the time, by women 85.6% of the time, and by people outside the household 2.6% of the time (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu 2022b,c). You can see the detailed numbers in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2 Persons responsible for household chores, 2021 | Screenshot from the official website of TÜİK – TurkStat (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu 2022c)



According to quantitative data, women continue to be the primary caregivers in households in Turkey today. It is critical to carefully monitor this data because it allows us to determine whether the actions taken to eliminate inequalities within



the household were successful. However, these data are tracked over very long time periods at both the national and international levels. It is especially important to monitor how the pandemic, which has lasted from 2019 to 2022, affects the distribution of unpaid domestic labor. Long-term lockdowns and an increase in working from home during this period have begun to emerge in early studies that have a direct impact on this data (Ilkcaracan and Memiş 2021).

At this point, I would like to point out that there is a wide-ranging feminist debate on whether or not it is practical to conduct research on the private-public space dichotomy. There are those who argue that such a dichotomy is western-centric, that spatial boundaries are not so sharp, and that such a distinction creates space for the reproduction of gender inequalities, as well as those who argue that the distinction between private and public space helps to understand the origins of gender inequalities, to examine how spaces are related to different social hierarchies, and to expose the power structures of the patriarchal order to in-depth discussion (Acar-Savran 2009; Landes 1995; Wischermann and Mueller 2004). In this debate, we cannot ignore the risk that the private-public divide deepens inequalities, especially in the private space. At the same time, it would be inaccurate to argue that the distinction between private and public is sharp and that the debates in these two spaces do not overlap. Even beyond these debates, it should not be ignored that people experience spaces uniquely. For this reason, studying gender inequalities through the dichotomy of private-public space requires great attention. We need to focus separately on the issues that cause people to experience space differently, especially the intersectional diversity they have. The distinction between private and public space, on the other hand, according to the opposing argument, provides important tools for understanding the origins of gender inequalities and the formation of patriarchal power relations. Therefore, I think there are practical benefits to concentrating on gender inequality in both public and private spaces, with due consideration given to intersectional differences, the fluidity of inequality across spaces, and the risk that the private-public divide deepens inequalities. In light of these considerations, I have chosen to base my research on the literature on unpaid domestic labor.

### **1.2.2 Kitchen, Food and Unpaid Domestic Labor**

In order to make sense of gender inequalities, the kitchen and cooking have frequently become the subject of various studies. The literature focuses on the act of eating, which every human being must perform every day, and how its direct or indirect relationship with the kitchen is shaped by gender norms (Cairns, Johnston, and

Baumann 2010; Counihan 2012; DeVault 1994; Engelhardt 2001; Haukanes 2007; Holtzman 2006). An important aspect of these studies is the responsibility of feeding family members and being the cook, which is traditionally assigned to women in societies. According to these studies, the status of being the one who feeds the family is one of the problematic areas that is seen as one of the reasons for the deepening of gender inequalities and women remaining within a family-centered system of inequality (Cairns, Johnston, and Baumann 2010; DeVault 1994). One of the issues frequently discussed in the literature is how food-related actions in the kitchen, one of the areas where unpaid labor is intensely experienced, are imposed on women as a "natural" duty in many different cultures and societies (Inness 2001). This situation demonstrates that the problem is fundamentally intersectional. Motherhood and childcare norms play a significant role in women's "natural" responsibility for food-related processes. According to the findings of some studies, women who provide care labor are used in some cultures to keep women within these norms through child feeding, and that a relationship is established between the social approval of these women's motherhood and the feeding of their children (DeVault 1994; Inness 2001). These studies, on the other hand, show that such relationships between fathers and men are not established in societies. Moreover, the connections between the kitchen and gender inequality extend beyond cooking. Mental responsibilities are another form of unpaid labor. As part of their unpaid work, women perform numerous mental tasks, such as deciding which day to cook, which ingredients to buy, what to buy at which market, and how to keep track of the fridge (DeVault 1994).

Understanding how inequality exists is frequently a crucial first step. If there is inequality, there is essentially one person that is subject to inequality and another person that utilizes the situation caused by inequality. This is how just and unequal systems are sustained. However, subjects within these systems can also be the beneficiaries of these inequalities, knowingly or not. For example, while the patriarchal order ensured its own continuity by eliminating the rights of many groups, especially women, men benefited from the advantageous position created by these inequalities. At this point, studies focusing on the domestic division of labor are often similar to other studies on gender inequality in that they focus on the survivors, such as women, rather than the beneficiaries and/or perpetrators of inequality (Julier and Lindenfeld 2005). These studies have been accumulating knowledge on the creation, continuation and elimination of gender inequalities for many years. This has resulted in significant progress in understanding the dynamics of gender inequalities in an academic setting. However, in order to take the findings of these studies further and develop solutions, it is necessary to examine the behaviors of both those who

benefit from and those who are subjected to these inequalities. There are studies in this field that focus on the behavior of men who benefit from inequalities, but these studies are very limited in comparison to studies that focus on women. To provide a summary of current debates that focus on men and discuss gender dimensions in the context of the kitchen and food, I can categorize them in four different ways.

The first group of studies in this area includes studies on diets that require effort outside the daily routine, such as sports nutrition and health-oriented diets, as well as studies on men's behaviors associated with such diets (Gough 2006, 2007; Naguib 2015; Sloan, Gough, and Conner 2010; Stibbe 2004). The second group focuses on professional kitchens. Studies in this group often examine the male-dominated culture of physical strength and endurance in professional kitchens and question why professional chefs are mostly men (Druckman 2010; Harris and Giuffre 2010, 2015; Kurnaz, Kurtuluş, and Kılıç 2018; Steno and Friche 2015). As in the first group, the third group of studies focuses on the food consumed. The studies in this group focus on constructions of masculinity that go beyond daily routine food tasks such as eating meat, choosing meat-oriented items as a dietary preference, cooking meat, and barbecue culture, where men enter the kitchen for their own pleasure or hobbies rather than for essential needs (Aarseth and Olsen 2008; Carpar 2020; Counihan 2012; Sobal 2005; Sumpter 2015). The last group consists of studies focusing on food, men, and the public space. This group consists of studies that focus on men who cook in the public space in contexts where work is presented as a show, such as television programs, and the performances of masculinities (Holden 2005; Leer 2016; Negra and Tasker 2019; Swenson 2009).

There are, of course, other studies that have been conducted concentrating on the relationship that exists between men and food in addition to these studies. However, as can be seen from the summarized presentation of the fields, men's relationship with food is examined in mostly different contexts rather than in the context of domestic unpaid labor. The fact that the relationship between men and food in the context of unpaid domestic labor is not sufficiently investigated remains an important barrier to understanding inequalities and finding solutions to them. For this reason, I think it is important to understand the literature on the relationship between men and food and to produce new research by reinterpreting these debates in the context of domestic unpaid labor. At the same time, it is important to note that existing research on the intersection of kitchen, food, gender, and unpaid domestic labor frequently focuses on the global north. The study conducted by DeVault (1994) on American families is one of the pioneering studies in this field. Similarly, Szabo (2013), who has done important research in the field, includes men in her studies from Canada. Not only the American continent but also European

countries are the field of these studies. There are studies that look at food, kitchen, gender, and unpaid domestic labor, including Nordic countries, as Leer (2019) does. However, research on these four issues from the global south is still limited. As a result, the intersection of food, kitchen, gender, and unpaid domestic labor can still tell us different stories in different settings. For this reason, I think that studies to be conducted in different countries and cultures are important. Despite all these limitations, what the existing literature and research have to offer helped me to shape my research. In the next section, I take this literature review, which I summarize in the following section, further and explain in more detail how studies on men and food are related to each other.

### **1.2.3 Kitchen, Food, Gender and Masculinities**

Foodways are the junction of cultural, social, and economic activities used in the processes of producing, distributing, and consuming food (Counihan 2012). Gender talks can take place at various levels and in various contexts in such a diverse field. A comprehensive review of any portion of any of these food processes reveals various gendered themes.

Gender is present in various food processes, according to studies. Some of these examine the gender angle in food production, while others examine the gender in food preparation and consumption (Counihan 2012). The majority of the second group discusses how the social structure influences domestic processes and how gender dynamics are reproduced. At the same time, these studies examine not only domestic practices but also public practices. These studies also look at how certain cultural and social structures promote gender norms in food preparation and consumption. The terms "masculinity" and "femininity" appear frequently in these discussions. We can look at these discussions in detail under the themes of "preparing", "consuming", and "sharing".

#### **1.2.3.1 Preparing food and gender**

The majority of research on food preparation has focused on domestic practices in order to examine the relationship between food and gender. The division of labor within the household, in particular, becomes a general determinant of this theme (Cairns, Johnston, and Baumann 2010). The division of labor in food preparation, as well as the burden on women in the private space, is a frequently discussed topic.

Through various arguments (for example, responsibilities imposed on biological characteristics), these discussions generally examine the social and cultural structures being reproduced within the household and the bases on which women appear to be responsible for the preparation of food in the household (DeVault 1994). A significant portion of these discussions takes into account family structure and how the domestic division of labor is distributed.

Some studies investigate gender differences in food preparation in public and private settings. According to these studies, women are culturally assigned reproductive roles within the home, whereas men are assigned productive roles outside the home (Cairns, Johnston, and Baumann 2010). Based on female vs. male and productive vs. reproductive dichotomies, these arguments contend that the role of women in feeding others is already established in many societies. These studies are becoming more prevalent as women become more visible in public and participate more actively in the labor force. There are studies, for example, that examine how working women's food preparation processes adapt to work life and how the burdens of women working at different times of day are multiplied (Cairns, Johnston, and Baumann 2010).

As the post-colonial feminist perspective gained traction in such debates, gender and food debates gained new perspectives. Various studies, for example, look at intersectional field features in the food preparation process. Some of these studies concentrate on different women's experiences rather than viewing women's experiences as a unit and universal (Engelhardt 2001). At this point, studies are focusing on how the experiences of women of different classes and races differ when it comes to food preparation.

Examining only women's experiences with food preparation will be insufficient to understand the dynamics between food and gender. New research agendas are emerging regarding the importance of conducting research on men in order to understand men's roles in these processes and dynamics (Szabo 2014*a,b*). Since this time, it is being debated not only how women are assigned the role of feeding the family, but also where men fit into this system. There is a growing interest in equal distribution of work within the household in areas such as social policies, and food preparation becomes one of the examined sub-areas. For example, even when couples are given equal maternity leaves, it is revealed that men are not involved in food preparation processes (Hook 2010). Although egalitarian policies appear to be effective, such findings reinforce the idea of investigating men's experiences in these processes. Several studies on how men avoid food preparation processes have been conducted in this context (Sobal 2005). Critical Masculinity Studies pave the way for new re-

search on food preparation in the professional and private domains. An argument that men prepare food solely for "pleasure," regardless of how simple or complicated the food is, appears here. The public space entry of men into food preparation processes through titles such as "chef" differs from domestic food preparation processes (Cairns, Johnston, and Baumann 2010). While professional food preparation is considered as a masculine performance, most home food preparation processes, with the exception of food prepared for pleasure (such as meat preparation and barbecue), are considered feminine (Aarseth and Olsen 2008; Counihan 2012; Inness 2001).

The majority of the studies mentioned above focus on heterosexual families-households. Men-women or husband-wife dichotomies are still commonly used in food, private space, and gender research. On the other hand, we began to come across non-binary studies in this field. Several studies on how the division of labor is distributed in food preparation processes, particularly among LGBTIQ+ households, have begun to emerge (Carrington 2012).

### **1.2.3.2 Consuming food and gender**

Food consumption is an important aspect of gender and food discussions. Both the production and consumption of certain foods can have social and cultural significance. The main focus of this debate is on "masculine" and "feminine" foods. According to some studies, certain foods are perceived as "feminine" or "masculine" by people (Sobal 2005). One of the most common research findings is that foods like meat are perceived as "masculine" while vegetable-based foods are perceived as "feminine" (Szabo 2014a). These food-related adjectives can be interpreted as a reflection of the male-female dichotomy that we see in many areas. Furthermore, adjectives associated with these foods can be replicated at various stages of foodways. As an example, as I mentioned in the previous section, the perception of meat as a masculine food and the preparation of meat by men appear to be interconnected issues (Thomas 2016).

The categorization of food as "healthy food" is a further aspect of this discussion. According to research, women consider eating healthy food to be a necessity, whereas men have no preference in this regard (Counihan 1999). Because healthy foods are perceived as feminine, men make different food choices than women. It is not surprising for gender studies to read these findings on gender and body discussions. Various theories that should be investigated in this regard include society's "ideal body" discourse on people (Regan et al. 2021). At this point, what is not eaten as well as what is eaten becomes a topic of gender and food debate. Women are

motivated to consume less food in order to appear desirable and feminine in society (Thomas 2016).

### **1.2.3.3 Sharing food and gender**

Gender dynamics are associated with food sharing, as well as food production and consumption. Sharing within the household is an important aspect of food-related practices. The fact that the person in charge of food distribution in the household is mostly a woman, and "feeding" individuals places an additional burden on the women (DeVault 1994). Various studies contend that working women struggle to provide their children with "healthy" options and regular food. This is known as the second shift of women (Inness 2001). Food sharing with household members, on the other hand, is directly related to care labor. Meeting the care labor needs of people in the household is frequently carried out by women. Traditional gender norms emphasize women's role as feeder of the family, and as a result, women are expected to share the food they prepare with others in the household. These traditional gender norms are still present in discussions about care work today. These norms, particularly in terms of childcare, can be attributed to women based on the concept of good motherhood. Cairns, Johnston, and MacKendrick (2013), for example, discuss in their study how mothers' organic and ethical feeding of their children is socially linked to good motherhood and how this has evolved into a new gender norm today.

As another area of sharing, we can think of sharing the food with people from outside the household. Carrington explains Bourdieu's argument on the relationship between the cultural capital concept and dinner party as follows: "Dinner parties often operate as a stage upon which the hosts display and call attention to various forms of cultural capital, including everything from works of art to home furnishings, from musical selections to displays of literature, from table settings to the food itself." (Carrington 2012, 206). This is the stage at which families demonstrate their class and hierarchical position. The exotic menus and dishes chosen while hosting guests are actually an environment where people create their own social-class identities. This situation prepares a suitable ground for mobility between classes. Dinner parties have an important place in order to be seen as an insider of the dominant class and to show that they share the same tastes. In this way, class mobility is created through tastes. This is also a presentation of household status (Carrington 2012). Also, Goffman's concepts of "frontstage" and "backstage" are useful in understanding how this dinner party transforms into gendered performances. While frontstage activities are the visible hosting performances of the guest, backstage ac-

tivities are typically comprised of unseen tasks such as planning, provisioning, and monitoring (Carrington 2012). These backstage activities, often invisible and the smallest part of the social recognition process, are women's unpaid labor. The literature primarily discusses frontstage activities in order to comprehend the gendered performances that partners embody. At this point, it is possible to discuss how class discussions are replicated at home and how women's labor is rendered invisible.

Although much of the literature on food sharing focuses on women's invisible labor, it is possible to find resistance and empowerment stories in the field of gender and food sharing. Some studies, in particular, discuss how women find their voices through food, how cookbooks serve as a means of transmission, and how food practices are passed down through generations through women's stories (Engelhardt 2001). At this point, we can say that the concept of sharing food provides empowering areas for women (Holtzman 2006). As examples of these empowering practices, studies focusing on intersectional elements in food sharing can be shown. These studies, in particular, seek empowering stories that include women's cooking, consuming, and sharing practices from an intersectional standpoint (Engelhardt 2001; Holtzman 2006).

#### **1.2.4 Critical Masculinity Studies**

In gender studies, there are many studies that focus on how gender inequalities occur, in which contexts and in which forms they emerge, and how these inequalities can be overcome. In addition to these problematics, studies that focus on the beneficiaries and/or perpetrators of inequalities in addition to those who are subjected to them are emerging as a new literature. This literature, labeled "Masculinity Studies," focuses on men's behavior in a variety of contexts, including unpaid domestic labor. It is important to distinguish this literature from the men's rights movement, which has been going on since the nineteenth century. Masculinity studies, as academic literature, is not a men's rights movement; rather, it examines masculinity from a critical standpoint, with the view that masculinity is a construction. In fact, in order to distinguish themselves from the men's rights movement, academics in the masculinity studies literature began to refer to their work as "Critical Masculinity Studies" (Göç 2020; Günay-Erkol 2018; Hearn and Howson 2019). Theorists such as Connell (1998; 2005*a*; 2005*b*), Kimmel (1987; 2013), and Messerschmidt (1994; 2018; 2019) have made pioneering academic contributions to what is now known as Critical Masculinity Studies. Connell (2005*a*), one of the pioneers of Critical Masculinity Studies, introduced the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which is one of the most



important concepts in this field. Connell uses Gramsci's concept of hegemony to understand how men's dominant position in society is legitimized, and how they oppress and marginalize other groups (2005*a*). Connell and Messerschmidt revisited the concept of hegemonic masculinity, one of the most commonly used concepts that has transformed literature since its original conception. In this study, the authors further develop and complicate the concept of hegemonic masculinity, arguing that hegemonic masculinity is not a single-layered structure and that men are not the only subjects who reproduce hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). According to this new discussion, hegemonic masculinity is multi-layered. Men can be the founding subjects of hegemonic masculinity, they can be the beneficiaries of the privileges created, and they can also be harmed by this system (Connell 2005*b*; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Göç 2020). The multi-layered nature of hegemonic masculinity and Critical Masculinity Studies has been brought to the forefront in these studies, particularly with the inclusion of many dimensions such as the representation of different men, different ways of negotiating with the system, and conflicts with masculinities.

Critical Masculinity Studies investigate traditional understandings of masculinity from a feminist point of view in order to call into question the privileges that are traditionally accorded to men in society (Göç 2020; Günay-Erkol 2018; Hearn and Howson 2019). Critical Masculinity Studies are also concerned with the long-term transformation of inequalities in this context. At this time, Critical Masculinity Studies provide us with significant and novel tools for analyzing domestic inequalities. Particularly, examining domestic inequalities under the assumption that multiple masculinities are constructed rather than a single masculinity opens up new fields of analysis for those conducting research on this topic. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of studies examining men's behavior in a variety of contexts, ranging from domestic chores to childcare (Courtney 2009; Geist and Ruppner 2018; Hoang and Yeoh 2011; Kilkey, Perrons, and Plomien 2013; Latshaw 2015; Ribeiro, Paúl, and Nogueira 2007; Roberts 2018). Focusing on the perpetrator as well as the survivor, Critical Masculinity Studies provide new resources to scholars of unpaid domestic labor.

Men's participation in the domestic division of labor is discussed in a variety of contexts in the global literature, providing a more complete picture of how masculinities are constructed in the home across cultures. When we examine the emerging masculinities, we find that rather than a single masculinity, multiple masculinities are constructed in different contexts, cultures, and periods (Aarseth and Olsen 2008; Courtney 2009; Geist and Ruppner 2018; Hook 2010; Latshaw 2015; Szabo 2014*a,b*). Studies on the contexts in which different masculinities are constructed

confirm the discussion on the differentiation of hegemonic masculinity at local, regional, and global levels put forward by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005). The local masculinities that Connell and Messerschmidt define by including face-to-face communication and the masculinities discussed by studies focusing on unpaid domestic labor are parallel. For example, studies that examine how different processes, such as the image of fatherhood, are formed in different societies and the path to the relevant concept of fatherhood (Akcınar 2017; Latshaw 2015; Randles 2018; Stevens 2015; Wall and Arnold 2007) actually indirectly parallel the discussion on local masculinities. When we look closely at these studies, we can see that there is no single global hegemonic masculinity, as Connell and Messerschmidt argue. In order for the Critical Masculinity Studies literature to advance gender studies to a deeper level, more studies focusing on various cultures and societies and discussing masculinities constructed at local-regional-global levels are required. A holistic and intersectional picture of gender inequalities will be provided by the interaction of as many studies on different cultural contexts as possible with a critical masculinity perspective. In this way, we will be able to see how masculinities are constructed in various societies, the differences/similarities between different groups of men, and possible opportunities for promoting more egalitarian masculinity in various groups in the fight against potential gender inequality.

Examining gender inequalities in various contexts through the lens of Critical Masculinity Studies offers various theoretical contributions to the literature. For example, one of the most frequently discussed topics in Critical Masculinity Studies is fatherhood studies, which focus on the relationship between fatherhood and masculinity. This literature attempts to comprehend how men engage in unpaid domestic labor through concepts such as "involved fatherhood" or "pro-feminist fatherhood" and it discusses how men can intervene in gender inequalities in the context of unpaid domestic labor (Barutçu and Hıdır 2016; Bozok 2018*b*; Kilkey, Perrons, and Plomien 2013; Latshaw 2015; Randles 2018; Stevens 2015). As in the case of fatherhood, studies in many different sub-fields focus on Turkey and examine men's behavior. For example, Sancar (2009) looks at the masculinities constructed by men from different social and economic classes, while Özbay and Soybakış (2020) discuss political masculinities in Turkey. As another example, Akyüz, Sayan-Cengiz, Çırakman and Cindoğlu (2019) discuss business masculinities in Anatolia, while Erol and Özbay (2013) discuss the relationship between masculinity, aging and andropause. While these studies may sometimes focus on a specific group such as veterans and disabled people, as Sünbülüoğlu (2017) does, authors such as Barutçu (2022) discuss issues such as religious masculinities together with phenomena such as circumcision through the body.

However, when compared to other fields, studies focusing on unpaid domestic labor from the perspective of Critical Masculinity Studies are scarce in Turkey. In Turkey, fatherhood is one of the most frequently analysed topics in which masculinities are examined in the private space or in contexts that intersect with the private spaces. In this literature, fathers' involvement in childcare is analysed through different concepts. For example, Beşpınar (2015) looks at middle-class secular fathers in Turkey and examines whether fatherhood defined through the concept of new fatherhood can be a means of changing traditional forms of masculinity and male privilege in the gender order. Barutçu and Hıdır (2016), on the other hand, through the concept of pro-feminist fatherhood, try to understand how fathers construct their fatherhood roles within the processes of constructing masculinity and what kind of effects this construction has on their own children towards gender equality. When we look at more recent studies, we can see that the themes have become more specific. For example, Bayazıt (2020) analyses the masculinity construction processes of stay-at-home fathers in Turkey, while Morva and Ünlü look at how blogger fathers define fatherhood while bringing fatherhood into the public space (2021). In the Turkish context, these studies often focus on the construction of fatherhood and discussions on the division of unpaid domestic labor are still limited. As a result, it may be beneficial to add a Critical Masculinity Studies perspective to the literature on unpaid domestic labor and gender inequalities in Turkey.

The literature on Critical Masculinity Studies, like that of many other areas of gender literature, is not limited to academic studies. Civil society projects aimed at reducing gender inequalities also contribute to the literature. In the field of fatherhood, AÇEV (Mother Child Education Foundation) in Turkey is one of the longest-running initiatives contributing to the literature. AÇEV contributes to the development of literature in this field by opening its field to academics by focusing on men's behaviors and conducting direct field studies to create more egalitarian masculinity, particularly the "Father Support Program" to improve democratic behaviors within the family (Akcınar 2017; Anne Çocuk Eğitim Vakfı 2018, 2021; Bozok 2018a). In the context of unpaid domestic labor, studies such as those conducted by AÇEV create a sustainable ecosystem for the study of inequalities. This is because the production of academic knowledge and the elimination of inequalities on the ground follow parallel paths. While the reality of the field reshapes academic studies, academic studies enable the field to progress in a more systematic way. Indirectly, it paves the way for the study of domestic gender inequalities in new contexts in the field from the perspective of Critical Masculinity Studies, paves the way for new solution proposals to resolve gender inequalities in addition to existing proposals, and includes new areas of struggle such as the inclusion of men in the elimination of gender inequalities.

There are many additional theoretical debates that can be categorized under Critical Masculinity Studies in order to systematically examine different masculinities constructed in different contexts (e.g. inclusive (Anderson 2009), hybrid (Bridges and Pascoe 2014), or mosaic (Coles 2008)). These debates, like the hegemonic masculinity debate, examine constructed masculinities in various contexts and attempt to identify basic patterns. Some researchers argue that such categorizations are ineffective because they restrict masculinity to a fixed position (Waling 2019). While I agree with this criticism, I argue that these discussions are useful in understanding how masculinities are constructed in various contexts. A body of knowledge will be accumulated as such studies, which will be conducted with an awareness of the limitations of research, are repeated in different contexts and cultures. This body of knowledge will be useful in identifying the factors that contribute to problems in order to eliminate gender inequalities. Within the scope of this study, I will discuss my data in the context of the theories of inclusive and hybrid masculinities in order to make sense of the masculinities constructed by men engaged in the kitchen and food, the sources of motivation for non-normative behavior, and their position in terms of gender equality. At this point, it is critical to summarize the discussions on inclusive masculinity, where researchers argue that men's non-normative behaviors are promising for gender equality, and hybrid masculinities, where researchers argue that these non-normative behaviors have the potential to deepen inequalities.

#### **1.2.4.1 Inclusive masculinity**

The idea that men are less likely than women to engage in tasks involving the kitchen has been a topic of discussion in the literature for a long time. However, recent research shows that men are more likely to be seen in home kitchens than in the past (Holm et al. 2015; Leer 2019; Smith, Ng, and Popkin 2013). Making sense of this slow transition is critical for long-term projections. In this way, we are able to determine whether or not this change is actually a change and, if it is a change, whether or not it is moving towards a more egalitarian point.

Although not directly related to cooking and housework, there are studies in the literature that look at men's transition from a position of staying away, not participating in the division of labor, and, on the contrary, benefiting from these inequalities to their inclusion in these processes. Eric Anderson's "inclusive masculinity" (2009; 2011; 2018) theory is one of two that examines these changes from different perspectives and looks at the issue from two opposing points of view. This theory deals with homophobia, which is the fear that men have of being perceived as feminine or

homosexual. Anderson claims that in homophobic societies, men reproduce gender norms in order to avoid being perceived as feminine or homosexual. This prevents the formation of different masculinities in society and keeps members of society, particularly men, within the norms (Anderson 2018). Anderson claims that in the globalizing world, homophobia and misogyny have decreased in some societies and that new generations of men in countries such as the United States of America exhibit behaviors that are out of the norm in this regard. According to this perspective, homophobia declines as a result of declining homophobia and misogyny, as men no longer fear being perceived as feminine or homosexual. As a result, homophobia loses its ability to keep men within gender norms, paving the way for the emergence of other forms of masculinity (Anderson and McCormack 2018). Particularly, the possibility of producing masculinity known as inclusive masculinity grows. This new inclusive masculinity is more accepting of “other” / “marginalized” identities (Anderson 2009). Many different researchers use inclusive masculinity theory to understand transformed masculinities in fatherhood, sports, education, and work-life (Anderson 2009; Gaston, Magrath, and Anderson 2018; Gottzén and Kremer-Sadlik 2012; Magrath and Scoats 2019; McCormack 2011; Roberts 2012; Scoats 2015). The discussion of inclusive masculinity is important in order to discuss the possibilities of transforming unpaid domestic labor and inequalities in this field. Because the social transformations discussed in inclusive masculinity may indeed be the changes that cause men to be more visible in areas such as the kitchen and food. If the social transformations associated with this assumption continue, more space for inclusive masculinity and new paths to gender equality can be created.

The theory of inclusive masculinity, which many researchers use to make sense of their fieldwork, has also been subjected to a number of criticisms in the literature. The common points where these criticisms intersect are that Anderson’s theory is Eurocentric and American-centered, and far from intersectional discussions (de Boise 2014; O’Neill 2014). This is because Anderson’s work, in particular, frequently focuses on white American men, leaving out the experiences of men from other economic or ethnic classes. It is important to note this criticism in the literature, as other researchers who borrowed Anderson’s concept frequently discuss it on the axis of Europe and America. However, it will be important to determine whether the theory’s argument is consistent with research in different contexts.

#### 1.2.4.2 Hybrid masculinities

The theory of hybrid masculinities stands in parallel with the criticisms of the theory of inclusive masculinity. As in the theory of inclusive masculinity, discussions on hybrid masculinities focus on the underlying reasons why men appear more frequently in areas where they were previously absent or hesitant to be present. The difference in Bridges and Pascoe's theory is that the reason for these changes in men's attitudes is not read as a shift toward more egalitarian masculinity. On the contrary, it emphasizes how men's privileged positions became more visible as feminist gains became more visible, how these privileged spaces began to be questioned, and how these spaces were gradually reduced as a result of these discussions. Men who want to reclaim this loss of privilege try to regain their privileged position by creating various maneuvers (Bridges and Pascoe 2014, 2018). One of these maneuvers is to be seen strategically more frequently in areas where they previously did not exist or did not feel obligated to exist due to their privileged position (Bridges and Pascoe 2018). The adoption of symbols, spaces, and behaviors belonging to other marginalized, suppressed, and denied masculinities through a kind of "strategic borrowing" is one of the reasons for this change. This "strategic borrowing" is one way that hegemonic masculinity, whose traditional privileges are under attack and are no longer regarded as acceptable, tries to expand its space once more in order to maintain its dominant position. According to those who work on this theory, this is the reason why changes in men's behavior, rather than paving the way for more egalitarian masculinity, blur gender norms again due to their underlying motivations, and have the potential to deepen the inequalities produced by these norms rather than solving them (Bridges and Pascoe 2018). When researching unpaid domestic labor, it is important to take into consideration a number of different theories, one of which is the theory of hybrid masculinities. Because men's participation in unpaid domestic labor processes can be the first steps toward an egalitarian masculinity, as well as an area of maneuver to regain formerly privileged spaces, as is discussed in the context of hybrid masculinities.

Nonetheless, it is important to mention, once more under the heading of hybrid masculinities, the primary reservation regarding the literature constructed on various masculinities in the field of Critical Masculinity Studies (Waling 2019). The assumption of hybrid masculinities based on a particular field or group runs the risk of pinning masculinities into a static position and concealing individual subjectivities. For this reason, it is important to remember that there is not only one masculinity while centering this theory. Although masculinities are the driving force shaping the lives of men, and indeed other people in society, this is

not the whole story. Rather than taking masculinity as a pre-existing force that shapes men's lives in a standalone way, it can even be seen as an effect produced through relations with the social world (Waling 2019). Seeing masculinities as a performing phenomenon and considering that one person does not produce a fixed type of masculinity all the time, is one of the important steps in making sense of gender-based inequalities and generating ideas about solutions. Starting from this perspective, discussions of hybrid or inclusive masculinities will provide us with important insights. This discussion also opens an important door for the agency debate. There are various discussions in the literature on how to move beyond pinning men to static positions under a fixed masculinity within the system. These studies often go beyond static positioning and draw the discussion to a more fluid point with concepts such as agency, emotions, and reflexivity (Holmes 2015; Waling 2019). I think one of the most important aspects of these studies is that they leave the door open for us to understand the multi-layeredness of people's lives. I also think that these open doors will enable us to better explore and understand the way to transform gender-based inequalities. Waling summarizes the possible positive outcomes of producing knowledge in the field of Masculinity Studies by foregrounding agency in the following sentences:

“Instead of determining whether or not men ascribe to a type of masculinity or are oppressed by it, a consideration of how they engage across time and place, and their capacity for agentive and emotionally reflective choices with such engagements would better equip MMS [Men and Masculinit(ies) Studies] scholars in understanding the complex nature between men's lived experiences and structural and systematic forces of gendered power relations. This leaves MMS scholars with a number of important questions they can explore more readily, such as investigating how men understand and reflect on their “doing” of masculinity, or how they might negotiate engagement with practices of masculinity that may be stigmatized or considered unethical with contemporary social norms. It is not just about their engagement with masculinity itself, but how men understand and view the audiences who may perceive such performances, and how men reconcile their engagement with masculinity amid increased awareness of systemic and structural inequalities produced by relations of gender.” (Waling 2019, 102).

This issue underlined by Waling is very important for this research because it is precisely from this perspective that I tried to design this research. Focusing on the theories of inclusive and hybrid masculinities, I tried to understand the motivations underlying the behaviors of a group of middle middle-upper class men who are

interested in the kitchen, which can be considered out of the norm, by including their agencies in the discussion.

I would like to conclude this chapter by seeking simple answers to two questions whose answers are on the same path; Why does equality in the kitchen matter? and What does this research say that is new in the discussion of all this literature?

According to the literature presented in this chapter, unpaid domestic labor continues to play a significant role in gender-based inequalities. Unpaid domestic labor is still predominantly performed by women, and it is an inequality that has echoes not only in the private space but also in the public space. It will be critical to continue investigating the nerve endings of this inequality network in patriarchal societies such as Turkey. I can say that food and kitchen work is one of the most important areas where unpaid work in the home is done in large amounts. There is noticeably a need for labor to complete a task that members of the household must complete at least once each day. Although this labor need can often be met by outsourcing, in many households today, this labor is still provided unpaid by household members, especially by women. Nonetheless, the kitchen and cooking are more visible and public than other household chores. As I will explain in the upcoming chapters, cooking is more than just cooking some ingredients on the stove; it also entails a lengthy process that includes everything from grocery shopping to garbage disposal. At the same time, the labor in this private space can be shared with outsiders by hosting guests. The shared meal is much more than just the food that will fulfill the minimum daily nutritional needs, whether it is for the nutritional needs of household members or for hosting guests. People who cook also share their tastes, hobbies, responsibilities, moods, emotions, memories from the past, social class, and many other social dynamics with others. As a result, kitchen work, which is one of the jobs requiring unpaid domestic labor, creates a context in which many social networks and dynamics emerge. Home kitchens and cooking therefore provide the appropriate intersectional ground for a topic such as gender, which should be viewed through an intersectional lens. Any pattern you follow within this intersectional network leads you to the other themes I mentioned above and even more. Therefore, equality and inequality in home kitchens do not only give us clues about the kitchen or food. It also informs us about the changing and transforming debates on equality or inequality in other contexts. I argue that when the equality that emerges in the context of the kitchen is transformed into equality in the real sense due to its relationship with these networks, we will be able to observe the transformation of inequalities in many different themes. We need to pay attention to the expression of real equality because, as I will discuss in the following sections, home kitchens, and cooking are also very suitable environment for the illusion of equality due to



these intersectional networks. Therefore, looking at home kitchens and cooking from multiple perspectives will broaden our perspectives on gender-based inequalities in society. In conclusion, since equality in the kitchen will only become fully visible after the equality that will emerge in many different themes, I think it is important to search for equality in the kitchen and to identify the pathways to this equality.

As home kitchens are, in my opinion, crucial to gender debates, one of the last things I should discuss in this chapter is how this research and thesis relate to the existing literature. It was difficult to define the social class of the research participant group in Turkey in 2022-2023. I think that determining social class solely on economic income is insufficient. The main reason underlying this idea is the significant fluctuations in the Turkish economy over the last five years. For this reason, while trying to determine the class of my participant group, I started from the classification pointed out by Ural and Beşpınar. The authors try to determine a road map to define social class through the concepts of "similar conditions of existence" or "similar dispositions" borrowed from Bourdieu (Ural and Beşpınar 2017). In parallel with the variables they chose, I made this determination using various types of capital such as education level, family background, neighborhood, the number of income entering the household, the type of professional work done, and seniority in the profession on a household rather than an individual basis. The participant group was formed in a range that I can call middle or upper-middle class. I think it is important to analyse this group in the context of masculinities. At this point, I agree with Beşpınar's view that it is important to examine middle-class fathers because the values and practices of this group are also emulated by other social classes (Beşpınar 2015). Since this is a class with transitions in both values and economics, it provides a critical context for identifying potential transformation potentials of gender inequalities. Since the changes to be experienced in this group may spread to other social classes in the long run precisely because of this emulation, I think that research to be conducted with this research class is important. On the other hand, while drawing these conclusions, it is important to underline the awareness that the groups are not homogenous. As a result, it is critical not to interpret the findings as representing the behavior of the entire class, but rather to recognize that they only represent various projections.

Another significant aspect of this thesis and research is that it is one of the first studies in Turkey to discuss unpaid domestic labor and masculinities in the kitchen. As I mentioned before, the kitchen can give us very different insights into gender. Although there are separate studies on domestic labor, kitchen, food, and masculinities in Turkey, I think that this study, which looks at them together, will contribute to this gap. At the same time, the findings of this study may pave the way for future

research on the intersection of kitchen, masculinities, gender, and food. I think that further studies, especially on the themes that I was unable to deepen due to research limitations and which I will discuss in the following chapters, will contribute to this gap in the long term. For example, there is a need to replicate this study with men from diverse classes or men from diverse gender identities and orientations.

One of this study's other contributions to the literature is its emphasis on the debate on hybrid and inclusive masculinities without ignoring the debate on the agency. Considering that the theory of inclusive masculinities is frequently criticized as a European and American-centered theory, I think that a sample from Turkey contributes to this discussion. In the following sections, I will examine in depth how the arguments of these two theories, which are typically discussed by placing them at opposite poles, work in the specific case of the research participants. I hope that this analysis will contribute to ongoing discussions, particularly in non-European or non-American countries such as Turkey, where patriarchy is still prevalent. I do not claim that the participant group of the research is representative of Turkey. However, I think that the participant group whispers a general picture of Turkey in terms of the cities in which the participant group participated and the class the participant group belongs to. At the same time, one of the strong and multidimensional aspects of this research is that we discussed masculinities not only with men but also with women who share the same household. This allows us to see not only the constructed masculinities but also the direct or indirect reflections of these masculinities on women in greater detail. In particular, I think that the discussion I will have in the final chapters on the proliferation of attempts to push women back into the norm in society should be taken into account in this context.

## 2. COOKING A RESEARCH: METHODOLOGY, LIMITATIONS AND POSITIONALITY

### 2.1 Research Design

As outlined in the Introduction chapter, I organized the research design around the following four primary questions:

- "What does the kitchen tell us about gender equality?"
- "What motivates men to participate in kitchen and cooking-related activities?"
- "Which masculinities are constructed as a result of men's increased engagement with kitchen and cooking-related issues?"
- "How are masculinities challenged and transformed when men are more engaged in kitchen and cooking-related issues in the private space?"

In light of these concerns, I conceived of a plan for a qualitative field study that would investigate the dynamics of unpaid domestic labor in the context of the private space. This section describes my methodology, from participant selection to the qualitative data collection instruments I applied. As I focused my research on kitchens in the home, its design presented challenges, as do all studies that examine the private space. In this section, I will explain how I positioned private space in my research based on the conscious decisions I made in the field design.

#### 2.1.1 Selection of Participants

In my call for participants, I used three main criteria within the scope of my research. The first one was that the applicants had to identify themselves as men. Secondly,

I used a condition that the participants must be citizens of the Republic of Turkey. The fact that I received applications from people of a diverse range of nationalities who were currently residing in Turkey led me to indicate this requirement after the open call had already been issued, despite the fact that initially I did not consider I required it.

In the context of unpaid domestic labor, I wanted to investigate how men engage with the kitchens in their homes and the process of preparing food for themselves and their families. For this reason, I stated as my third set of criteria that the participants must have shared their residences with another person for an extended period of time. In this context, I stated that these individuals must have lived with their partner for at least two years. The 2-year limitation served two purposes here. The first objective is to ensure that people's household chore routines have been established and continue to be for some time. Thus, it would be easier to recognize the preferences, negotiations, conflicts, and compromises made by members of the household. The second goal was to observe that people had spent a significant amount of time together during the Covid-19 pandemic. This made it easier to understand the dynamics within households before, during, and after Covid-19.

Based on the basic criteria I mentioned above, I created a participant form. I disseminated the participant form I designed through the project's Facebook, Instagram, Linked In, and Twitter pages. I also utilized the advertising features of these social media platforms to extend the reach of these announcements beyond my private network. In this context, one of my goals was to gain an understanding of the demographics of the individuals who expressed interest in the call and then use that information as a component in my analysis of the information. I created the ad target group based on the characteristics I wanted the main target group of the research to have (man, living with a partner for at least two years, and interested in the kitchen) when creating ads on the relevant social media accounts. These targeted advertisements remained active throughout the fieldwork. Between November 2021 and September 2022, these targeted ads reached 196,813 people. In total, 1,878 people clicked on the registration link, and after excluding those outside the target group, a total of 134 potential participants registered. I asked participants for demographic information as well as whether their partners would be willing to participate in a potential interview via the form. I prioritized men whose partners were likely to be involved in potential interviews and sent interview invitations to participants. After five pilot interviews, I decided it would be beneficial to speak with the participants' partners as well, so I contacted sixteen participants' partners and conducted separate interviews with their consent. The main reason for this decision was to understand how the events described by the men I interviewed in their

households were observed by the other partner. For this, I was thinking of using a method called Kitchen Diaries and entering the private spaces of the participants, but when I interviewed the women participants, I realized in the pilot interviews that it would be useful to interview them directly instead of using a separate method for this.

### **2.1.2 Data Collection Tools**

Within the scope of this study, I selected qualitative semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method. By providing space to the participants, I intended to investigate the relationships they created in the context of the kitchen and food, particularly the division of labor within the home. In this context, I determined a fundamental interview flow and finalized it by considering the first five interviews to be pilot interviews. I can summarize the fundamental structure of the interviews in the following sections:

- Basic Demographic Details

In this section, I asked the participant to share demographic information about herself/himself and others in the household (education, income, age, etc.).

- Division of Household Chores

In this section, I asked participants to describe the activities that require unpaid labor in the household (laundry, ironing, cleaning, etc.), as well as who performs them and how frequently. I specifically asked them to categorize their favorite and least favorite tasks.

- Stages of Cooking

In this section, I talked with the participants how each stage of the food preparation process - tracking the refrigerator, shopping, deciding on the food to be cooked for the day, cooking the food, collecting the dishes, and disposing of the garbage - occurs in their households under the current circumstances.

- Personal History with Kitchen and Food

In this section, I showed the chart you can see in Figure 3 to the participants. Through this visual, we discussed how they interacted with the kitchen during the four major phases of their lives (childhood-çocukluk, adolescence-ergenlik, university years-öğrencilik, and the present-günümüz) as well as other key players (mother, father, siblings, etc.). I asked them to rank them from the person

with the strongest relationship (5 points) to the kitchen to the person with the weakest relationship (1 point). Thus, I had the opportunity to discuss the variation in their relationship with the kitchen and their social environment. Figure 2.1 and 2.2 shows sample charts that we filled in with one of the participants.

Figure 2.1 Personal History with Kitchen and Food Chart (Blank)

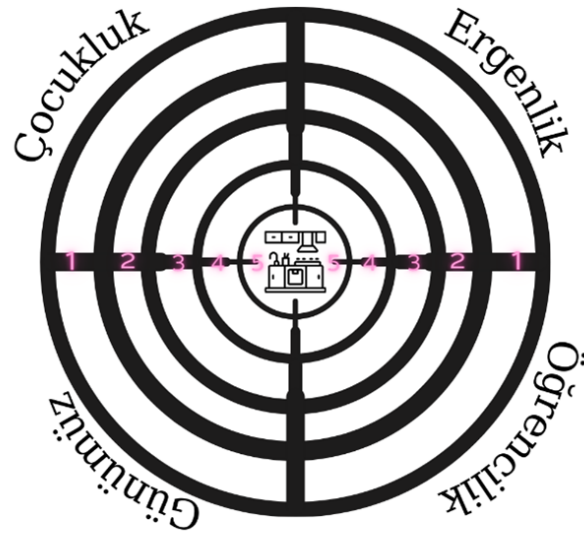
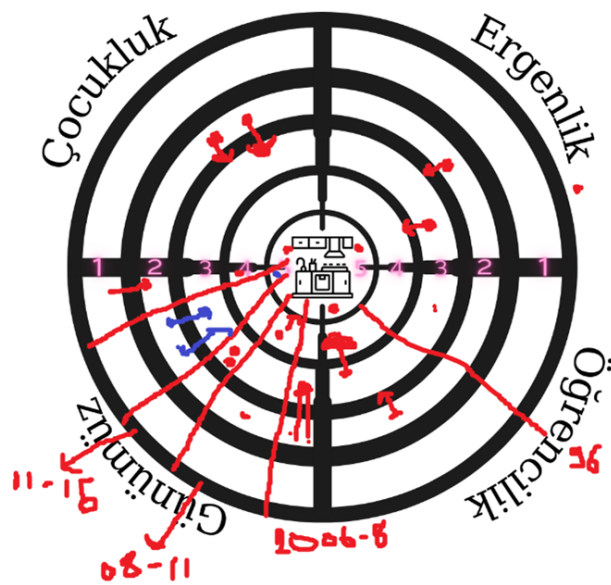


Figure 2.2 Personal History with Kitchen and Food Chart (Filled)



- Food in the Media

In this section, we discussed influential celebrity chefs and cooking shows that people regularly watch.

- Defining Gender Equality

In this section, I raised the fixed question, "What does gender equality mean to you?" to the participants.

I frequently restructured this main flow based on the responses of the participants, changing the order of the themes or adding new questions. In accordance with the preference of the participants, I conducted all of the interviews via video on the online platform Zoom. I simultaneously recorded all interviews with both verbal and written consent. I had originally intended to conduct interviews only with men participants, but I also interviewed the partners of some of these men in order to understand the intra-household reflections of the men's narratives, how their partners perceive these narratives, and how intra-household dynamics are formed. All participants attended from their own homes. I told the participants at the beginning of the interview that it would be good not to have anyone else in the room during the interview. Only 3 men participated in the interview in the living room, while their spouses entered these rooms in between and stayed for various periods of time. I did not intervene in this situation in order not to disrupt the flow at home. When interviewing the women participants, none of their partners were in the same room. All interviews lasted between fifty and ninety-five minutes. The audio recordings were transcribed by project assistants in a manner that maintained the participants' anonymity. The data started to repeat between the 40th and 46th interviews. Therefore, I completed my research in 51 interviews by conducting 5 more control interviews.

In order to make this research more in-depth, I used a second qualitative data collection tool called Kitchen Diaries in addition to the semi-structured interviews. I intended to conduct a diary study with the participants who voluntarily participated in the interviews in order to gain a deeper understanding of the intra-household dynamics that I could not obtain or that remained superficial in the interviews. This is because, when conducting research on the private space, people may resist allowing the researcher into this space and may not want to provide information in sufficient depth as they consider it private. As a result, interviews alone may be insufficient, and participants may not be able to establish enough trust during the interview to provide information about a private space (Bell 1997; Edwards and Ribbens 1997). As a result, I selected Kitchen Diaries as part of a search for different

tools to extend contact with participants and understand their relationship with the kitchen and food in various contexts.

The Kitchen Diaries was essentially a data collection tool in which participants were encouraged to keep diaries about their experiences in the kitchen and food that day. I informed the interviewees about the Kitchen Diaries as soon as the interview was finished, explaining that this study was separate from the interviews and that participation was voluntary. In a private online space, I asked the participants to write about what they did, ate, or thought/felt about the kitchen or food on a daily basis. They could write every day in the evening, or they could collect diaries kept elsewhere (for example, in a physical notebook) and share them later through this online space. I also explained that, in addition to writing, visual materials such as videos and photographs could be freely shared. Because this would be a new type of work for the participants, I did not set a minimum or maximum number of days, but I did tell them that a diary of about 10 days would be ideal.

There were 20 participants who agreed to participate in the semi-structured interviews as well as the Kitchen Diaries voluntarily. However, gathering enough data to include in the analysis proved extremely difficult. As a result, the data I obtained as part of the Kitchen Diaries is not included in the analysis. In the following section, I will go over these issues in detail.

### **2.1.3 Profile of Participants**

Semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection tool for this study. Following the call, I created a pool of potential participants and sent interview invitations to this pool at regular intervals. In this context, I conducted 51 semi-structured interviews. Figure 2.3 Gender Distribution shows the participants' gender distribution, Figure 2.4 Occupation Distribution shows the general distribution of their professions, Figure 2.5 Relationship Duration shows the number of years they have been married or with their partners, Figure 2.6 City Distribution shows the cities they lived in during the interview period, and Figure 2.7 Date of Birth shows the participants' dates of birth.



Figure 2.3 Gender Distribution

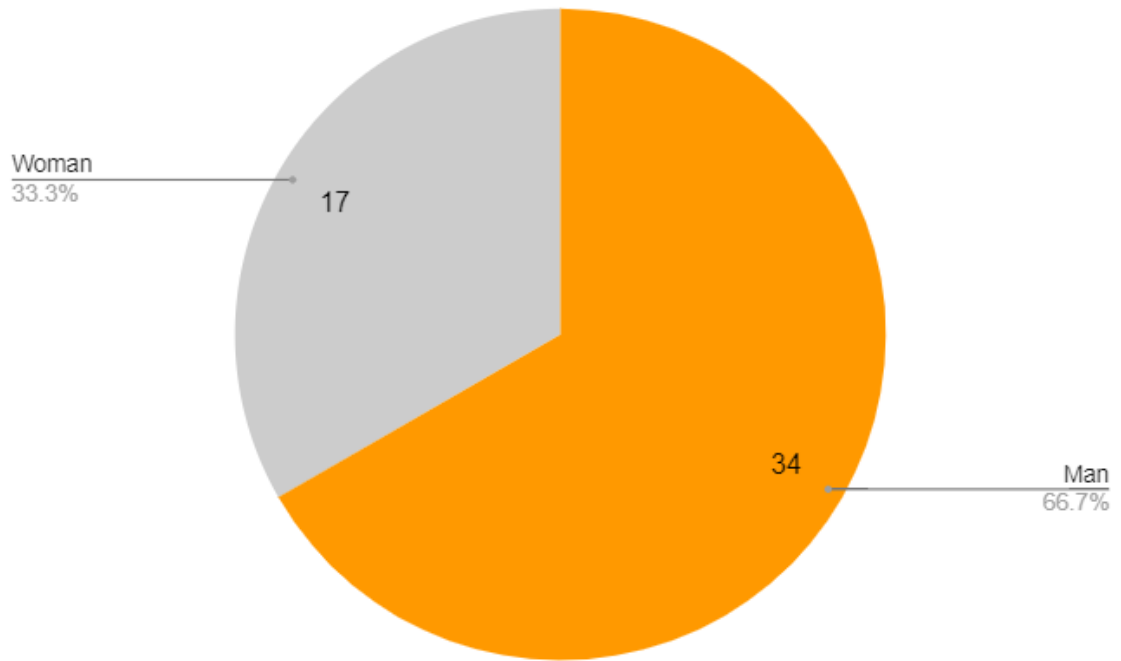


Figure 2.4 Occupation Distribution

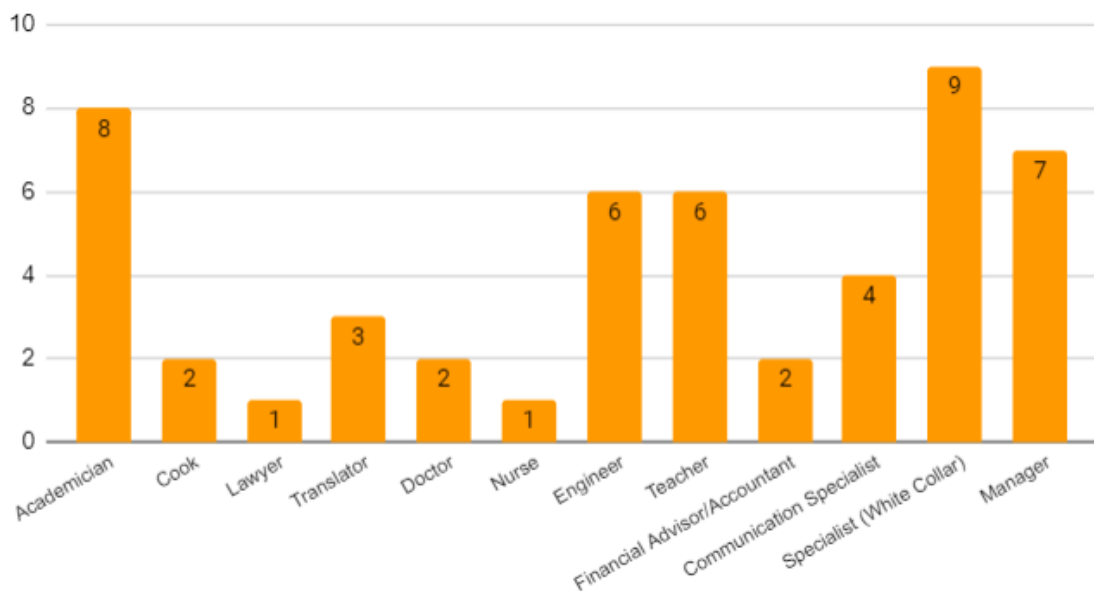


Figure 2.5 Relationship Duration

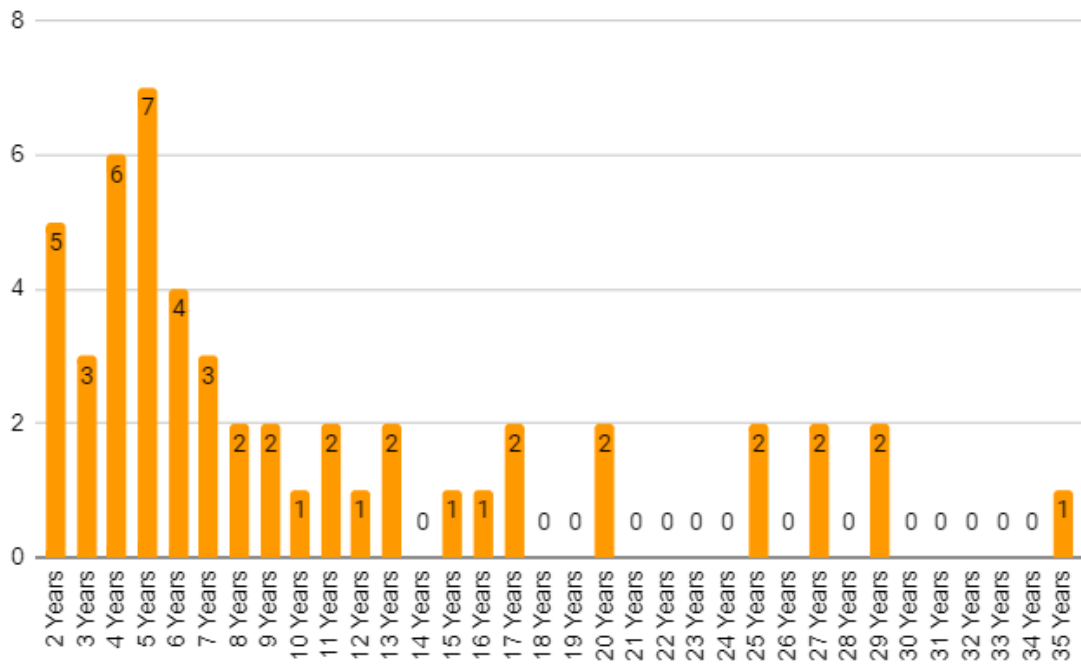


Figure 2.6 City Distribution

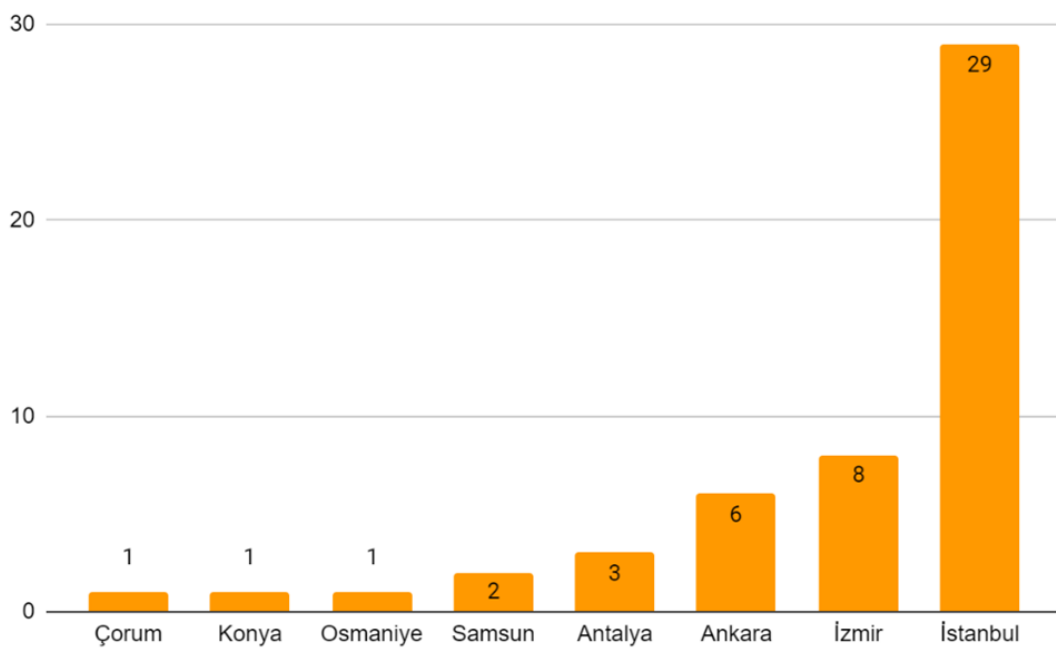


Figure 2.7 Date of Birth

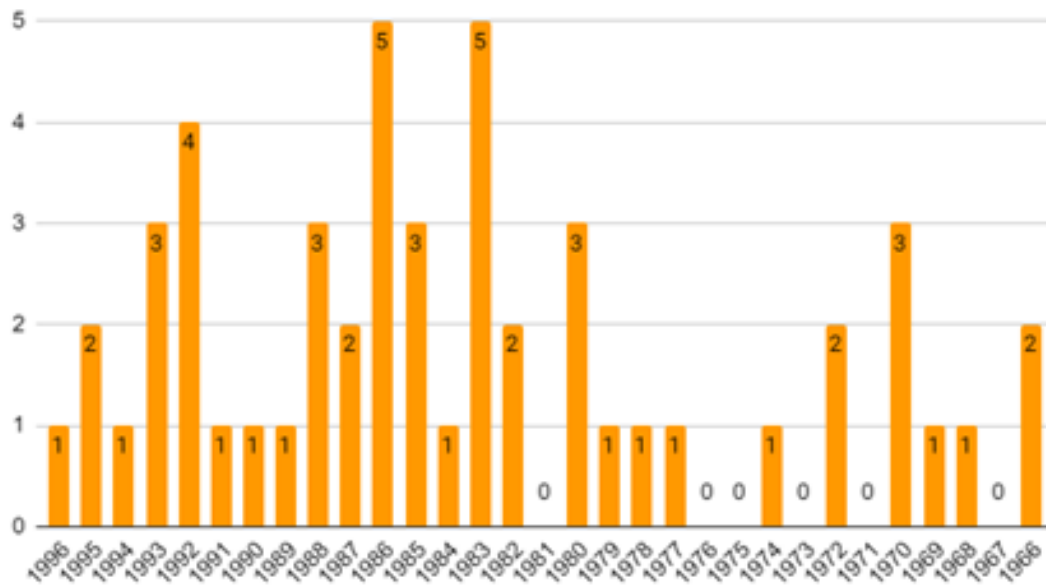
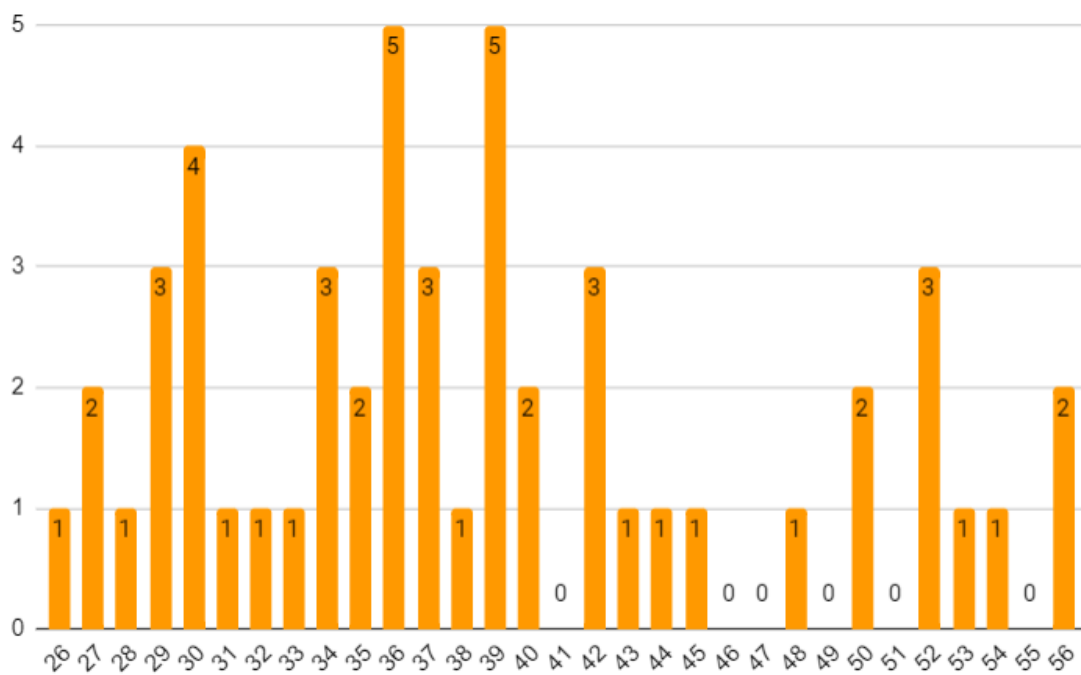


Figure 2.8 Participants' age at the time of the interview



### 2.1.4 Data Analysis

In order to systematically evaluate the research findings, I went through a multi-step analysis process. In this context, I first followed Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis steps. Braun and Clarke propose six fundamental steps/phases for thematic

analysis (2006). These steps and my actions within the scope of these steps can be summarized as follows:

- Phase 1: Familiarizing yourself with your data

The process of becoming familiar with 51 interviews lasting 50-95 minutes each was challenging. Taking notes during and after the interviews was necessary to refresh my memory in this context. During the time that the project assistants were transcribing the interviews, I frequently re-listened to the recordings and read the transcripts alongside the recordings to ensure that the transcripts were of comparable quality. A total of 1598 pages of transcripts were produced by the end of the day. Editing and importing these transcripts into MaxQDA, a tool for qualitative data analysis, greatly helped in my familiarization with the data.

- Phase 2: Generating initial codes

Reading the data multiple times and taking notes during and after the interviews assisted me in developing the fundamental codes. Since I chose the path of theoretical thematic analysis, which is one of the paths mentioned by Braun and Clarke (2006), the insights I gained from the Critical Masculinity Studies literature were particularly helpful in the creation of these fundamental codes.

- Phase 3: Searching for themes

After organizing the codes and examining their relationships with each other, I started to identify my main themes. In total, 9 main themes emerged: Feelings towards housework, Meaning of Food, Motivations for Everyday Cooking, Ceremonies of Hosting Guests, Relationship with the Social Environment, Experiencing the Kitchen as a Space, Practices of Cooking Together in the Kitchen, Changes in Cooking Habits, and Women's Experiences when Men are in the Kitchen.

- Phase 4: Reviewing themes

I worked on the data one more time to ensure that the codes under the themes I obtained were compatible with the themes and to simplify the themes. I created two sub-themes under the theme of Changing Cooking Habits: Covid-19 and Having Children.

- Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

I evaluated each theme in its own context as well as in relation to other themes. I took note of these preliminary findings and prepared outlines for each theme.

- Phase 6: Producing the report

I created a narrative by combining the theoretical literature and the intersections of the themes. At the end of the day, this is how the thesis' skeleton emerged.

In addition to this coding for thematic analysis, I created a separate coding to understand how each participant perceived the flow I followed in the interviews. In this context, I extracted common themes to code the similarities and differences in food-related experiences such as refrigerator tracking, shopping, and cooking. Similarly, I used common themes to code the similarities and differences in how people relate to the kitchen and food at different stages of their lives. Finally, I used common codes to code the similarities and differences in the participants' perspectives on chefs and programs/competitions that are visible in the media. Since these themes were directly included in the flow of the interview, I did not include them directly in the thematic analysis, taking into account the warnings of Braun and Clarke (2006). However, during the thematic analysis, I used the themes generated by these codes to deepen the analysis and add multidimensionality. For example, in this way, I was able to make sense of the participant's conflicts about sharing the kitchen with the actors in the participant's personal life story.

It can be difficult to check the validity and reliability of qualitative research. At this point, various ways can be followed to protect the depth of data analysis and avoid bias. Triangulation is one of these ways, which is often preferred in qualitative research (Carter et al. 2014; Flick 2004). Triangulation can basically be defined as observing the research from at least two different angles (Thurmond 2001). In this context, four different ways of triangulation are discussed in the literature: methods triangulation, triangulation of sources, analyst triangulation, and theory/perspective triangulation (Fusch, Fusch, and Ness 2018; Patton 1999). Within the scope of this research, I tried to do methods triangulation with interviews and kitchen diaries, but I could not achieve methods triangulation because the output of the kitchen diaries was not as deep as I expected. Since this research is a doctoral thesis, analyst triangulation was also something I could not do technically. Because of the nature of this doctoral thesis, I had to ensure the collection and interpretation of data as a single researcher. However, I think I made significant progress in the areas of triangulation of sources and theory/perspective triangulation. Especially the fact that I followed the same theme with semi-structured in-depth interviews with both men and women participants from the same households strengthened this research in terms of triangulation of sources. Similarly, this research also has strengths in terms of theory/perspective triangulation since I utilized theories of both inclusive and hybrid masculinities while designing the field and

analyzing the data I obtained. The fact that I achieved triangulation in at least two contexts enabled me to analyze the data of this research in more depth and with a broader perspective. Regarding the different results that can be encountered when working with triangulation, Patton points out the following sentences:

“Different kinds of data may yield somewhat different results because different types of inquiry are sensitive to different real-world nuances. Finding such inconsistencies ought not be viewed as weakening the credibility of results, but rather as offering opportunities for deeper insight into the relationship between inquiry approach and the phenomenon under study.” (Patton 1999, 1193).

With this caveat in mind, I have continued to maintain this multi-layeredness in my data coding and analysis, focusing not only on common patterns but also on exceptions and inconsistencies. In this way, I have tried to capture as much real-world nuance as possible.

### **2.1.5 Research Ethics and Turning Research into a “Project”**

Throughout my research, academic ethical rules were my top priority. As I focused specifically on participants’ experiences of private space within the household, I had to pay special attention to ethical rules in order to collect data without jeopardizing the dynamics within the household for both participants. In this context, I first requested ethical approval from the Sabancı University Research Ethics Committee before the project began in June 2021, and I began fieldwork after receiving ethical approval under the code FASS-2021-64. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and I obtained informed consent forms from each participant. Although I interviewed each partner separately, I listened to some information off the record if they felt it was necessary, but I did not include it in the research data. Again, because I interviewed the partners separately, I was extra concerned about data anonymization, so I tried to keep the partners from discovering each other’s interview data as much as possible. As a result, rather than providing detailed demographic information about the participants, I present a summary in this thesis.

Throughout the study, I kept the personal information of the volunteer participants private in separate files. All of the data was saved in such a way that I had complete access and project assistants, who continued to assist me throughout the project, had limited access. The only access the project assistants had was to transcribe the interviews. Because all participants agreed to take part in the study online, no

separate physical material containing personal data was created. I gave digital gift vouchers to participants at the end of each study they participated in to increase the number of voluntary participants. To avoid any ethical issues, I gave these vouchers to everyone who participated rather than a specific number of people.

The fact that my fieldwork was so extensive, the hiring of project assistants who assisted me with transcriptions, and the provision of enough gift vouchers for all participants were all made possible by the TÜBİTAK 1002 program's support. This research was completed on time and with sufficient scope thanks to the project, which was funded under the code 121K698.

### **2.1.6 Limitations**

When discussing the results of this study, it will be essential to acknowledge the limitations that emerged during the participant selection process and to evaluate them in light of these limitations. The first of these limitations concerned the gender identity and sexual orientation of the participants. I expanded my call so that it would be sufficient for people to only state that they are men. However, I only had 2 participants who stated in the application form that they had trans men experience. I could not include these two people in the participant group because I had at least one contact with them in my personal or professional life. Similarly, I excluded other cisgender men I know from my personal and professional lives. This research is a study in which I tried to map the participants' domestic lives. For this reason, I did not want to have prior knowledge about the people. In cases where I included people I knew, I was afraid that the participants might leave various gaps in this mapping, thinking that I knew certain topics. In this way, I tried to protect the nature of each interview as a new field of discovery from beginning to end by making such a selection.

None of the people included in the participant group stated that they had trans experience. Therefore, this study provides data on the experiences of cisgender men as a participant group. At the same time, in my call for participants, I stated that being married was not required and that people living as partners could apply to the study. Besides that, I did not include a requirement that people's partnership relationships be heterosexual. However, as with gender identity, my open call in terms of sexual orientation also resulted in various limitations in participant group. All of the participants were continuing their relationships with people who identified as women. It would be impossible to call them all heterosexual at this point. I did not ask people about their statements because I did not interview people on

the basis of sexual orientation in terms of the subject of the research. However, based on the information available, I can state that a house where two people with man self-identification share the same household is not included in this study. On the other hand, despite this limitation, this study enabled me to reveal important findings on masculinities constructed in home kitchens. In this respect, this research stands in an important place as one of the first steps. The findings of this research, which mostly included cis and hetero people as participants, can be expanded to include other gender identities and sexual orientations. At this point, it should not be forgotten that masculinities are not only produced by cis-hetero men, on the contrary, masculinities can also be produced or reproduced by people of other gender identities and sexual orientations. In particular, the continuity or transformation of gender roles through constructed or reproduced masculinities is not something that concerns only cis-hetero men or that emerges only through their actions. For these reasons, conducting this research again with people of other gender identities or sexual orientations will yield potentially different results and diversify the knowledge in the field.

The socioeconomic status of the participants constituted the second major limitation of my study. During the time I conducted the research, Turkey was experiencing a severe economic crisis, which was felt more and more profoundly as the research progressed. At the same time, Turkey's political environment and the policies of the government for the last 20 years are other reasons that increase the uncertainty between the classes. Due to the crisis conditions and political climate in Turkey, it was extremely challenging to classify the respondents according to their household economies at the time of this study. Since the blurring of the distinctions between the lower, lower-middle, middle, and middle-upper classes during this time period, even the participants had difficulty identifying their own class. For this reason, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, while trying to determine the class of my participant group, I tried to follow a parallel path with the classification made by Ural and Beşpınar 2017 using the concepts of "similar conditions of existence" and "similar dispositions" with reference to Bourdieu. In similar to the variables that they selected, I also tried to make this determination using different types of capital, such as the level of education, the family background, the neighborhood, the number of incomes entering the household, the type of professional work done, and the seniority in the profession, but I did this on a household basis rather than on an individual one. Based on this, I was able to conclude that the participant group consisted of middle-class or even upper-middle class people. This is because the majority of participants were white-collar, mid-career, had spent a certain amount of time in their professions, had risen to middle management or were waiting to



be promoted, had multiple incomes in their households, often living in middle- or high-income neighborhoods and were all university graduates. For this reason, it is important to note that the focus of this research is on the middle and upper-middle classes. It would be important to conduct this study with low-income men in particular. Especially in groups with lower levels of education and economic standing, a different picture would emerge. On the participant form, I also inquired about participants' occupations. The fact that all applicants are employed in white-collar positions requiring a university degree may provide a clue in this regard when I review their responses. The fact that this profile responded to the call for men interested in cooking, while other profiles did not respond at all, suggests that other socioeconomic groups may have very different experiences.

Another limitation of the study was the cities in which the participants resided. The majority of participants came from major cities such as Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir. When I look at the pool of other applicants who were not able to participate in the study, I see the same picture, which is a situation that arose on its own after the call for participants, such as occupation and socioeconomic level. Again, research focusing on the experiences of people living in various small cities would expand on the findings of this study. Based on the current outputs, I predict that the situation of society attempting to bring those who behave outside the norm back into the norm, which I will frequently mention within the scope of this research, may be different and stronger in small cities.

The age distribution of the participants is the final limitation that I think is important to mention. A significant proportion of the participants I interviewed for the study ranged in age from 25 to 45. They had been with their partners for a period of 2 to 15 years. This limitation could be attributed to the fact that I publicized the participant search announcements on social media. This age distribution may have emerged as a result of young people being more technologically literate. This study's findings could be expanded by conducting similar ones with different age groups. This current study will be advanced in particular by analyzing generational differences and tracing the origins of observed changes.

## **2.2 Backstory of the Research and the Positionality of Researcher**

“Situating yourself (“here I am”)” (Davis 2014). I cannot express how grateful I am to Kathy Davis for this sentence. Because this sentence was the sentence that allowed me to find myself in the field of gender studies. This section of the chapter is a

synopsis of the diaries I kept for myself while conducting research. This study is the result of five years of curiosity. In this journey of discovery, the process she refers to as Theory Journals has broadened my horizons (Davis 2014). Situating myself was one of the most important steps in the theory diaries. This sentence, which appeared to be a minor detail at first, assisted me in navigating a course and then the entire thesis. The diaries I kept throughout my thesis became the answer to the question "Where am I in this thesis?". It also assisted me in comprehending the connection between theory and my research. I have to admit that the literature review part of this thesis follows exactly the flow of a (boring) Ph.D. thesis theory chapter as criticized by Davis. In reality, however, there is a story behind the patterns she recommends. This chapter describes how these diaries are interwoven with the research itself. Similarly, in this section, I discuss my own position as a researcher. Since the story of the research and the researcher often intertwine, I describe in this chapter the transformations that both my research and I underwent throughout the process. Thus, I think you will be better able to comprehend how the story behind the findings chapters you will read unfolds and how I fit into this story.

Coming from a political science background, having previously worked in a narrow intersection of different fields such as migration, health, and civil society, and not being very good with theories, it was a challenging decision to become involved in gender studies. It was a very exhausting process to dive deep into all the theories from scratch, to wonder about particular aspects of these theories, to develop this curiosity, and to produce a research project as a result. During this time, I bounced back and forth between numerous topics, such as the health of women migrants, the migration of transgender people during the gender adjustment process, and gender dynamics among roommates. It was a time when I endeavored to follow in the footsteps of "theory stars" (Davis 2014) and create a new niche in the field. For me, writing a doctoral dissertation meant making room for that time period. Talking about food with Fulya, my friend from the same Ph.D. cohort in the Gender Studies program, brought order to this chaos. We had just returned from a Şirin Tekeli Conference where we had spent the entire day thinking about gender. We talked from Karaköy Minerva Han until we got off the Kadıköy ferry. This discussion focused on my interest in the kitchen and food-related issues. Fulya expressed surprise that a man was interested in the kitchen and expressed gratitude. This surprised me because I did not think that even in the small community where we "dared to" challenge gender norms, this was considered an exception. This conversation would have likely been framed in terms of responsibilities and obligations if it had occurred between two women. Many of the questions she asked me throughout the classes

we took together were transformative for me, but the questions she asked me about my interest in food were unique and illuminating.

Consuming food is one of the daily activities I must perform. And yet, as a man, was it truly so fascinating that I was so interested in preparing the food I would consume? Was it really that important to be compared to other men and to be positioned differently than them in this regard? Was it truly admirable that a man was preparing food, a task that billions of women perform every day? These inquiries were noted in my journal. And after a long journey, as Kathy Davis points out, a theory and my life intersected.

Cynthia Enloe's discussion of "feminist curiosity" was another impetus for this research (Enloe 2004, 2016). My personal experience and the theory intersected with Enloe's (2004; 2016) advice to "pay attention to what is considered 'trivial'" and "pay attention to what is considered 'normal'." The fact that men's lack of interest in the kitchen is considered normal, while men who are interested in the kitchen are considered exceptional, triggered my feminist curiosity that Enloe mentions. This curiosity led me to the intersection of diverse topics, including the kitchen, food, gender, and masculinities.

As a cisgender man, I must admit that I, too, have benefited from the patriarchal order's privileged position. I thought that for many years that the compliments I received for my relationship with food came solely from the food I prepared. I did not recognize the underlying complexity of gender relations. While conducting this research, speaking with both men and women was a crucial factor in helping me recognize my privileged position. I received as many compliments as the men I interviewed. I enjoyed the acclaim that accompanied this privileged position. However, as I interviewed their partners, I began to see the other side of the coin, which I had not seen in my own life (or made no effort to see). While my normal relationship with the kitchen was praised more than it should have been, many of the women around me were subjected to comments such as "He does it as a man and you do not do it as a woman. How shameful." as I encountered in the interviews. This was not normal at all, but because it was considered normal, it became invisible. No matter how much you work on gender equality, the privileged positions provided by the patriarchal order have become so normal that you have to make an effort to see them.

On the other hand, the limitations that I stated occurred due to the demographic characteristics of the participant group (such as age or socio-economic background) turned out to be an advantage. Due to the fact that my demographic characteristics were similar to theirs, I was able to communicate with more people and to have more

insightful exchanges. If I had been a member of a different group, it would have been possible to see things differently, but it would have been difficult to conduct such in-depth interviews. Consequently, the advantages provided by demographic overlap were foregrounded in this instance.

Before writing this thesis, this research followed numerous paths. My engagement with my own life, my efforts to position myself, my acceptance of my privileged position, and the accompanying transformation efforts were the most significant.

Another significant step was introducing my research topic as a two-semester project course at Sabancı University. I opened a course with a joke from the 1990s: "İsmail, is there anyone in the kitchen?" Within the scope of this course, I was expected to assist and guide the students as they conducted research on the course's topic. After the course topic was announced, each semester more than a hundred students sent me emails expressing their desire to enroll. This was both a responsibility and a pleasure for me. For me, teaching this course for two semesters with a total of 30 students was a life-changing experience. We produced and pursued feminist curiosities with the students on a variety of topics, ranging from the relationship between food and masculinity in advertisements to the gender-based experiences of gastronomy students. Even though it was not directly related to my topic (because I did not want them to study my topic directly for ethical reasons), I learned new knowledge about numerous topics that are related to my topic. This allowed me to dive deep into my own research.

Another important path the thesis took was to turn my thesis research into a TÜBİTAK 1002 project. Both the project design and the field stages after the project was accepted made this thesis possible. Thanks to this support, I had the chance to reach wider groups. In particular, thanks to this support, I have accessed tools such as social media advertisements. These tools have enabled me to reach a wider group with my call.

This personally transformative journey also influenced the methodology of my research. My initial intention was to follow in the footsteps of theory stars through a multidimensional and exhaustive study. I intended to investigate the connection between food and masculinity through cooking, consuming, and presenting food. However, due to the jury's warnings, I did not undertake such a large project. This is how I realized that studies that may be the first in a field do not always need to cover all aspects, and that I can make a significant contribution to the field by examining a single aspect with the appropriate feminist curiosity.

I adopted a semi-structured approach when planning the interviews. I prepared questions flow based on my areas of interest. It took five pilot interviews for my questions to find the flow that was described in the previous section. For instance, I anticipated that media associations with food would occupy a much larger space, but I was able to go into much less depth than anticipated. This demonstrated how varied individuals' associations with food and the kitchen can be. In this way, I was reminded that the manner in which I, as a cisgender man, experience the kitchen is not necessarily shared by my interviewees. This realization had a transformative effect on me, allowing me to create a more comfortable environment for them to express their unique experiences.

The use of Kitchen Diaries presented the greatest challenge in terms of the research methodology. When I was designing the research, the Kitchen Diaries were one of the things I was most excited and optimistic about. I planned to examine men's relationship with the kitchen and food by adapting a diary-keeping technique frequently encountered in feminist research. At the same time, I thought that people might not be able to give all the details if they were performing during the interview, and that I could bypass this issue by collecting data over a longer period of time as opposed to all at once with the help of Kitchen Diaries. It seemed logical to conduct a study in which domestic dynamics could be explained more easily and the participant had more time. I described the Kitchen Diary study to the interviewees and invited them to participate. The number of participants who volunteered was very high. I requested that they share their daily interactions with the kitchen and food in text, audio, or video via the Telegram channels I created for them. Although the initial few messages were easily received, maintaining continuity was extremely challenging. It was also extremely challenging to obtain detailed information from the participants. The majority of them were posting images of food. Some of my users utilized this channel as a recipe book, posting recipe links at irregular intervals. Very few of the participants provided me with the specific information I requested. For this reason, I do not use the data derived from the Kitchen Diaries method when discussing the research data.

At the end of my Kitchen Diary journey, I was left with few options for learning more about the men's stories. Interviewing the men's partners was one of these options. I received a lot of feedback from women, especially when I was spreading the invitations to the research through various social media tools. Women who claimed their partners were interested in the kitchen or had never been interested in the kitchen sent me messages requesting interviews with their partners. Those whose partners were involved in the kitchen emphasized their partner's exceptional personality, whereas those whose partners were never involved in the kitchen requested

that I investigate how this situation could be changed. In fact, this situation showed the value of communicating with both men and their partners. The detailed information I was expecting from the Kitchen Diaries could have come directly from inside the house, from their partners. I was initially drawn to the Kitchen Diaries study because it was difficult for two people from the same household to devote a long period of time, such as 90 minutes, to interviews. However, as I looked for participants, I realized that this was pointless. Participants who wanted to participate as a couple outnumbered those who wanted to participate individually.

I think that the process of data coding was equally transformative for my thesis as the other processes. The flow I designed for the semi-structured interviews assisted me in the process of coding. Reading 1598 pages of data multiple times and dealing with over 6600 coded fields had an impact on my relationship with the data. While I think the data to be highly parallel to the basic flow of the semi-structured interviews, I discovered patterns of various dynamics that continued to conceal themselves behind the ordinary. Each major code group was telling its own unique story. This makes me feel as though I am performing a feminist harvest of feminist curiosity, for which I was initially inspired by a reference to Cynthia Enloe (2004; 2016). I have reached the conclusion of a research project that I began based on Enloe's advice to "pay attention to what is considered 'trivial'" and "pay attention to what is considered 'normal'", that I wondered about based on my own life, and that at the end of the day also made me question my own life. Specifically, the privileges patriarchy provides to men, which I have mentioned in this chapter and from which I have unintentionally benefited, have become apparent to me. This dissertation will be the most fruitful harvest of this research. I think that this study will generate new feminist curiosities in both myself and others who read it, as well as pave the way for future valuable research.

I would like to conclude by discussing a theme that will recur throughout this thesis. In the field of Critical Masculinity Studies, the amount of knowledge produced is growing. I created the topic of this study by combining this knowledge with my own experiences. Focusing on people's experiences is like trying to complete a puzzle that will never be completed. Each study in the field functions as a puzzle piece. Each of them contributes significantly to the field. Some studies combine to form larger, more meaningful wholes. When we think we understand the picture that may emerge at the end of the puzzle, a piece comes along that causes the entire meaning to be reconstructed. One of these puzzle pieces is this thesis. This thesis, which I wrote to fill in the gaps in the other pieces, will never reflect the experiences of all people. It tries to piece together the patterns in its own universe to form a meaningful whole. This thesis might not fit with the pieces it has today, but it will fit somewhere

else, or it will be discovered years later that it is no longer a part of this picture at all; it will grow old and fade away. There are currently very limited, if at all, academic works dealing with the intersections of masculinities, and food in Turkey. I hope that this thesis, which will be one of the first in this field, will be followed by numerous other studies that examine various groups through intersectional lenses. As time passes, we will be able to see different and larger pictures in this field. As a result, rather than producing a thesis that claims to remain in the same place in the same way from today to tomorrow, I tried to formulate a thesis that brings the emotions of the participants to the forefront and tries to describe the subject it looks at in a much deeper, diverse, and colorful way.

### 3. LOOKING AT GENDER INEQUALITIES FROM HOME KITCHENS

Kitchen and food contexts constitute an ideal setting for examining gender inequalities. Regarding professional kitchens, it has been extensively argued in the literature that professional kitchens have traditionally been male-dominated spaces (Druckman 2010; Harris and Giuffre 2010, 2015; Kurnaz, Kurtuluş, and Kılıç 2018; Steno and Friche 2015). In domestic kitchens, i.e. kitchens within the home, the situation is reversed. The ways in which women relate to the kitchen in their private spaces may vary from woman to woman. It is discussed in the literature that home kitchens are often seen as women's spaces due to gender norms. When we examine the literature, we find that kitchens in the private space for women are primarily a space for carrying out activities necessary for the feeding of household members, but it is also a space where memory and remembering practices occur, which can provide a platform for discussions in extremely broad contexts (Cairns, Johnston, and Baumann 2010; Counihan 2012; DeVault 1994; Engelhardt 2001; Haukanes 2007; Holtzman 2006).

Where are the men in these private space kitchens? The social norms that assign women the responsibility of household feeding do not apply to men. In the majority of societies, men have minimal responsibilities in the kitchen. When examining these norm-imposed responsibilities and inequalities, it would not be incorrect to say that men benefit from this system of inequality. Considering the privileged space that has been designated for them, there must be significant motivators to get them into the kitchen. According to some research, this motivation can include cooking meat (Aarseth and Olsen 2008; Carpar 2020; Counihan 2012; Sobal 2005; Sumpter 2015), as well as hobbies or special nutrition for sports (Gough 2006, 2007; Naguib 2015; Sloan, Gough, and Conner 2010; Stibbe 2004).

To rephrase my question, in what contexts are men involved in routine cooking processes in order to provide the daily nutrition required for life? Are men present in private kitchens in order to share the household's responsibilities? Locating the



answers to these questions resembles a game of "Where is Wally?" in the kitchen. Consequently, within the scope of this study, I began by asking the participants how they experienced the kitchen processes and identifying a number of patterns. I compare this procedure to the game "Where is Wally?" because, when it comes to cooking, nearly everyone, regardless of gender, frequently recalls the time they spent in front of the stove. A small number of participants, on the other hand, thought ahead when they considered cooking and began with preparation before placing the pan on the stove. This was a similar pattern to the game "Where is Wally?" in which players exclaim, "Oh, I found Wally!" whenever they see a person wearing red. Is preparing a family dinner really a matter of seconds at the stove? For example, suppose we are making lasagna for dinner. At this time, I would like to pose a series of questions about making lasagna:

- Is it enough to prepare lasagna by making a sauce, layering it between lasagna sheets, baking it, and then taking it out of the oven?
- Is deciding to make lasagna tonight (rather than last night or tomorrow night) considered preparation?
- Does preparing lasagna entails considering whether there is leftover food in the fridge after deciding to make it?
- Does making lasagna entail keeping track of where the lasagna sheets are and purchasing them from the store if they are unavailable?
- Does it include knowing the lactose intolerance of the people in the house, and if someone is lactose intolerant, making a béchamel sauce with lactose-free milk? Or if there is a vegetarian-vegan person, is it included in making lasagna to source ingredients accordingly?
- Does making lasagna include setting the table and cleaning up the mess made while making the lasagna sauces?
- Does making lasagna include planning and preparing what to eat and drink with it?
- Is putting the leftovers in the fridge and the dishes in the dishwasher part of making lasagna?
- Does making lasagna include collecting the leftovers and disposing of them at the end of the day?

As a reader, you may find it strange that a Ph.D. thesis in gender studies should mention lasagna so much. It is also possible that you are wondering why I chose

lasagna as an example. No, I did not choose lasagna because of its symbolic meaning of the layers that make up the social structure. It is just that I am planning on making lasagna two days after I finish writing this text! These questions are steps that are in line with the nature of the work for someone who cooks on a regular basis, often without thinking. If you are involved in the day-to-day food preparation of your household, you know that most of the time you do not ask yourself "Is anyone in the household lactose intolerant?". Many of these questions are part of the concept of "mental load", which I will discuss in detail in the following section. In other words, you are doing many of these steps unconsciously, or someone else is doing them on your behalf without you or them realizing it.

In conclusion, preparing food is a more complex and multi-step process than we might assume. If we are to look for the relationship between gender inequalities and men in the kitchen, I argue that we must examine each layer and step in greater detail. For this reason, I devoted a small portion of each interview to the six steps of cooking. Thus, I try to comprehend how men and women who claim to be interested in food perceive these steps. I discussed a structured routine as much as possible, given that household routines may vary. We followed these six steps: Fridge Tracking, Shopping, Choosing the Food to be Consumed, Food Preparation, Dishes and Cleaning, and Garbage. In order to determine how each action was performed in individual households, I inquired as to which member of the household usually performed each action.

I identify six steps of cooking, which will serve as the background for my subsequent analyses. This snapshot will be more descriptive than the thesis' other sections. My main aim here is to give the reader a general picture of the kitchens of the households I interviewed before discussing my findings. We have numerous encounters with the intersection of home kitchens, food, and gender issues in our daily lives. There are many narratives that we encounter while sharing a house with our partners or that we hear from other couples, even if we do not share a house with anyone. Many of us will be familiar with narratives such as "I clean the kitchen, he or she cooks," "If I do not tidy up, it will be like a war zone in the kitchen in two days," or "While I cook, he or she will definitely help make the salad." This section's goal is to report on these encounters and show how the picture we see through individual windows is visualized in a group of 51 people. In this way, I hope my subsequent analyses I will present in the following chapters on home kitchens, food, and gender will be more comprehensible.

## 3.1 Six Steps of Cooking

### 3.1.1 Fridge Tracking

In this section, I will frequently refer back to the lasagna example to illustrate the interdependencies between the various steps. I will begin with step one, which is tracking the fridge. Therefore, I will start by asking this question: *Are there lasagna sheets to cook tonight in the fridge?*

The majority of my research participants associate meal preparation with the processes of chopping and cooking the ingredients for a complete meal. That the dinner's adventure consists of several phases was frequently overlooked. Prior to gathering the ingredients for the meal on the stove, which is the first thing that comes to mind for the participants, the necessary ingredients must be stored in the fridge. Consequently, cooking a meal is not a momentary action, but rather a prolonged process. As with this and all the other steps, these tasks are typically performed and supervised by a household member in the majority of interviewed households. However, when it comes to keeping track of the fridge, the majority of people are unaware of this work and may not even realize they are performing it. In fact, this is similar to the mental load debate, which is frequently brought up in discussions of unpaid domestic labor (Dean, Churchill, and Ruppanner 2022). Even when physical work is performed by someone else, the mental load can be defined as someone else doing the work that requires mental effort, such as deciding when to begin doing the work, determining how it will be done, or planning the necessary preparations. I have observed that keeping track of the fridge is one of the most frequent occurrences of this mental load. In this context, situations such as keeping track of the cooking ingredients can be evaluated. For instance, Ulvi, who stated that he is more involved in kitchen processes than his partner, describes the refrigerator tracking procedure in their household as follows:

“Now who keeps track of the fridge? It is the lady of the house, and sometimes we ask her, she asks us, "What are we going to do?" Because children come to both of us, regardless of mom or dad. Now, for example, my children say, "Dad, we are hungry." My son comes directly, "I am hungry." "Oh, I am hungry." Now let's go and see what we are going to do, let me tell you, we need to look in a fridge. I will go and look in the fridge. She asks her mother, then her mother will go and look. What is there, what can be done quickly, what is there and what is not? But our mother feels the lack of such vegetable-like things in the fridge. We, I mean the wife feel it. For example, there are no peppers, parsley, or

salad ingredients at home. I would not think of looking for it at that moment. I cannot think about it. Whether it is vegetables, ingredients, ingredients to be added to a dish, legumes, etc., my wife takes care of these. I would be lying if I said I take care of it” (Ulvi, Participant 31, 43y/o, Man)

This participant’s mention of feeling is actually an indication of how mental load can be hidden. The participant is actively involved in a significant portion of the cooking process. But first, the ingredients for cooking must be prepared. The cooking process cannot begin if the ingredients needed are not in the fridge. This participant thinks that his partner feels these basic needs. But there is undoubtedly a follow-up procedure in place. The automation of this process may give the impression that these needs are felt rather than thought about.

The mental load discussion can also be viewed as the domestic equivalent of modern-day project management. Because, when I inquired about food-related steps, the majority of the respondents referred to all steps, including refrigerator tracking, as "process management." For instance, Yilmaz summarizes the main division of work in the household as follows: “Of course, at that point, my wife manages the process much better, since there is a much more organized work in a shorter period of time, she takes much more responsibility there, she is more active.” (Yilmaz, Participant 1, 31y/o, Man)

Another participant, whom I asked about the same process, describes the decision-making processes of all these steps as follows: "You know, it is like my wife manages a little bit, she cannot do it, I do the remaining parts" (Barış, Participant 40, 36y/o, Man). The project management rhetoric in these narratives can be read as a reflection of today’s world. Daminger (2019) also encountered that these processes are defined with the term project management in her research. From this point of view, we can observe that the terminology used to describe processes in the public sphere in the neo-liberal business world has shifted to private areas such as the kitchen.

One of the initial mental loads of kitchen processes is fridge tracking. Numerous actions, including shopping, are directly impacted by fridge tracking. Among the actions performed within the scope of the fridge tracking step were tracking which product enters the fridge first, tracking which product should be used first before spoiling, and listing new items to be purchased. This results in a workload that meets the definition of mental load. Because what I refer to as fridge tracking is not limited to what you see when you open the fridge door at that particular moment. It necessitates its own logistics planning.

When I asked who tracks the fridge, I discovered that many people conflate shopping with tracking the fridge. Men typically respond "I, do" but when I explained what fridge tracking is, they frequently stated that women perform this task at home. Although men claim to be interested in keeping track of the fridge, I found that the distinction between keeping track of the fridge and shopping is unclear in the face of detailed questions.

Although there are a small number of men who distinguish fridge tracking from shopping and engage in this practice, I have observed that the majority of men do not recognize this distinction. This can be interpreted as yet another example of the invisibility of the mental load in the field. I noticed differences between the interviews of men and women regarding whether fridge tracking and shopping are distinct activities. For example, in the interviews I conducted with men, the subject of how to get the missing items passed very quickly, whereas in the interviews with women, how to track the missing items was explained in more detail. In fact, keeping track of refrigerators was viewed by some men as the sole responsibility of women. For instance, Cumhur who typically works from home and whose wife physically goes to work stated:

“I usually leave it to my wife and she leaves it to me and something always gets moldy and gets thrown away. I think that women can keep track of the fridge better because it is a habit I inherited from my mother, but my wife is a working woman, of course, my mother did not work, and when she comes home and the children come home from school, she has to prepare food very quickly, she does not have the chance to look at what is in the fridge in the meantime.” (Cumhur, Participant 15, 52y/o, Man)

According to the quotation, the participant believes that women are traditionally responsible for keeping track of fridges. Even though he has an intuition that this norm is false, he attributes this belief to the fact that he learned it from his mother. This means that, according to this participant, the kitchen is still a space for women, though men do temporarily share it (only by being involved in stages such as cooking). This demonstrates that inequalities can persist invisibly if participation in every kitchen is not sufficiently layered and analyzed.

This view of the participant is in line with the findings of Daminger’s cognitive labor concept, which Daminger (2019) uses as an umbrella concept covering the physical and emotional loads of unpaid domestic labor. Daminger’s definition of cognitive load is actually a mental load. Although Daminger uses a different concept

to define the labor required beyond physical and emotional load, she emphasizes mental load. For this reason, I think that Daminger's definition of cognitive load can be used interchangeably with the definition of mental load, and I think that Daminger's discussion on cognitive load is important for understanding mental load. According to Daminger, cognitive labor takes place in four different stages. These are anticipation (identify impending challenges, needs, or opportunities), identification (find ways/options to meet the requirement), decision-making (making a selection from a list of possibilities), and monitoring (verify that the choice was carried out and the requirement was adequately met) (Daminge 2019). Who performs these steps in the household varies from step to step. According to Daminger's research, the steps of forecasting and monitoring are performed more frequently by women, the step of identification is performed jointly by both partners and the step of decision-making is performed more frequently by men. This is actually an indicator of how women carry invisible cognitive burdens in the planning and management of unpaid domestic labor. The finding in my research that the anticipation of possible needs in the fridge is carried out through women is in parallel with Daminger's research. In fact, we can observe the increase and decrease of men's participation in the process in parallel with the steps drawn by Daminger in the following steps of cooking. I can give the example of women undertaking the processes until the actions of shopping or taking out the rubbish are carried out physically, and then men step in when the physical action is about to take place. I will discuss these steps in more detail in the following subsections. There is also another correspondence between Daminger's research and the view of the participant I quoted last. Many participants in Daminger's (2019) research, like the participant in this research, tried to legitimise the processes of anticipation and monitoring by arguing that women do it better as a personality trait. The fact that there is a similar approach in completely different countries is a global reflection of how mental burdens in unpaid domestic labor are rendered invisible by blending them with personality traits. It is possible to see the signs of mental load - cognitive load in the other steps as well as in the fridge tracking. Instead of discussing mental load in all these steps by repeating the same sentences, I will discuss mental load more holistically under a separate sub-heading in Chapter 4.

### **3.1.2 Shopping**

*We are out of lasagna sheets, who will buy them?*

After the mental load of keeping track of the fridge, the next step is shopping and

making up for shortcomings. There are two factors to consider at this stage. One is whether the shopping was completed before or after the outbreak of Covid-19. The second factor is whether online or in-person shopping is performed. Shopping is one instance in which the kitchen in the private space opens up to the public space. In order for the process in the private space to continue, there must be contact with the public space. At this point, I am able to assert that men are more foreground in physical shopping than online. The list created after the fridge tracking is either kept in a common area (such as on the fridge) or forwarded directly to men via Whatsapp message. Before the pandemic, I can say that there was more in-person shopping. With the pandemic, the increase in online markets and the fact that people had to use them in some way ensured the survival of online shopping in the post-pandemic period. In this manner, online shopping, which entered the lives of the majority of families for the first time during the pandemic, has become permanent. Mesut, for instance, described the shift as "After the pandemic, we were all familiarized to online shopping. Typically, 95% of our shopping is done online. We used to purchase our fruits and vegetables from the market, but over the past year, that ratio has decreased " (Mesut, Participant 6, 42y/o, Man). 95% is a significant change. This can be interpreted as a phenomenon that alters the consumption dynamics.

Physical shopping may be carried out more frequently by men due to the contact with public space. For example, Yavuz describes the shopping process in their households as follows:

“I do almost all the shopping for the house; when we need something, I usually run around, if something is to be bought somewhere or if you are going to go somewhere for a bill, if the problem of the bill is to be solved, if the problem of the bill is to be solved, if the site management is to be met, if anything in the house is to be disposed of, etc.” (Yavuz, Participant 19, 39y/o, Man)

As in this narrative, physical shopping is evaluated alongside other tasks that involve greater contact with the public space. I think we can see traces of the traditional norm of male public space and female private space here. This data does not only appear in my data set. According to the "Persons responsible for household chores" data I shared in the first chapter, the three most common household chores undertaken by men in Turkey were basically paying monthly bills (74.1%), maintenance and repair (65.2%), and daily shopping for food (49.3%) time (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu 2022*b*). We can also see in the participant's excerpt I shared that the first and third of these tasks are performed more frequently by men. Based on this, I can say that the pre-pandemic work distribution strategies of the households participat-

ing in my research are similar to national data in terms of these work items. This point of view is further supported by the fact that the public space contact of shopping has decreased, especially with the advent of online shopping, and that women are more visible in this work. Van Droogenbroeck and Van Hove (2020) conducted a similar study. In contrast to my example, they examined who performs which steps in households during online shopping processes in the click-and-collect model rather than the home delivery model (Van Droogenbroeck and Van Hove 2020). In the home delivery model, which is also available in Turkey, the order is delivered to the door after it is placed online. In the click-and-collect model, on the other hand, grocery stores prepare the order after people have shopped online, and customers then physically pick up the prepared order. According to their research, women are more likely to order groceries online, while men are more likely to pick up the items (Van Droogenbroeck and Van Hove 2020). In my opinion, the fact that more men perform the steps of online shopping that have the most contact with the public sphere strengthens my claim about the public-private contact of shopping in my study. According to the results of my research, after the entire shopping process is moved online - that is, when the contact with the public sphere decreases - women conduct the process largely. For this reason, I think that further research on the public-private sphere contact of the steps of online shopping in Turkey is necessary so that the relationship between these contacts and space can be better understood.

The gray area between fridge tracking and shopping, in my opinion, should also be mentioned. I also observe a change in dynamics, such as listing the items to be purchased and sharing them with the person who will make the purchase, particularly after the planning of fridge tracking. Traditionally written lists are being replaced by Whats App groups between partners and online checklist applications like Google Keep. This causes women to shift the mental load of keeping track of the fridge to the step of grocery shopping. Because we are nearing the end of the era in which a single list is created and the shopper uses it to do bulk shopping one day. These lists take on a more living form as a result of small physical purchases made by the available person or partial purchases made by following online discounts. Similar to tracking the fridge, keeping track of what has been crossed off the list or what must be added becomes a tracking element in and of itself. This may be one of the factors underlying the shift in general responsibility from men to women as physical shopping fades away from online shopping. Since, during the online follow-up process, the missing items are frequently checked on online shopping sites, and if a reasonable price is found, they can be purchased immediately. The mentally recycled shopping load brings with it the instantaneous tracking of small parts. At this point, Berrak describes the procedure as follows:



“I think I am totally in charge of keeping track of the fridge because I think it is a bit up to the person who does the shopping and the person who manages the shopping. I have all the grocery store apps installed on my phone. You know, if there is a new grocery store application, it is usually up to me to try it out, to see how its grocery store is, or there are vegetable and fruit applications such as *"Mevsimi"*, if we are going to order something from them, I choose what will come. That is why I am usually the one who knows what is in the fridge, and I think about how we can combine those leftover pieces and make a meal. I think about 80 percent of it. 20 percent or so is managed by my husband, as far as he can see.” (Berrak, Participant 47, 30y/o, Woman)

As I have observed with this participant and a significant number of my other participants, the prevalence of online shopping apps on women’s smartphones is increasing. This may result in a more frequent shift in the mental load of keeping track of the fridge to the shopping phase. There are already a number of mental loads associated with physical shopping, such as creating shopping lists and scheduling the shopping day. As indicated in the quote, the frequency and invisibility of these mental loads may increase with online shopping. This is because people may prefer to browse countless apps and conduct research in their free time. This can further blur the distinction between unpaid domestic labor and personal time.

### **3.1.3 Choosing the Food to be Consumed**

*Should we make lasagna or meatballs today? Or should we order takeout?*

The process of selecting a meal to eat or prepare was another instance of intense mental load. The majority of participants reported that they decided together which evening meal to prepare. This decision-making process typically begins with one partner asking the other, "What should we cook?" and ends with the decision being made based on the ingredients in the fridge. Since the answer to the question "What is in the fridge?" is frequently analogous to the decision-making process, the effects of the mental load associated with keeping track of the fridge can be observed in great detail at this stage. In fact, even though the partners declare that they are making joint decisions at this stage, the fact that women are more active in the previous step indirectly makes them more active in this step as well.

This step’s mental load is not solely derived from fridge monitoring. I noticed that this step can also be a direct mental load in and of itself. For instance, Ersoy summarizes the household cooking processes as follows: “Because I am the one who likes to cook, but I do not want to do too much with thinking, like a division of

labor, in fact, let her choose and I will do it. It is something I enjoy more so that she can make the decision of what to eat next week.” (Ersoy, Participant 18, 37y/o, Man) Since the participant views the cooking process as simply combining the necessary ingredients, he declares the other steps to be unrelated to the process. During the process of deciding what to prepare, he believes he retreats in favor of his partner. However, when I asked his partner what she thought of this procedure, she responded, "It is a very troublesome question that everyone asks every day" (Arsen, Participant 35, 35y/o, Woman) While the participant man engages in a process he enjoys, the participant woman is not left in the background to enjoy a task with a lot of mental loads. This example is consistent with the literature on men’s engagement with the kitchen. According to this literature (Adler 1981; Hollows 2002; Szabo 2013), men will mostly perform unpaid domestic labor if they enjoy it. Reducing the entire cooking process to the enjoyable portion and assigning the remainder to women demonstrates the reproduction of the relevant social norm.

The meal selection process is frequently not limited to the day of the meal. Choosing a meal has more mental load than it appears because it is a point where many processes intersect, such as what was eaten yesterday, what will be eaten tomorrow, and who does not eat what. Miray, for example, explained this multidimensionality as follows:

“It never ends, my son asks what we are going to eat for the second course when he has already eaten the first course and it is very difficult to organize that. It is extra difficult when I work, we do desk work, but it has a physical reflection; I am very tired, my mind is very tired, and trying to plan meals is very difficult for me. One person does not eat something, the other does not eat that, it is very difficult to find something suitable for everyone. After a while you always go back to the same place; I make meatballs every other day, every other day I make this soup, that soup so when I try something new, they do not like it, it does not suit them, I try to turn what they do not eat into something healthy and make them eat it, they understand, they say no. Repetition bores me. If I want to turn to simple things, not everyone eats the healthy things I eat, for example, I eat oats in the morning, yes, the girl eats oats with me, but X [says her partner’s name] does not eat oats. We have an ongoing weight problem and the foods to eliminate this weight problem are far from the common foods of everyone. So there is a vicious circle, and this may have overwhelmed me. When I was working, I was more overwhelmed by cooking, I do not want to spend my time on it, it seems like a very unnecessary time to me, so it could be because of that. Especially during school time, we work at home, I am going in the evening, I will cook one, we will eat it once, and I will cook the second batch so that they can eat it tomorrow when they come back from school

because they come before us, their meal times are earlier. I ask X [she says her partner's name] what we are going to eat today, and he says "You will arrange something", for example, I cannot arrange it; I cannot think of it. I cannot think about it all the time. That is actually why I do not like it." (Miray, Participant 32, 39y/o, Woman)

As this participant noted, the dilemma of what to eat is not unique to that day. Many factors influence the decision of what to eat that evening. As it becomes necessary to constantly come up with a solution, this mental load increases. This procedure's complexity may even deter people from cooking altogether. In addition, as the number of children in the household increases, new unknowns, and constraints are added to this equation.

Aside from this instance, it is important to note that within the scope of the study, there were men who incorporated the process of selecting the food into the preparation of the meal. Men who are involved in the selection of the meal are also involved in the tracking of the fridge, a similar pattern. For instance, Volkan, who tracks the fridge himself, describes the selection process for the food to be cooked as follows: "That is on me again; sometimes I think about what to cook or what to make, depending on what is in the fridge. Also, we have to cook two or three kinds of food. My wife also takes her lunch from home, she does not eat at work. I have to cook a little more for her." (Volkan, Participant 23, 56y/o, Man) Men who begin a mentally demanding process such as fridge tracking also actively participate in other mentally demanding activities such as food selection, as exemplified by this quote. This may be related to being aware of mentally demanding tasks. Cooking entails a number of steps. From keeping track of the fridge to taking out the trash, there are a number of mental load-intensive tasks. I have noticed that men who are engaged in one step with a high mental load are typically engaged in additional steps with a high mental load. In this regard, awareness of "mental load" can be crucial. When the mental load in some tasks remains hidden, it may not even be recognized as a cooking step. According to my observations, men are involved in these processes when it is understood that the mental load is just as important as the physical workload and must be completed. In the next section, I will be discussing the strategies for the distribution of mental load in the households I interviewed.

### 3.1.4 Food Preparation

*Lasagna is ready! Let's eat!*

This is the first step that comes to mind when we think of cooking, where we can put a chicken in the oven, boil chickpeas in a pressure cooker, or chop tomatoes for a salad. We can think of this step as bringing individual products together and making them ready for consumption. In this step, men mostly take responsibility in the households of the participants in the research. The primary reason why the sample yielded such results was because I made it clear in the research call that I was looking for men who are interested in the kitchen and cooking. Therefore, it was not surprising that men assumed the majority of active meal preparation responsibilities in the households of men who already cook regularly (or claim to do so). When I inquired as to the extent of this responsibility, I received varying responses.

Very few men reported that if a meal was to be prepared in the household on any given day, it was definitely prepared by them. In general, households shared meal preparation between partners, with a 60 percent to 40 percent split. In my current participant group, I noticed a pattern that men prepare about four dinners per week, while women prepare about three. Aside from that, I had a small number of the men participants who were only involved in salad and breakfast preparation and defined this as being in the kitchen. One of the situations I frequently encountered was trying to be visible in such a small area and distinguishing oneself from other men in this area. In the following chapters, I will delve deeper into the specifics of these patterns.

Throughout the interviews, I try to inquire about the type and ingredients of the prepared meals. Men are more foreground in making meat-related dishes in this context, which is consistent with the literature (Inness 2001; Sobal 2005; Sumpter 2015). Men enter the kitchen more frequently on days when meat-containing dishes are to be prepared. This was observed in both men who worked in the kitchen frequently and men who worked in the kitchen only occasionally. As an example, I can give a household in which neither partner likes kitchen work, but the man partner is involved when necessary. Ulvi describes the type of food he prefers to prepare when he cooks: “Let me put it this way, now when there are some meat dishes like sauteed meat, when there are dishes that I can cook, I can cook. Now I cannot compete with my wife in terms of cooking. Maybe I can look at it, I can learn from the internet, but I cannot match a woman’s hand.” (Ulvi, Participant 31, 43y/o, Man) As demonstrated by this example, men prefer to cook meat dishes

even when they are the least confident. Similarly, it is possible to interpret this as a process that is passed down through generations. Yalvaç, for example, describes his father's relationship with the kitchen as follows: "For example, my mother never cooked meat dishes, only my father cooked them, and he loved to cook them." (Yalvaç, Participant 28, 39y/o, Man). This was a process learned in the family, according to the participant who stated that his first experiences with the kitchen were also meat-related food intensive. As I previously stated, this is consistent with the literature (Sobal 2005; Sumpter 2015). This literature has often discussed that this particular interest of men for meat may be a kind of masculinity performances.

One of the key distinctions I discovered during my research was how people perceive food preparation. I need to open a parenthesis on cooking for pleasure versus cooking for necessity, which I will discuss in greater detail in the following chapters. Men in the households I interviewed prefer to spend more time in the kitchen for pleasure. Women, on the other hand, frequently enter the kitchen to meet the households' healthy or mandatory nutritional needs. For example, İrfan summarized the feelings elicited by cooking as follows:

"We have tried to change our diet, we have tried this, we have tried that, but the food is a hobby for me; now my wife does not have such a hobby. I mean, she does not look at food as something, not like me. Also, when I cook, I do not know if this will be mentioned in the questions in the coming questions, but when I cook, it is like therapy for me in my own private life. I mean, I get away from the world, it is good, it feels good. That is why I like cooking." (İrfan, Participant 36, 27y/o, Man)

Cooking is viewed as both therapy and a hobby by this participant. This time, when I asked a participant woman what it was like to cook in the same way, she replied:

"In fact, there is a very clear distinction between us. I try to do more home cooking and vegetable dishes. He makes the pizza for the house, he is like the minister of state in charge of pizza, he does everything related to pizza, he makes it every week, or other than that he makes things like baked potatoes. He is very good at breakfast. He makes very wonderful breakfasts. As I said, I make traditional Turkish dishes, vegetable dishes, etc., and he is the one who puts them in the oven or cast iron, and because of breakfast, he has an incredible command of eggs. Eggs and pizza are his most important areas. [...] I mean, I help us to survive and he helps us to enjoy life." (Berrak, Participant 47, 30y/o, Woman)

I have frequently encountered these two opposing viewpoints on cooking in households. I have noticed that women go into the kitchen to cook “healthy” and “necessary” meals for the family, whereas men go into the kitchen to take risks, fulfill a hobby, or have fun. The academic literature already points to a picture parallel to my findings (Adler 1981; Cairns, Johnston, and MacKendrick 2013; Hollows 2002; Szabo 2013). Unlike this literature, in my research I have also brought up the points where these motivation sources have changed. If this enjoyment or hobby for men changes, their motivation to enter the kitchen may decrease. Remzi, for example, compares his childhood and current cooking motivations as follows:

“Then, if we talk about cooking, for example, in the past, when we were children, for example, I used to barbecue on the balcony by myself, I used to do all the work of stringing it on skewers and so on as a fun thing. Then, when it became a thing, when it became a duty instead of a pleasure, gradually you get bored, do you know what I mean? “Come on, you do these things.” I used to do it for pleasure, now it is something else. “No, no. You do it.”, I gradually distanced myself from the barbecue.”  
(Remzi, Participant 27, 52y/o, Man)

When cooking is a necessity, people may avoid it at various stages of their lives. Some participants displayed such avoidance in adulthood, while others displayed such avoidance when they left their family home and moved into university student housing. While some participants’ avoidance disappears after a short period of becoming familiarized with it, others, such as this participant, continue to exhibit this behavior. Therefore, calling a man’s mere physical presence in the kitchen an act of direct egalitarianism may be an inaccurate perspective. Instead, the motivations for the person’s presence in the kitchen and the persistence of this behavior should be compared to the efforts of others in the household. This motivation may be to perform required household chores or, as Lupton (1996) argues, to engage in aestheticized leisure activities by separating cooking from household chores.

Men were also present in the kitchen on occasions when they were not involved in the main course for dinner. Salads and breakfasts were frequently opportunities for men to be present in the kitchen without taking on the entire process. Men who prepared weekend meals and/or breakfasts were identified as men who took active responsibility in the kitchen. Again, this can be read along with the discussions in the literature on men entering the kitchen for pleasure, special event,s or as a hobby (Adler 1981; DeVault 1994; Hollows 2002; Lupton 1996; Szabo 2013). The general consensus was that they try to support their partners’ workload by entering the kitchen on days when there is no daily work routine. Making salads, on the other

hand, is a gray area of kitchen involvement. One of the most common situations I encountered among men with limited kitchen involvement was taking responsibility for the salad rather than the main course. Salad preparation was motivated by the desire to share the workload and have a short conversation with their partners, who were in the kitchen preparing the main course. After meat and barbecue, the most frequently mentioned topic among men when discussing their fathers' relationship with the kitchen was that their fathers assisted them in preparing salads. Ozan, for example, described the situation as follows: "My father used to make all the salads, the barbecue was all my father's. Some meat dishes were specific, for example, casseroles, my father used to make them. He used to do the things he liked to do." (Ozan, Participant 11, 30y/o, Man) This participant also mentions that, while he enjoys cooking meat dishes, he prefers to cook dishes with olive oil or vegetable dishes more frequently. In this way, he presents an image that is similar to the previous discussion's inference of similar patterns across generations. Salad is seen as a means of dividing the workload not only for men but also for women, which is one of the reasons it remains in the gray area. Salad preparation was presented as an exception when men prepare the main course or when the woman partner dislikes kitchen work in general. For example, Hicran summarized the recent division of labor in the kitchen as follows: "I cook, I do, but in recent years, especially after my husband retired, he has been doing it more. Since I work, the food is usually ready when I arrive. Sometimes I add a side salad or rice, pasta, that kind of thing from time to time. But mostly my husband is in charge of cooking now." (Hicran, Participant 43, 54y/o, Woman) I can infer that salad is both the first item to enter the kitchen and the reason to stay there for both men and women. Salad is one of the first products that comes to mind when considering the division of labor in the kitchen. It is not associated with leisure or pleasure, unlike breakfast. On the other hand, breakfast is defined more as a weekend activity done for pleasure. In the literature, breakfast is one of the stages that is highlighted (Adler 1981). Men who prepare breakfast only on the weekends are able to easily differentiate themselves from other men in terms of gender norms. Because this activity takes place on the weekend, when there is more free time, and minimal cooking skills are sufficient. Men who prepare weekend breakfasts in such a favorable setting attract attention in the household (Adler 1981). This is one of the first steps they can take to distinguish themselves from other men who are not interested in the kitchen by exerting the least amount of effort.

My other finding about the food preparation step was the partners' shared kitchen experience. When the partners entered the shared kitchen, I frequently inquired about how it was to collaborate with the other partner. Although many partici-

pants stated that everyone did their part of the work, they also stated that working together in the kitchen was a source of tension most of the time. The main sources of this tension are often one partner interfering in the other's work, interfering in their processes, and not liking what they are doing. This usually takes the form of the partner who is more active in the kitchen interfering with the other's work. For example, Türkan summarizes her experience of cooking in the kitchen with her partner as follows:

“[Cooking with my partner] is disgusting, but that was a bit of a thing, our house was very small, now we moved to a bigger house, the house was actually 50 square meters, in that small kitchen there, we were already being a thing, for example, when I hosted guests, it was like this much food coming out of the tiny kitchen. Now the kitchen of the house is more spacious, we can move a little more comfortably, of course, we fight less with the effect of that, but since we have very different tastes in food, our approach to food is very different beyond taste, and because he does not know the job, we become something, I tell him to do this, I tell him to do that, it is like giving orders. It is not a very good experience, but with X (she says the name of her daily housekeeper), for example, we do not even talk while cooking; I mean, she already knows, I mean, two people who know how to cook, it is very enjoyable.” (Türkan, Participant 29, 50y/o, Woman)

In the following chapters, I will examine these conflicts and compromises in detail.

### 3.1.5 Dishes and Cleaning

*Stubborn dirt left in the lasagna pot, Mr. Muscle on duty!*

After the meal, washing the dishes is another step. This step's workload is linked to the previous step. If the food preparation process is messy, the subsequent dish washing work grows exponentially. In order to reduce the number of dishes to be done later, partners occasionally try to eliminate the mess created by each other during the meal preparation process.

There was an unwritten agreement in most couples to take the dishes to the kitchen after the meal was eaten. They reported that whoever prepared the main meal, the other person usually cleared the table and took it to the kitchen. However, putting the dishes collected in the kitchen into the dishwasher was often independent of this division of labor. At this point, placing the dishes in the dishwasher was generally the responsibility of men. When the reasons behind this division of labor were



discussed, they focused on the idea that men participants loaded the machine more efficiently. For example, Gürkan summarized the division of labor between him and his wife in loading the dishwasher as follows:

“My Ph.D. is in dishwasher placement, we used to live with 3 men and there would be a mountain of dishes and then that machine would be placed. Now, as a person who likes order and cleanliness, when they are like a mountain, I improved myself there to see how I can maximize the efficiency of that space. When my wife places it, sometimes I do something without letting her know that it is not this, that top shelf, the sharp part of the knife will face down, etc. My wife also does that part, but even if my wife does that part, I try to get into that part a little more.” (Gürkan, Participant 17, 34y/o, Man)

Another participant man summarizes his own processes with a similar narrative as follows:

“I am the type of person who likes to be organized. For example, an unorganized dishwasher bothers me. I unload it and put it back in again and so on. Of course, when something like that happened a couple of times. She said okay, then you put it in. I said okay, do not interfere. She leaves it, you know, she packs it around the sink. I will put it in the dishwasher. Everyone has different and interesting tasks. For example, I do not interfere with emptying it.” (Yalvaç, Participant 28, 39y/o, Man)

Men’s obsession with order came to the fore in two narratives in particular when describing the process of loading the dishwasher. In this context, men who approached the process as a solution to an optimization problem rather than a household chore were in the majority. Women, on the other hand, took on more responsibility when it came to loading the dishes back into the dishwasher. I can explain this by claiming that women have more knowledge about the placement of kitchen items and kitchen organization during the process of placing kitchen items in their proper places. Because when we discussed why there is such a division of labor, the argument that women know better where to place clean items came to the fore. This actually indicates whether the space is still perceived as feminine while cooking. Also, this attitude is in line with Daminger’s (2019) discussion that I cited in the section on fridge tracking. In this attitude, as in the previous attitudes I have discussed, we see that people can often bring up personal traits while defending themselves and trying to legitimise the fact that mental burdens fall on one partner. In this case, however,

it is more important to regularly monitor the current position of the kitchen utensils than personal character.

### 3.1.6 Garbage

*Who forgot to put the packaging of the lasagna in the trash can?*

As the last step in the cooking process, I talked to the participants about the disposal of kitchen garbage. Mostly, men considered it their responsibility to dispose of the garbage. One of the most important factors of the division of labor here may be that garbage is disposed of outside the home, outside the private space. It can be read as the intersection of a step of the process that continues in the private space in parallel with shopping in the public space. For example, Altay described the garbage process as “I take out the garbage part mostly at night, because we take it out at night. If I am not at home, she takes it out herself.” (Altay, Participant 48, 34y/o, Man), indicating why the task is on himself through public space and time. However, there is a more homogeneous division of labor in this step than in the shopping step, and men take more responsibility in this step. For example, a participant woman described the process in her household as “I never go there. My husband throws garbage, he follows up. The garbage is full, here is the garbage disposal. It never changed when we came here. I mean garbage, there are garbage rooms here. I have never even been in the garbage rooms. He always takes the garbage downstairs, he does the follow-up” (Algin, Participant 34, 35y/o, Woman) and stated that this distinction is clear.

Although the division of labor in garbage disposal appears to be clear, there is another point to consider. This is the mental load, like the others. While talking to the participants, tracking the kitchen garbage and determining the time to dispose of it did not come up in the first place. This situation appears in parallel with the fridge tracking and shopping steps. While men were more responsible for garbage disposal, the mental load, such as tracking the garbage, was often carried out by women in the household. For example, when I talked garbage disposal and mental load with one of the participants, he said:

“I confess, I follow it by force. I mean, they make me throw the garbage as much as possible, but I do not follow it up. The women at home do the follow-up, but the part of taking out the garbage is given to the man. You know, it is given to the man because it is a man’s job. This is the

situation with us. They ask if you throw the garbage. I do it." (İrfan, Participant 36, 27y/o, Man)

This mental load frequently did not attract the attention of women participants and remained invisible to them. Unlike other mental load patterns, the mental load is most frequently shared by men concerned with garbage disposal. Yılmaz, for example, summarized this as follows:

“What we live with is that wherever the waste goes, to the garbage dump or to the waste center, etc., it has to be handled by us. There is no staff for this. At this point, I usually have to be the one to take the garbage out of the house. I can say that my wife is a bit negligent at that point. Generally, if I do not do anything for one day or two days, more garbage accumulates in the house. This is an area where I feel uncomfortable. There is a small conflict in this regard.” (Yılmaz, Participant 1, 31y/o, Man)

When we focus on the mental load component of the process, as in the case of fridge tracking, it is clear that this is also labor, and that this tracking is even required for the act of garbage disposal to begin. When it came to disposing of garbage, people often thought of disposing of garbage by traveling some distance to the garbage bins located outside the house in public spaces and returning back. I observed that men were more often involved in the transfer of garbage from the door to the bin in the public space. Even when the janitors collect the garbage at the door, this mental load continues. However, some households' garbage is collected from the door of the house by the janitors. The activity's contact with the public space is diminished similarly to how it is with online shopping. However, unlike shopping, I observed that this change had no significant impact on the partners' division of labor. Again, the women kept track of the garbage inside the house, while the men often put the garbage in front of the door. Even though there was less contact with public spaces, leaving the garbage outside the boundaries of the household was still a task frequently performed by men.

The fact that both putting the dishes in the dishwasher and taking out the rubbish are often carried out by men initially made me wonder whether there might be a gender-related relationship in the division of dirty vs. clean work within the household. However, when I looked closely at the garbage process, I observed that women were more involved with the dirty parts of the garbage and that the garbage isolated with garbage bags was taken out to the public space by men. In other words, the relatively clean part of the garbage process was left to men. In the

division of labor related to the dishwasher, as I mentioned in the previous sections, there is no division of labor over dirty vs clean. Rather, there is a division of labor based on the fact that men often do not know where to put the clean items. When I closely analysed the interviews on both themes, I realised that the participants did not define their division of labor in terms of dirty vs. clean work. However, conducting interviews directly on dirty vs. clean work may give a different picture. In particular, all of the participants in my research had dishwashers. In households that do not have dishwashers, the division of labor related to washing dishes may also be completely different.

## 4. SPATIAL, TEMPORAL AND PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH AND IN THE KITCHEN

In the previous chapter, I presented a general picture of the division of labor in food-related processes in households. In this chapter, I will concentrate on the conflicts and consensus that arise in the kitchen during these steps of the process. I will explain how partners interact with the kitchen as a space and how they interact with each other in the kitchen.

### 4.1 Strategies on Division of Labor

Since I stated that I would be conducting research with men who have lived in the same house with their partner for at least two years and have an interest in the kitchen, the existence of a division of labor in how they relate to the kitchen was a foreground issue in the interviews. Couples were dividing the work into various dynamics, particularly in the 6-step process I described in the previous chapter. Again, the step that most often comes to mind when it comes to cooking meals is the fourth step, in which people cook the meal and transform raw products into finished products. Given the focus on this step, it should not be surprising that men often said "I am interested in cooking". At the same time, I can say that this is not a daily interest. While the participants had clearer work division strategies in other household chores, I can say that the boundaries are blurred in the kitchen and cooking. This blurring of boundaries can be seen as normal, especially since it is a multi-layered, multi-step action that must occur every day. Cooking, for example, is a process that must be repeated every day, whereas laundry can be spread out over different days of the week.

At the same time, the fact that personal pleasures are involved adds to the ambiguity. While sweeping or ironing are more need-oriented activities, it was

difficult to clarify the strategies underlying the division of labor because meals are frequently shaped daily based on people's needs, tastes, and expectations. The purpose of cooking becomes clear at this point. Enes, for example, summarizes the situations in which he frequently enters the kitchen as follows:

“For example, when there is a type of grill at work, I usually take care of it. I usually take over when there is a type of grill at work. Sometimes I am more involved in pasta and new flavors. I get a little more involved in seafood, or we bought an air fryer, let's try this and this, let's try this, let me handle this, see how it works; I stand on top of the air fryer and check it every 2-3 minutes as if it will cook more as if it will have a different effect. In something like this, if we generalize it more, you know, I have certain pasta, grilled and new types of dishes.” (Enes, Participant 46, 37y/o, Man)

As demonstrated by this participant, I frequently observed men in the kitchen, not in the context of routine, but in the context of experimenting with new flavors. As a result, I realized it was critical to ask: do people cook for the mandatory nutritional needs of others in the household, or do they cook for pleasure? According to the answer to this question, weekly routines emerge. When I asked couples how they split the weekly cooking process, they frequently mentioned a 60-40% split. What was frequently meant here was who cooks the main course. If the man prepared the main course, he was considered to have cooked that day. The other partner may prepare the salads, visit the kitchen for a chat, or remain completely uninvolved. When we focused on the content of the work performed, I discovered, in line with the literature, that men frequently cooked protein-containing dishes, whereas women frequently cooked vegetables (Sobal 2005; Sumpter 2015). This type of meal was one of the factors determining the 60-40% divide in this case. If the family prepares a weekly menu, the man is the main figure in the kitchen on days when meat is to be cooked.

Another significant indicator was the dishes that men enjoy making as a hobby. There was a dish that the man-made as a hobby, mastered, and frequently served to guests in a significant group of men. This could be something like beef steak, but it could also be a home-made version of something commonly purchased from a restaurant, such as pizza. Men prioritize getting into the kitchen when preparing this “special” meal. However, I rarely encountered such specific types of food in my interviews with women, and some of the women I interviewed had even distanced themselves from the kitchen. I met women who refused to go into the kitchen for

whatever reason, be it necessity or hobby. Serpil summarized what underpins the majority of her behavior as follows:

“It is a prison for me. X [says her partner’s name], for example, enjoys it, he considers it a hobby, but it has formed in me in such a way that the kitchen is a prison for me. It is a woman’s prison in my eyes. I refuse to enter that prison; I mean, my father used to say, "My daughters are not maids", what a bad expression; is my mother a maid? You do not ask that then; you like it when your father says that at the age of 20.”  
(Serpil, Participant 7, 42y/o, Woman)

As evidenced by this participant’s account, being in the kitchen, particularly in the context of responsibilities, can cause people to lose their connection with the kitchen. Especially the mental exhaustion caused by responsibilities spills over into leisure activities. Due to this, they have a number of reservations about entering the kitchen, even for personal enjoyment. Although this participant’s account is at the extreme end of the spectrum, I observed that many of the participants felt similarly. As a result, when women were asked about their favorite dishes to prepare, they frequently stated that they prepared everyday dishes rather than a specific dish or type of dish. While the men were excited about these special meals and even mentioned that guests came specifically to eat them, the women mentioned meals that were prepared to keep the routine. While these special meals were on the agenda, instruments such as special pans and pizza ovens purchased specifically for these meals also took center stage. In other words, I am able to say that it is important to look at the content when men account for the leading figure in the 60-40% division of labor. I observed that the majority of the men participants take the leadership of this division of labor by preparing meals that are more flexible and suitable for their hobbies and leisure time, whereas the women take care of the remaining parts of this division of labor by choosing meals based on the needs of the people in the household. I can say that this image corresponds with the results of DeVault’s study. In her study, DeVault revealed that the majority of men who cook engage with the kitchen in contexts where they can be more flexible and tailored to their tastes, whereas women tailor their kitchen work to the needs of the family. DeVault contends that this situation perpetuates for women the role of being the one who feeds the family (1994). I think that the fact that the leadership in the kitchen is shared without big differences, which emerged in my interviews, is in line with DeVault’s argument. Although in some households, men seem to be more involved in the kitchen, around 60%, it does not contribute much to the removal of the family feeder label on women, as men are often in the kitchen with what they feel is more

of a hobby. On the contrary, since women still act with the nutritional needs of family members in mind, the role of being the feeder of the family still remains with them, even if in a hidden way.

According to all of these stories, when there is a special process, men are more involved in the cooking process. They form a special bond with the food and the technique and enter the kitchen to demonstrate their "mastery" of this particular dish. Enes, for example, compared this mastery to an academic process, as follows:

“I mean, this is obviously the most important trigger, I enjoy eating, but as I said, I mean, this is what a Ph.D. is like; I am doing a Ph.D. in this period. I mean, how is it done, how are these meals prepared? I mean, after all, I am in the field of biotechnology, I am in the field of polymers, you mix things and get a recipe. You get a result from it. You present this as a result of the experiment, as a thesis, as a publication. The same logic works at dinner. I mean, let me call it curiosity. If I enjoy it, I should do it” (Enes, Participant 46, 37y/o, Man)

Women, on the other hand, are frequently present to ensure the continuity of the kitchen routine. When they are in the kitchen preparing the main meal, their priorities include the healthy nutrition of family members and the continuation of their daily routine. At this point, I can say that my findings are consistent with the existing literature. Men are frequently found in the kitchen preparing foods that they enjoy and consider special (Cairns, Johnston, and MacKendrick 2013; Cairns, Johnston, and Baumann 2010; Szabo 2013). In contrast to the literature, the men I interviewed spent more time in the kitchen. In fact, a group of men I interviewed were in the kitchen because they saw cooking as an obligation. However, the majority of people continue to try to be in the kitchen while keeping the element of pleasure and hobby in mind. This alters both the division of labor and the content of the food they prepare. I do not want this assumption to be interpreted as men making the kitchen more enjoyable. On the contrary, they attempt to extend their presence in the kitchen beyond the discourse of necessity and reconstruct a discourse based on the fact that they are there to show their mastery. In this case, the shift in the burden-sharing of the kitchen at home is based on different justifications rather than necessity.

Men frequently stated that they used the kitchen to experience new things, which is consistent with the approach of realizing hobbies and mastery in the kitchen. Men were far more adventurous than women when it came to creating and tasting new



dishes. Even more, they criticized their partners for not being as brave. Yilmaz, for example, explained why he thought his partner was conservative in this regard with the following sentences:

“My wife is much more conservative at this point, she has a set pattern, and she knows what to put in the food and what not to put in the food. She prepares the meal in a much shorter time. My preparation process takes longer; even if it is not something very innovative, I may prefer a product that I do not normally use. Anything I go into the process of preparing food, I have a thing; at this point, what can I add to it differently is always a question in my mind; as I said, my wife is more conservative at that point. [...] We think that something has an effect. For me, both the food preparation process and the consumption process afterward seem to be based on pure pleasure; that is my perception. For my wife, it works like a more basic human physiological process; I need access to food; I need to consume it.” (Yilmaz, Participant 1, 31y/o, Man)

The emphasis on pleasure for men and women’s perception of it as physiological overlaps with the previously mentioned dichotomies. As seen in this example, I discovered a common pattern in which men use the kitchen to experiment, develop new recipes, and frequently serve these recipes to guests. Women, on the other hand, were willing to try new flavors but hesitant to try making a new dish. At this point, paying attention to the search for excitement in cooking can provide important clues. According to (Lupton 1996), food and eating were symbolic commodities to help us understand people’s search for diversity. People do not only eat to appease their hunger, but their actions also have cultural meanings in the food they eat or cook. In this respect, the behavior of cooking to make the food more different, more exotic, also tells us something culturally. Lupton interprets this desire for differentiation as follows:

“Differentiation and innovation are highly culturally valued. In the context of an abundance of food, the search for new taste sensations and eating experiences is considered a means of improving oneself, adding value and a sense of excitement to life. As with other cultural products and commodities in Western societies, variety, and innovation in food practices are expected and valorized. This is particularly the case for individuals who view food preparation and eating as aestheticized leisure activities rather than chores.” (Lupton 1996, 126).

The term aestheticised leisure activities used by Lupton is crucial to this discussion. According to Hollows, “the production of cooking practices as ‘aestheticized leisure’ is also crucial in producing a masculinized cooking practice” (2002, 151). At the same time, he argues that aestheticized leisure activities symbolically exclude cooking from being care labor (Hollows 2002). Consequently, men frequently create aestheticized leisure activities for themselves through this search for difference, despite the fact that they appear to share the care labor that is imposed on women. This situation, on the other hand, transforms the work from being compulsory domestic work to a more choice-based position. The fact that women, unlike men, stay away from this pursuit of adventure may be an indication that cooking is still a domestic chore for them.

While women still remain in the kitchen as a part of necessity, we see men entering the kitchen to “showcase” their old and new skills. This actually allows for a different point of view. It is frequently argued in the literature that professional kitchens are built with concepts like sweat, pain, tears, strength, and durability, and thus are more male spaces than home kitchens (Oren 2013). There are attempts, in particular, to establish a link between the exclusion of women from these spaces and this feature of professional kitchens. While chefs demonstrate their expertise in professional kitchens, which are male spaces, household nutrition is prioritized in home kitchens, which are female spaces. In the following sections, I will discuss the professionalization of home kitchens more frequently. At this point, I can share the following professionalization story from one of the men participants:

“I mean, I think a bit more like an engineer with the logic of a process. You know, I put 4 pots on the stove, 4 onions, I chop them all, I put tomato paste in all of them, I put oil in all of them, you know, I put the vegetables in order in the next stage. Until she takes one pot and puts the other pot, she doesn’t touch the work of the other dish at all. So she does it slowly. In terms of time, while I can make 4 types of food in 1 hour, she takes 2 hours. You know, I mean, there is a fight there. You know, I am a little more prone to mass production. But I do not like to make the same thing twice. I mean, I usually like to add more spices to every dish I make; if it is not something very basic, I like to try something, and even if it is bad, I will eat it. In the end, I like playing with the food, I like the playful part of the food. I also like to try something with the food.” (Soykan, Participant 42, 32y/o, Man)

As in this case, men who attempted to professionalize the process in addition to their hobby were a group I encountered frequently during my research. The basic pattern was to reorganize the kitchen with logic such as stations, to set specific

performance concerns, and to combine this with a pleasure element. As I previously stated, home kitchens appear to be the space where my interviewees demonstrate their mastery. My main question at this point is whether men have begun to exist in home kitchens, which are perceived as feminine spaces, or whether they legitimize their presence by transforming home kitchens into male-dominated masculine spaces. When we consider the division of labor, the tools used in the kitchen by men, and the presentation to guests, I think the second scenario is more likely. I can say that the division of labor is based on transforming rather than re-experiencing the existing space, which was a common theme in many of my interviews. Klasson and Ulver make a similar argument through their own research (2015). According to their findings, male-specific kitchen gadgets (such as specialized knives or pots) play an important role in men's kitchen engagement. These gadgets, according to them, make it easier to connect with domestic space and even serve as a tool for masculinising domesticity (Klasson and Ulver 2015). Masculinising domesticity thus makes room for men's presence and actions in a previously perceived feminine space.

## 4.2 Mental Load

Domestic work frequently involves mental load. Although it is often perceived that someone else is doing the work, there may be multiple dynamics at play behind the scenes to make that work possible (Dean, Churchill, and Ruppner 2022). When we look at the steps for the meal, some of them (for example, fridge tracking) can be a mental load in and of themselves. The mental load has a very cunning nature. Many women are unaware of their mental load. This was common among the women I interviewed. For example, keeping track of the fridge was almost nonexistent for men. It frequently stopped at making a shopping list for them. As a result, because they do not perform this workload, it may be difficult for them to clarify this stage in their minds. Similarly, a sizable proportion of women did not consider fridge tracking to be a job requirement in the first place. However, in contrast to men, they were able to explain all of the fridge tracking processes very well. Women were able to explain processes such as knowing which food was purchased and when, tracking the ingredients for the next meal based on the last food consumed from the fridge, and evaluating ingredients that were close to spoilage in sufficient detail. As a result, asking them to elaborate on tasks that could be considered mental loads was helpful in understanding the extent to which mental load was present during the interviews.

Naming the mental load was an important step in removing the cloak of invisibility that surrounded it. Some of the women participants, particularly those who believed that their partners did the majority of the work, wanted to discuss this issue in greater detail. They realized that their partners were not sharing the workload as much as they had assumed when the mental load became apparent. Because they were concerned that their partners were shouldering too much of the burden. In the final chapter, I will go into detail about this feeling of discomfort and how it can be used to push women back into gender norms.

There were also households that had considered mental load in greater depth prior to the interview and taken action to address it. For instance, Ajda provided the following breakdown of the mental load in their households:

“The day before, I say that we will go to work in the morning, so if something is to be taken out of the freezer, let’s take it out, or if something is missing, let’s buy it on the way, or if there is a preliminary preparation, let’s do it at night. My husband is out of work there. Let’s come tomorrow, we will see. I say, look, sometimes it is like this; I said I am not going to make any decisions for a week; I said it is up to you; I said it is up to you to do the planning; I said please, I said you follow this, I am not going to make decisions because I inevitably make decisions and I go, I implement it, if there is something to prepare in advance, I do it at night. It usually happens more in the winter months; I take out beans, I put them in water, or when I get out of the freezer in the morning, if there is meat, chicken, whatever, or if there is something missing, I make a note of it on the way, as we will get it, we will do it later. At one point I got very angry and I said I am not going to do it; I said you’ve got this job. I did not do it for a week and then my husband realized what was going on. Then he started not to object anymore and he started to come up with ideas with me, we can do this and that. It was like this for a week, but it went on like this for years, let me put it that way.” (Ajda, Participant 51, 33y/o, Woman)

As in this example, it may be necessary to recognize the mental load and make the other partner aware of it. Otherwise, in a vicious circle, one partner may have to fulfill the same responsibility for a lifetime. Another crucial aspect of my research on mental load was how sticky mental load is. The mental loads that are frequently embedded in each step frequently spill over into the subsequent steps and have the potential to transform the entire process into a mental load. As I previously mentioned, a common conception of cooking is that it takes place at a stove. The preceding and following steps were carried out as if it were a process outside the kitchen to maintain the routine of the household. Regardless of gender, a person

was not considered to have cooked if they did not transform raw ingredients into a finished product but instead performed other processes. However, the absence of other processes means that this step will also fail. To successfully complete this step, the preceding steps must also be completed successfully. As a result, the mental load of the other steps has an effect on the cooking process, and the coordination of the other processes for the success of that step becomes a mental load in and of itself. It was among my observations that the process became a mental load in and of itself, especially in families other than those in which men performed all kitchen-related tasks every day without exception. I observed that when men are involved in the process 90% or less, even the planning of the moments of this 90% involvement is usually determined by women or women have to be involved in determining it, because the initiation of all the steps, the successful transformation of each step into the next step and the successful completion of all the steps at the end emerges as a mental load for women. This allows for the reproduction of gender norms in the division of labor, whether visible or not. Because the home, and particularly the kitchen, continues to be the domain of women, even if a man does the cooking at the stove, women, who are the natural owners of this space, coordinate all other processes. Berrak, for instance, describes her relationship with her partner as follows:

“The mental part, again, because I know the things in the fridge, and at the same time, not to generalize men in general, but my husband needs directives more often in the kitchen when he is doing something. The question of how we used to do that, even if he has done it 80 times before, I can actually get this question again. So I have to think for him and tell him clearly what he should do so that we can reach the result.”  
(Berrak, Participant 47, 30y/o, Woman)

As in this example, mental loads that are not openly discussed or, even if they are, are not shared equally, create a constant monitoring task on a partner. In particular, situations such as knowing what is where in terms of space cause women to associate more with the kitchen. For this reason, people who do not receive directives while cooking need directives for the work before or after the meal. The giving and planning of this directive again becomes a workload on women and reinforces their relationship with the kitchen. In other words, a vicious cycle is developing. In order to eliminate inequalities in the kitchen, the unequal distribution of mental load is one of the first issues to be addressed.

From the opposite perspective, it was extremely difficult to identify a pattern in the steps that men frequently performed as a mental load on food and the kitchen. The

men who shared mental loads did not share mental loads in predictable patterns but rather shared different mental loads at random. This could involve sharing the mental load of tasks that they personally enjoyed, or it could involve sharing the mental load because their wife required it. Although I had a number of men participants who carried the mental loads typically assumed by women within their own families, I was unable to discern a pattern regarding which mental loads are frequently assumed by men and why. Nonetheless, it will be necessary to examine these individuals and households closely in order to comprehend the dynamics underlying egalitarian behavior. For instance, Erdem, who I think to be the most sensitive to this issue, described how the process works in all jobs requiring unpaid domestic labor, how they perceive the mental load in their households, and how it is distributed as follows:

“My wife takes care of these things like ironing etc. There has been a role distribution between us that has evolved over the years regarding many things. What we care more about our own interests, skills, and what we can do has turned into following up the work rather than doing the work, because that’s where the real burden is. The mental load created by keeping track of whether it is time to wash the laundry, which day it will be washed, whether the colored or white clothes will be washed, and what will be needed, rather than who throws the laundry into the washing machine, is much more. The question "What are we going to cook tonight?" in the morning is more difficult than making the meal because it includes things like what ingredients were in the house, what ingredients were missing, what to buy, and what not to buy. So we naturally divided these things among ourselves over time in accordance with our own pace of life. For example, my wife does the laundry and I do the kitchen. Since my job is more relaxed in terms of time compared to hers, I also keep track of a few other things related to the house. Also, since I lived in my own house for many years before I got married, I already have the instinct to do, follow and take care of many such things. When you do not do it, it starts to hurt at some point. [...] It is not different from being an office assistant. An office assistant is the hand and foot of the office because everyone goes to him/her with questions about everything, he/she has to keep track of everything and this is a serious burden. Same at home, there are tons of things to do and someone has to keep track of them”. (Erdem, Participant 3, 42y/o, Man)

At this point, in this household, unpaid domestic labor and mental load were openly discussed between the partners, and they considered how to divide the resulting burden, similar to my previous participant who took action. They also concentrated on how to construct the process from a more egalitarian perspective by allowing

for spontaneous dynamics. In general, I encountered this circumstance in numerous areas of this household. I can conclude from these two examples that open communication is crucial for the equitable distribution of mental load.

### 4.3 Cooking Together: Conflicts and Consensus

I mentioned that there are frequently unspoken processes in the formation of division of labor strategies and mental load processes, — in other words, people have often suggested that they somehow plan processes without speaking, without saying "You do this and I do that." So how did these situations really arise without talking? At this point, I focused my interest on the participants' experiences of entering the kitchen alone or with others. I made an effort to comprehend how the procedures operated when they were alone and when they were with a partner.

Most of participants preferred to cook alone. However, they did not want their partners to be too far away. The most common expectation was for one partner to be in the kitchen while the other cooked and for them to hold a conversation. This desire was more prevalent when cooking was a necessity rather than a pleasure. Miray, for example, preferred to have her partner in the kitchen even if he was not cooking, rather than being alone. She described the emerging feeling as follows:

“He sits next to me, he gives me psychological support because I have a hard time. He makes coffee, he smokes his cigarette next to me, and he plays games, so actually his presence is enough because I get very bored alone; I do not want to do anything, then it is even more like torture. Turning on music motivates me, but I cannot get motivated to cook, I do not know, listen to a book, listen to a podcast, listen to something; I try to shorten that free time that feels like torture, but it does not work that way. So I feel a little better when we go through the same torture together.” (Miray, Participant 32, 39y/o, Woman)

Although music or podcasts were not the best solutions for this participant, many of my other participants enjoyed listening to music while cooking. They preferred the sound of their partner's conversation to the sound of the kitchen itself, and if they were alone, they drowned out the sound of the kitchen with other instruments. This instrument is sometimes music and sometimes podcasts. In fact, music tastes are frequently related to how people relate to the kitchen. Suat, for example, explained how his music taste and working in the kitchen are related to each other as follows:

“I am an ethnic person, I like ethnic music a lot. It is not necessarily spoken but it can be instrumental. I usually listen to ethnic music; I mean I like Middle Eastern music a lot. I feel better with that music. Maybe it can also be related to identity. You know, that identity, and when identity, music, and kitchen come together, maybe it can turn into a space where I feel safe and peaceful.” (Suat, Participant 39, 34y/o, Man)

The sound of the kitchen itself, or in other words, silence, was unacceptable to my group of participants. Although I did not understand why at first, this process became more meaningful as we discussed engaging with the kitchen alone. When I asked the participants, "What goes through your head when you cook alone in the kitchen?" my expectation was to identify the thought patterns that people have in the kitchen. However, in order to prevent these thoughts from occurring, people either seek out another person's conversation or attempt to divert their attention with various instruments. Being alone in the kitchen, an action that requires certain fixed steps over a certain period of time actually means being alone with oneself. People enjoy this time alone, but they are hesitant to bring their daily problems into this time alone. Almost none of participants use this time alone to reflect on their daily problems or to plan for the future. They did not use this intimate moment alone with themselves to work through their issues. They likened everyday life to an outfit and tried to take it off before entering the kitchen. This resonated with me like taking off the everyday outfit and putting on a more sterile outfit when entering a professional kitchen. For example, Okan described this state of isolation as follows:

“I focus on music, I try to leave everything outside after I enter the house, which is a bit of a privacy zone because I have seen the damages of this in the periods when I did not leave it before; I think I achieved this by meditating within myself. I want to get away from this anyway, so I want to open music and so on, then I can focus more on what I do and I love music, music is an inseparable part of my life, as someone who tried to learn an instrument after my 30s, of course for certain reasons, because I would have liked to have done it earlier, but it was possible at this time. Since I love all kinds of music, music is something that can rehabilitate me, something that can separate me from the negative conditions in life, so when there is music, I can isolate myself from everything.” (Okan, Participant 41, 37y/o, Man)

Despite their efforts to avoid everyday life, some of them did not fully experience this detachment. I also had participants who watched opponent political commen-



tators such as Nevşin Mengü's broadcasts. At the end of the day, focusing on the content presented to them is a way to drown out the silence or noise of the kitchen. Otherwise, in silence, it can be very easy for them to start thinking about their daily lives. As with music, they may prefer the rhythms of their favorite news commentators to be in sync with the rhythms of the kitchen. For example, Gülce, the wife of my previous participant Okan, expressed this rhythm distinction most clearly as follows:

"You know how it works for me? I turn on Nevşin Mengü, she has a broadcast of about 40 minutes. That broadcast, which is very rarely 50 - 55 minutes, becomes a timer for me in the process of cooking, that is, starting and finishing the meal. I follow the day and I like Nevşin's voice. Why Nevşin and not Cüneyt Özdemir? You know, she speaks clearly, precisely, it helps me cook faster. I do not listen to music while cooking. Music is a more emotional process for me." (Gülce, Participant 45, 30y/o, Woman)

This situation actually made me realize that there is another point where food and kitchen processes differ from other household chores. Particularly because the cooking process is confined to a small space in the home and requires follow-up from beginning to end, it allows people to be alone with themselves. I do not interpret this as an indication that people fear being alone with themselves. Cooking, on the other hand, was beneficial to many of the participants, even therapeutic. For instance, Aytekin explained why he wanted to be in the kitchen, particularly during difficult times, as follows:

"I mean, I can say it like this, I mean, people have difficult times like this; there are times when they are stuck in a rut; I love cooking at those times, honestly. I think it is an activity that relaxes me, especially trying different recipes in those moments. I mean, it is a good feeling for me to see your own success there." (Aytekin, Participant 37, 29y/o, Man)

Rather than isolating themselves, as is the case here, people are trying to get away from the troubles of everyday life. They need to leave these things outside for a while to spend more quality time with themselves, or cooking is good for them because they have left these things outside.

Things are more complicated when it comes to the experience of cooking together than when cooking alone. This is where conflicts and compromises arise. Many households reported that strategies for dividing work and distributing mental load

had been developed without discussion. A closer look at these compromises and conflicts reveals important insights into how the status quo came to be.

Many couples expressed dissatisfaction with their joint cooking experiences. Joint cooking can be viewed as a direct division of the focal task, such as preparing the main course together, or as a side task, such as preparing salads. A large group of people who created space in the kitchen for their partner to chat expressed that they had conflicts with their partner during the joint cooking experience and that they should not interfere as much as possible. As a result, some partners prefer to take a passive position in order to suppress conflicts. For example, a participant woman in the household who experienced a similar conflict described how she purposefully took the following stance:

“It is a cramped feeling because our kitchen is small. I do not like working with someone in the kitchen but he likes it. Actually, I do not know, sometimes he pretends to like it and sometimes he claims that I interfere with his work too much. It is not bad actually; I mean, if we are in a good mood, we work very harmoniously and come up with something good, but there is something like this, I believe that while he thinks we are working harmoniously, I actually pull myself down, that is, I lower my own voice because even if I am not happy with something he does if I choose not to say it at that moment, we are working harmoniously. That also depends on my mood. Will I prefer to work harmoniously or not, will I interfere or not interfere, if I choose not to interfere, we work harmoniously; otherwise it can be a place in the kitchen where we can cause unrest. Because we may not like each other’s way of doing business.” (Berrak, Participant 47, 30y/o, Woman)

In these conflicts, different partners can help solve the problem by taking a passive role, or they can leave the kitchen entirely. According to some of the participants, this situation was more severe, particularly in the early days of living together, and could even lead to various conflicts. The main reason at this point was a lack of rhythm and priorities in the kitchen. For example, one partner may believe that the necessary steps to finish the meal should be completed without interruption, whereas the other partner believes that the kitchen should be cleaned in between. People can avoid such conflicts by focusing on their own prioritized work items. A participant woman in a household that uses such a solution to find rhythm in the kitchen explains how she positions herself in the process as follows:

“Actually, since we do not cook many different kinds of food, we share the same food, we prefer one or two kinds of food at most, we do not

cook three kinds of food at the same time for two people. X [says her partner's name] usually makes the dominant main dish because he is good at that stage and he likes it. For example, if breakfast is prepared, X [says her partner's name] cooks the eggs, I am in the middle of setting the plate, the table, I mean the side part, like cutting the tomatoes and cucumbers. Or while the meal is being cooked, I do more of the time-consuming but side items like salads so that X [says her partner's name] can enjoy it with the main course, because he likes it because he also likes to stir a dish while it is cooking, I do not look for such things for a long time, I am more of a "let's get it done" person, so I am more of a tidying person, and I am also used to tidying up while I am doing it. By the time I eat, there are no dishes left. That is why X [says her partner's name] is still at the stage of making the meal, and I play a role more often at the stage of making the side parts and supporting him." (Sinem, Participant 21, 26y/o, Woman)

When such attempts are made, but the rhythm and priorities do not match, the partners try to pull each other into their own style, which eventually leads to conflict. Underneath such conflicts and rhythmic differences, I frequently encountered another aspect of mental load. Because, as in the previous example, the fact that the partner will bear the burden of cleaning up after the meal creates a demand to work more cleanly during the meal preparation process. On the other hand, if the cooking process is simply cooking at the stove, the priority for the other partner is to ensure that all of the steps of that process are completed and timed correctly. Because men, particularly those who cook for pleasure, concentrate solely on this step, it is not surprising that conflict is common in their households. As a result, the person responsible for cleaning begins cleaning from the frontlines as soon as the meal begins. In this way, they hope to reduce the enormous burden at the end of the meal. Other conflicts may arise if this side cleaning interferes with the meal.

Another point of contention is who will oversee the joint cooking process. People, as previously stated, have their own routines, rhythms, and priorities. This makes putting the same amount of effort into the same dish at the same time difficult. As a result, one person usually takes the initiative, while the other person completes the tasks delegated to them. This situation was more intense than I had anticipated. In the kitchen, couples' relationships were frequently described as master-apprentice or chef-pupil. The master-chef plans, manage the process, determines the necessary steps, and delegates work as needed. Simultaneously, the master-chef intervenes in many of the other's steps, from the size of the vegetables cut to the stirring of the food in the pan. The person who watches what the other person is doing out of the corner of his or her eye gains power over the other. They intervene when necessary. If he or she does not like the work, he or she becomes angry and may even kick the

other out of the kitchen if the situation persists. In contrast, the apprentice-pupil completes the tasks assigned to him/her and tries very hard to meet the required standards. If the interventions become too much for them, they will occasionally leave the kitchen voluntarily. Couples may even stop cooking together if this tension is not relieved at some point. This tension is usually reduced through compromise, with the apprentice expressing his/her discomfort and stating that if this continues, he/she will not help in the kitchen. Partners in some households recognized the emergence of such a hierarchy and attempted to describe the situation directly from the interview process using expressions like master-apprentice or chef-pupil. A man household member who witnessed such an observation summarizes the situation as follows:

“I always see something missing. When I tell her what is missing, she gets uncomfortable, she gets uncomfortable being watched. I can’t stand it either, I can’t stop saying, ‘That’s not the way to do it; that is the way to do it’. That is why she doesn’t like me contributing. I don’t like it like this either; when I ask her for help when I am doing something, she says, ‘You are the cook; I am the apprentice. You make me do it in such a hierarchy. That’s why she doesn’t like it. Plus, I don’t like what she does in general. For example, when I say, ‘Give me a container’, there are times when she doesn’t give me the appropriate container. And I say sentences like ‘Can you do that in that?’. I want it to be a process that I enjoy, so I prefer to do it myself. I mean, it is better for me if there is little or no help.” (İhsan, Participant 24, 39y/o, Man)

The professionalization of the home kitchen, which I mentioned in previous chapters, is brought up again here. Two people divide the processes in the home kitchen into various stations, and the person who cooks the food assumes the role of executive chef. Yavuz, for example, describes this type of station division as follows:

“I am the cook and she is like my pupil. For example, I peel zucchini, I give it to her, she slices it. I peel the peppers, clean the inside, give them to her and she slices them. Then, when something is frying in the pan, she takes over the pan. But usually, I direct them, but it is a collective thing; it is a cooking process.” (Yavuz, Participant 19, 39y/o, Man)

One of the reasons why men are more visible in the kitchen may be due to the professionalization of the kitchen. It is an important indicator that men frequently use expressions like master-apprentice or chef-pupil to describe these processes of conflict and compromise. Whether they are master chefs or their partners, this

situation brings them to a professional kitchen. These are no longer conflicts and compromises between partners, but rather between two professionals. The only difference is that if you are an apprentice, you will find that the resignation process, which would be difficult in a professional kitchen, is much easier in professional kitchens at home. In fact, if the conflict results in such resignation, men are often eager to carve out new spaces for themselves. They prefer to enter the kitchen alone, rather than with their partner, and be their own boss. One of the men participants even realized that these conflicts create uncertainty about who has control of the kitchen. He describes their household's hegemonic conflict as follows:

“If there is already one person in the kitchen, it can be difficult to work together with the second person. One person has hegemony, the second person is the sidekick. Or when you ask for something, it can be perceived that way. When you say do this or that, it can be perceived as if you know a lot. The kitchen is an area where we sometimes clash. Dominance, hegemony is always a question mark.” (Cahit, Participant 2, 36y/o, Man)

The conflicts and compromises I have discussed in this chapter continue deep into the process of sharing the kitchen. The resulting hierarchy and kitchen transformation demonstrate how the home kitchen swings between being a feminine and masculine space. Despite these changes, there are still some questions about whose space the kitchen is. In this context, I tried to develop a distinct viewpoint on whose space the kitchen is, despite conflicts and compromises.

#### **4.4 Whose Space is the Kitchen?**

The last issue I would like to touch upon in relation to home kitchens is the issue of whose space the kitchen is. This issue is actually an area where the reflections of all the ways of relating I have mentioned above fall. The extent to which people experience the kitchen alone or together, as well as the extent to which they own and shape it, gives important clues. This also paves the way for us to understand how men's experiences of the kitchen today are related to the fact that home kitchens are seen as feminine spaces.

How can we decide whose space the kitchen is? First of all, we can ask people. But instead of asking people, it would be more informative to look at the dynamics

behind these statements by looking at the ways of relating to the kitchen. For this reason, I tried to get information from the participants around two themes, the first of which was "Who knows which items are where in the kitchen?" and the second was "How does this process work when something new is to be bought in the kitchen?".

Who knows where items are located in the kitchen is a multifaceted question. This question was frequently interpreted as "Who purchased the items in the kitchen?" However, it is equally important to know the permanent location of an object as it is to determine its initial location. This is why the section on dish washing in the six steps of cooking provided such valuable information. When describing the steps, I mentioned that men typically loaded the dishwasher, while women typically emptied it. For instance, Sinem described their experience with this circumstance as follows:

“I can say that X [she says her partner’s name] follows an order I have created. In my opinion, I feel comfortable, his mind is at ease, you know, there is no planning and intensive part, for example, he leaves that place. Even for example, when the dishwasher is being put back together, some materials are left on the table; he says he did not know where to put them. We use it every week, 2-3 times a week, but I put it in its place, for example.” (Sinem, Participant 21, 26y/o, Woman)

However, would not the optimization equations apply when loading the dishwasher also be useful when putting it back? I realized with the participants at this point that the vast majority of women know the fixed location of the items, so they are the ones who have the task of emptying the dishwasher. Though, how did the people who had trouble placing the pot because they did not know where it was finding it when they were cooking again? Actually, it is not difficult to find something visible after a few attempts. However, determining which space the item in your hand belongs to is another mental load. The area to be occupied is larger than the dishwasher; it takes up the whole kitchen. As a result, keeping track of the location of each item, putting things back in order if they have occupied each other’s places, and managing the processes by which many moving items, such as dishes, return to their places, is a mental load. Otherwise, randomly placed items will end up somewhere. However, not having that item available for the next cooking process causes a disruption in the process. To overcome these disruptions, a series of mental processes must first be completed. Things must be placed in their proper places as part of this process. As a result, participants frequently stated that women back-empty the dishes. When I asked who was in charge of the dishes, I was frequently told that it was the person who loaded the dishes’ responsibility. However, the

workload difference between loading and unloading is not significant. The mental load of the unloading step is once again invisible, and putting clean objects in one place is perceived as having a much lower workload than putting dirty objects in a basket. Again, this demonstrates how mental load sneaks in between tasks.

I pointed out that the question "who knows the location of the existing items?" is confused with "who bought the existing items and decided on their location?" At this point, I elaborated with the participants on the process that occurs when a new item for the home is purchased. This procedure is divided into three stages: determining the need for the item to be purchased, conducting market research, and making the purchase. There may be differences in patterns between partners when it comes to identifying a need and making a purchase. Men frequently purchase items that complete a specific process. Every kitchen item serves a specific purpose. For example, a saucepan for cooking and a dish rack for drying washed dishes. However, what men focus on that necessitates a specific process frequently differs from everyday tools. These tools could include a cast iron pan carefully chosen for cooking meat or knives for various purposes. These tools are typically purchased and used by men in the kitchen processes that men manage. Because these tools are different from standard tools and are required for the processes I mentioned in the previous chapters, which are the reasons why men enter the kitchen, their absence is usually noticed by men. Similarly, men participants frequently stated that they prefer to buy effective tools, whereas their partners prefer to shop for aesthetic concerns. For example, Yalvaç described how their household's purchasing processes began as follows:

“Now we are like this, especially in the kitchen; I focus on things that are useful from a professional point of view, while my wife looks at the whole house in a much more aesthetic sense, including the kitchen. Of course, she is more on the aesthetic side of things, she wants things that look good, that look aesthetic and beautiful rather than effective. Me, it does not matter if it is ugly; does it work? Ok, I mean. I am a little bit there; that is how we look at it. Our kitchen is actually a mixture of both. I mean, we have knives that cut well rather than a very nice knives, but on the other hand, we have very nice-looking cups for making coffee. Let me put it like that. I do not interfere with that either, because for me there is no difference between a normal glass and a very beautiful glass for drinking coffee, but if it is useful for something, for example, a knife, it is important for me that it cuts well rather than being beautiful. You know what I mean? We have such a thing, we have a point of view. She actually beautifies our house, and I make sure that it is comfortable to use. We have such a division of labor.” (Yalvaç, Participant 28, 39y/o, Man)

The term professionalization here can also be read as a sign of the transformation of home kitchens, which I mentioned earlier, by professionalizing them. When planning purchases, as in the case of this participant, men initiate the purchase of necessities that they see as professional. Klasson and Ulver (2015) argue in their study that men value their own kitchen gadgets and that these gadgets serve to masculinising domesticity. This demonstrates that kitchen gadgets are an important source of data for understanding the transformation of the meaning of the kitchen and people's relationships with the kitchen. When I asked both men and women participants which items women in the household identify the need for, the answer was almost always glassware. The definition of glassware here can include basic tools such as plates, cups or cutlery, as well as specific but low-value items such as special strainers for rice. According to women, men fail to recognize the importance of these tools. When I ask women about the tools on men's radar, they say they would be nice to have, but it is not the end of the world if they do not have them. There is a sense of division of labor here because different partners recognize different needs. However, when we look closely at the needs, I can see traces of the findings I mentioned in previous chapters here again. Men's shopping preferences, for example, reflect the fact that the kitchen has become professionalized and no longer a female domain. Going beyond daily needs, acquiring special tools for special meals, and creating a toolbox for their own use are all examples of professionalization efforts. Keeping track of what needs to be purchased to ensure the continuity of kitchen processes, on the other hand, appears to be a mental load. Once again, women take on the majority of this burden.

Finally, in this section, I would like to touch on the meanings attached to the space and non-food activities. When we talk to the participants about their personal histories, the image of their mothers often comes to mind in their family kitchens. In particular, regardless of whether they have a professional job or not, women who do not let others into the kitchen and who are the masters of this kitchen come to the fore. For their mothers, the kitchen almost serves as an office. Mothers who carry out all the processes of the house use the kitchen as an office. They conduct their meetings with family members or others in these offices. For example, Serpil described this relationship between her father's mother and her mother and the kitchen as follows:

“My father used to go to the kitchen when they had problems with their mother; all three sons used to talk about all their problems with women with their mother in the kitchen. If the son was in a bad mood, he would go to the kitchen with his mother, the kitchen door would be closed and they would talk there. Talking in the kitchen, they would talk to their



sons there, or me; for example, while my mother or my sisters-in-law were washing the dishes, I would go and chat with them or the sisters-in-law would talk in the kitchen, one would wash the dishes, one would put them away, and so on, and they would gossip at that time.” (Serpil, Participant 7, 42y/o, Woman)

I came across these kitchens as a source of distress and as a source of gossip. Although the house has a male-dominated structure, the kitchen is coded as a female-dominated space. Participants frequently attributed this to their desire to keep others out of their mothers’ kitchens. For them, it was the domain of their mothers, and they did not want any other authority in this space. When I examined the partners’ division of labor, I noticed that the execution of the main meal process makes the person who executes that process the hegemon of the kitchen at that time. From this point of view, I argue that the establishment of the relationship between the execution of the main process in the kitchen and the establishment of the relationship between kitchen power has lasted generations. The only difference is that this hegemony lends itself better to division. Participants’ mothers, according to their stories, did not even share kitchen hegemony with other men, whereas today’s participants are willing to share this hegemony between partners. They are more aware of the responsibilities that come with hegemony, and they have expectations of the other partner on a variety of issues. Even when fathers are involved in the kitchen in family homes, the mother’s clear kitchen hegemony is not questioned, if at all. Even if the father cooks in the kitchen, it is consistently stated that the kitchen is the mother’s domain.

The transition between generations is about more than just who the hegemon is. At the same time, the physical changes in today’s home kitchens parallel the shift in generational relationships with the kitchen. A large number of participants expressed dissatisfaction with the small size of their kitchens and how different they were from family kitchens. Participants specifically mentioned that kitchens today are smaller than family homes. Their mothers’ office space is no longer so majestic. Even in today’s small kitchens, partners expect the other to be present and chat, if not to give direct support. However, even for these conversations, these kitchens no longer have enough space. In fact, many of the participants felt that their kitchens were too small to accommodate even one person. Metin, for example, explained how having a second person in the kitchen creates a space issue:

“We do not have that kind of space in the current house, because the kitchen is about what? It is like 4 square meters. It is really small and I am more planned; I do not know when something is cooking, I tidy up,

this has to be done more often because the kitchen is so small, a second person creates chaos, but in the previous house we moved in about 6 months ago, we were enjoying it in the previous house. We were in a structure where I was still managing it, giving her small tasks. [...] We were able to move here under the condition that you will not interfere in my kitchen. And what was the plus? Because it is an American type, you know, since this living room and kitchen are together, it made our childcare life much easier. We saw a very big plus.” (Metin, Participant 49, 27y/o, Man)

Many participants thought that spatial narrowness made conflicts more likely. For a small number of participants, as in this example, their kitchens were included in their living rooms. Although this situation does not replace the kitchens of their families, it provides the opportunity to socialize with other members of the family while carrying out kitchen processes. For example, İrfan explained why they consciously preferred a house with a kitchen included in the living room against today’s kitchens that are shrinking and losing their sociability:

“We were in the hometown during the period of the pandemic, we were not in Konya; we were living in Ordu at that time. The main reason we were there while we were living in Ordu was that construction was being built on the existing land and houses were being built by the contractor company on our behalf. When we were drawing the plan of the houses, the result was that we chose the living space in the summer house there according to what is called the open kitchen, American kitchen. Not the American kitchen in the house we live in here; here it is closed. The house we live in here in Konya is a normal standard house with a separate kitchen. But in the house in the cottage, we preferred the open kitchen, American kitchen style, and kitchen style combined with the living room because we wanted to have constant communication with the kitchen, to have the kitchen included in the living space, so we preferred the architecture in this direction. Hopefully, when we retire and return to our own house when we settle in the summer house, we have shaped the architecture accordingly so that the kitchen will be more in life. So the kitchen is always in our lives. There is no such thing as her space, my space. Children love it too. I mean, spending time in the kitchen, going in and out of the kitchen, looking at what is going on in the kitchen. When one of the adults is in the kitchen, they ask, what are you doing, you can sit at the kitchen table and chat. I mean, I do not know, the living room, is already in the summer house, and there is constant communication right after the living room. The balcony is also accessed from there, there is communication between the kitchen and the balcony. There are constant tea and coffee services, the kitchen is constantly in our lives. There is no such thing as his or mine. The kitchen is in everyone’s life.” (İrfan, Participant 36, 27y/o, Man)

The old independent large family kitchens had their own social networks. It is now more difficult to establish these social networks due to their downsizing. Being an independent space is no longer sufficient at some point. As a result, as in this example, an association with the living room, which is the intersection of the last remaining social networks in the home, emerges. At the same time, modern kitchens present a trade-off in terms of whether or not they are integrated into the living room. To summarize, the dynamics between partners with compromises or conflicts are not only determined by the relationships within the kitchen. In terms of physical space and physical location, it also determines the dynamics between partners. In this regard, I would even say that it creates its own areas and dynamics of compromise or conflict. To summarize, the kitchen does not only determine the dynamics between partners, with compromises or conflicts based on the actions that take place in it; it also determines the dynamics between partners in terms of its physical space and physical location. In this respect, I can even say that it creates its own areas and dynamics of compromise or conflict.

## 5. MEN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE KITCHEN DURING PERIODS OF TRANSFORMATION IN THEIR LIVES

Until this point in the thesis, I had concentrated on the routines of the households I interviewed, attempting to observe how gender norms are embedded in these routines and where differences exist. It is frequently beneficial to examine routines in order to observe norms. Routines contain numerous social phenomena as a result of their invisible burdens. As a result, when I chose a participant group, I required that they have shared the same household for at least two years. With this requirement, I hoped that a routine would be established in their households. These routines were easily identified in the interviews. However, life does not consist solely of routines. People must break their routines for a variety of reasons. Sometimes they start university and leave their routines at home, and other times they suffer great losses, and their routines undergo significant change as a result of their mourning process. Even if these changes cause some uncertainty, it is common to return to or create a new routine. Temporary and permanent routines formed as a result of major changes can reveal different information than long-standing routines. A few questions arose in my mind at this point. Do these new routines feed on pre-existing norms as they emerge? Is the new routine more innovative or conservative than the old one? How much can routines change social norms? To discuss all of these questions, it is necessary to observe a process of change in an existing routine; otherwise, if this new routine is only temporary, answering these questions will be technically difficult.

While conducting my research, I came across two critical routine changes that I could examine. The first was the pandemic-related changes, which I also felt strongly about. These changes had the potential to establish a temporary routine. I came across a circumstance where I could gain in-depth perspectives on a variety of topics, including what happened when establishing a temporary routine, the feelings for the previous routine contained within the current routine, and the actions taken to reinstate the previous routine. Another significant routine change is the situation

of having children, which I did not have but which 22 of the participants did. The addition of a new family member, whose needs are ever-changing and necessitate a corresponding reorganization of the home, is also one of the most significant routine changes. It is similar to a pandemic in that it requires immediate solutions and disrupts the current routine. In fact, having a child is a situation that can force people to change their routine unexpectedly, much like a pandemic. However, unlike the pandemic, it is extremely difficult to return to the old routine once the child is included in the family. As a result, both having a child and the pandemic had the potential to produce similar and dissimilar patterns in changing routines. In this chapter, I will look at how these drastic changes in routines have affected households, how they have transformed kitchen and food-related processes, and how men have responded.

### **5.1 It is Time to Bake Bread: Engaging with the Kitchen During the Pandemic.**

The Covid-19 pandemic first appeared in the world in December 2019, and in Turkey in March 2020. Covid-19, which began to have an impact in many countries almost immediately after it was discovered, was a game-changing situation in many ways. While hundreds of thousands of people died, many more suffered from severe Covid-related symptoms. States were slow to manage the process. People's lives were changed in numerous ways as a result of the crisis and chaos.

The progression of the Covid-19 pandemic in Turkey has been unpredictable. There was a lot of worry after the first case was discovered. Schools were closed, and university students were sent home immediately. State officials stated that these measures were only temporary until the situation was brought under control. In addition to these optimistic statements, a nearly two-year pandemic has begun. Schools have shifted to online education. Many businesses temporarily stopped production, while others allowed employees to work from home. Even with these precautions, the pandemic's spread could not be stopped. Because a sizable portion of the country needed to work in crowded places, such as factories, to keep the wheels of industry turning. Masks and other basic necessities could not be provided. Major lockdowns were declared in order to prevent the general situation from worsening and the healthcare system from collapsing.

As I saw in the testimonies of participants, the major lockdowns initially brought relief as well as anxiety. Despite the anxiety caused by the health crises, many people began to consider the possibility of not working or working from home. If someone had said a few years ago that a significant number of workers would work from home, they would have been laughed at. In fact, he or she would have listened to preachers who claimed that global systems could never handle such a thing and that working life should be spent online. This unexpected pandemic has actually caused us to re-experience industrial life. When the initial anxiety gave way to long-term uncertainty, people gradually began to adapt to processes such as working from home. People enhanced their working environments by purchasing additional items such as monitors or office chairs. The establishment of home offices also abruptly altered the relationship with the home. To put it simply, the time spent traveling between home and office became their own. Even processes such as getting dressed and getting ready have been left to the people, because let's face it, we've all attended at least one Zoom meeting in our pyjamas. The lack of an office has caused many people's shifts to be longer than they should have been. However, when we look at the big picture, we must admit that there is a surplus of time. Lockdowns, for example, have made it necessary for this extra time to be spent at home.

We must address the increased responsibilities in addition to the increased time. The main topics of these increased responsibilities were the withdrawal of outside cleaning assistance on a weekly basis, as well as the closure of daycare centers and schools where children were sent. Simultaneously, the need to keep a place where 24 hours of time is spent more collectively, as well as the increasing need for hygienic cleaning due to pandemic fear, contributed to these workloads. At the end of the day, households had to balance increased workload with increased time spent at home.

Before presenting the main findings on the pandemic, I tried to convey how participants experienced the process based on their narratives. At this point, I should point out that this situation was also true for the middle and upper-middle class white-collar groups I interviewed. In fact, there were a few people in the group I interviewed who had to physically continue working from the first day of the pandemic because they were managers. Apart from this group, especially blue-collar workers, as I mentioned before, had to work to keep the wheels of the industry turning. Many of them even risked their lives without taking precautions. Likewise, almost all health workers continued to work physically, even more than their usual workload. The situation was the same for the 3 health workers I interviewed. Therefore, the definition of context above is far from fully reflecting even the group I interviewed. How each group experiences the process is an intersectional phenomenon.

Many factors such as class, education, and ethnicity changed the way people experienced the pandemic period. At this point, studies that look at the pandemic period intersectionally can provide information on how each group experiences the pandemic process (Aygüneş and Ok 2020).

The dynamics of shopping were the first to change as a result of the pandemic process in kitchen routines. The inability to go out on the streets due to the pandemic, the inability to enter crowded places such as markets, and increased online shopping opportunities have all been major drivers of this change, in my opinion. During the pandemic, almost all of the participants started shopping online or increased their frequency. For example, Arsen describes the transformation of household shopping organization as follows:

“It had a very serious impact on the food supply. Before we were not buying from the market again, for example, we preferred to shop from the farmers’ market, there was a farmers’ market near us, we used to go there every Monday and shop weekly, but since the pandemic, online shopping has made it very easy, and since it allows us to access organic products as much as possible without pesticides, we have started to buy almost 100% of our fruit and vegetable shopping, I should say 90%, usually from the Internet, and we rarely buy from the farmers’ market anymore.” (Arsen, Participant 35, 35y/o, Woman)

Many participants began to shop online in similar ways and stated that they continued to do so even after the effects of the pandemic faded away. This change can also be said to have a direct impact on the shopping step in meal preparation. Although the participants stated that they do physical shopping together, it appears that women have become more heavily involved in online shopping. When comparing various online shopping applications, women participants stated that they use these applications more frequently than their husbands. This was a new mental load for women, as I mentioned in the steps leading up to dinner. Another factor that contributed to this situation’s occurrence is the economic difficulties caused by the pandemic. Because the main motivation, in this case, is to find a cheap product as well as a good product. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, women who install online applications for a variety of services on their phones prefer the company that offers the best campaign at the time they are shopping. Because these campaigns cover different product groups, the shopping process has become fragmented. As a result of tracking the products that are on sale and will be needed in the near future, the old routine of monthly bulk shopping and the most available person buying a few small items from the market on the way home as needs arise has

evolved into a routine of multi-part online shopping. The invisible labor involved in fridge tracking and shopping has been fragmented as a result. Instead of reducing the impact of labor, fragmentation has allowed for this work to be spread out over longer periods of time. As a result, more people are following online markets and browsing the discounts every other day. Because this mental load is now part of their daily routine, they run the risk of becoming invisible. Although some households have begun to resume their old physical grocery shopping routines as the pandemic has ended, online shopping continues to play a significant role in households.

I mentioned that the pandemic has led to an increase in the time spent at home in many households. Especially after the initial shock period, participants said that they started various efforts to make use of this extra time they had. Suat shared his strategies to utilize this time as follows:

“Of course, we did more things in the kitchen. That period, that is a good question, like this, we managed to try new things, things we had not done at home before because of time constraints, because of work. You go to work, you come, the road takes a long time. When that did not happen, we had tantuni nights; for example, I dice very well, and I make everything tiny. That is how I use that knife. You know, while I am making them, my wife is doing something with the chicken. You know, the lavash is very good, we go, we take it out of the oven and bring it. For example, we used to make tantuni every week, 1 day a week. For example, you normally eat tantuni outside, it is not something you bring home or make at home. Lasagna was the first thing we started making at home during the pandemic. It was a process of discovering things that we had not tried, that we did not know, that we had not done before. In this context, the pandemic was not like stay at home, stay alive, but when we stayed at home, there were opportunities to do new things in the kitchen because, as I said, time is both temporal, the relationship between time and space disappears, but it is flexible, there is a wide time, we had the opportunity to turn to different things. We both tried to do this. I mean, we made different kinds of eggs for breakfast this time. In this sense, the pandemic was enriching.” (Suat, Participant 39, 34y/o, Man)

As in this example, almost all participants stated that they chose the kitchen to make use of the time they had. In this process, they had both time and motivation to try different dishes. One of the reasons for this can be seen as the inability to order food from outside or even buy bread. This situation encouraged people to produce at home. Since the need had to be realized at some point, using it as a leisure activity was a priority for almost all participants. Especially making things like bread and



sharing these products on platforms such as social media were processes that many people witnessed during this period. Many people even made these dishes visible on social media. Yalvaç summarized their behaviors at that time as follows:

“Always sharing posts on Instagram, we made bread, we made cake, we made something. It happened, unfortunately, I am ashamed of that thing right now, but there was such a period. Everyone made a lahmacun, a bread, so we did it too. No one should hide it, no. We did it too. Ours is even an exaggeration because we know a little bit about the business; I was sharing stories like this for a while, we are going to Far Eastern cuisine today, or something like that. Today we are in Italy, risotto or something like that. People just share bread; I made this and that from Italian cuisine; I made this and that from Spanish cuisine. I mean, we were like, what are we doing? I think everyone questioned themselves after a while. We also fell into that, yes. I mean, we did it.” (Yalvaç, Participant 28, 39y/o, Man)

The mass sharing of what people do with hashtags such as #makingbreadathome (#evdeekmek) is an area that other research has also focused on. For example, according to Gargacı Kınay and Aşan (2021), this behavior has become a "recreational" activity that includes reflexive experience, the experience of success, positive affect, therapeutic experience, family togetherness experience and sociability in addition to the attempt to access healthy food.

People now have more time than ever before to reproduce essential foods. It also gave them the opportunity to try out new recipes. At this point, we see men attempting to cook dishes they have never attempted before. However, I have noticed that these new experiments are not about everyday meals, one-pot meals, or vegetable dishes, but rather about things like pizza, which is frequently purchased ready-made from outside, or meat by purchasing new cast iron pans. Yavuz, for example, explains how he uses his increased domestic time in this regard as follows:

“Since we spent more time at home, we spent more time on food. It was a bit better in that respect. You are more involved in the kitchen. [...] For example, I had been thinking for a long time that I should make pizza, I went and bought a pizza stone and made pizza. I can say that I did some things that I had postponed. Again, I bought the KitchenAid at the same time, instead of kneading the dough by hand, I said, let me buy the machine; I said it is something that can be used for years; I will use it.” (Yavuz, Participant 19, 39y/o, Man)

As stated in the quote, the new dishes that are actually tried are those that make people feel good. People can purchase a variety of new tools for these endeavors, including pizza stones, ovens, mixers, cookers, and cast-iron pans. An important finding to note here is the contexts in which interaction with the kitchen increases as domestic labor increases. We can see from the participants' narratives that, aside from basic meals to meet the daily nutritional needs of the household, meals eaten and cooked as a hobby or to make oneself happy predominate. As a result, I cannot claim that increased time and interest are always reflected in domestic dynamics from an egalitarian standpoint. Kitchen interest that emerges during special times, such as a pandemic, does not always have to spread to all areas. In fact, because these interviews were conducted in the final months of the pandemic, there may be men who still think of this temporary and specific interest and define themselves in relation to the kitchen. If I were to do the interviews again in a few years' time, it is likely that some of this group would have distanced themselves from the kitchen. This is because I heard from participants that as the pandemic ended, their relationship with the kitchen began to return to pre-pandemic levels. Of course, because the majority of participants had been cooking for others prior to the pandemic, the point of return was not outside the kitchen. At the same time, considering that this pattern exists in both men and women, an imagined increase in culinary interest caused by the pandemic should be approached with caution. Many more patterns will emerge from the group that only became interested in cooking during the pandemic. At this point, I had only two participants who stated that their interest in the kitchen increased as a result of the pandemic and remained that way.

I also noticed that the pandemic had altered participants' dietary habits. With the pandemic, the majority of participants stated that they began to eat more regularly and healthier, reduced their ready-to-eat habits, and began to have longer-term relationships with the kitchen. While some of them continued this new pattern in the post-pandemic period, a significant number of them claimed that it returned to pre-pandemic levels. Another group concentrated on the dangers of attempting new things during the pandemic. The fact that the new things tried were mostly fast food, sugary-carbohydrate meals, and cooking frequently raised some health concerns. For example, Remzi, who saw the effects of the increased time and food variety during the pandemic period as long-term weight gain, summarized the situation as follows:

“Now, for example, let me put it this way, at that time we tried a lot of things ourselves at home. I mean, we made different cakes, we made

cakes, we made cookies. We even made minced meat *pide*, and cheese *pide* at home. After that, we made them ourselves, just like in a normal bakery. I even gained some weight there, in fact. I lost a little bit later, but at that time I had gained a lot of weight. In fact, at that time, our meal times went to very different points. I mean, for example, we were cooking in the middle of the night, we had things like that. We were doing it in the mornings too. I mean, our day and night were quite mixed up there. And as I said, we were bored at home, so we would say let's go to the kitchen. We were doing things like that.” (Remzi, Participant 27, 52y/o, Man)

Some of the participants felt that the situation was not progressing in the right direction, so they intervened and worked to change their pandemic patterns before the pandemic ended. This effort was usually manifested as a return to more balanced and healthier vegetable-meat pot meals. Others saw the pandemic as an opportunity to change their diet to include more healthy meals. With the pandemic, these households, which were more fast-food oriented prior to the pandemic, began to spend more time in the kitchen. Participants who attributed their pre-pandemic meal patterns to a lack of time to care for the kitchen stated that they used the extra time during the pandemic to do so. For example, Aytakin who believed he had experienced this type of positive transformation stated:

“Obviously, in our normal life, fast food used to take more place in our lives. This has become much, much less. I mean, even when I prefer something from outside, I do not remember eating a healthier burger for a very long time, for example. Those kinds of things, but healthy foods, such as vegetables and legumes, have entered our lives more. As the pandemic situation decreased, this situation reversed, of course, unfortunately, as the workload increased, there was a return to fast food.” (Aytakin, Participant 37, 29y/o, Man)

The return that this participant stated towards the end was a situation experienced by many of the participants who thought that there were positive transformations with the pandemic. With the end of the effects of the pandemic, there was a decrease in the time spent at home. This decrease caused people to return to their old norms. For this reason, as in the example given by this participant, people had difficulty maintaining even the attitudes they thought were positive.

With the pandemic, the need for unpaid domestic labor increased in parallel with the increase in time (Farré et al. 2022; Ilkkaracan and Memiş 2021). It has been frequently stated in various studies that the increased workload has largely been

added to women's workload. This situation was frankly not surprising. Even before the pandemic, studies on unpaid care at home had argued that men were initially involved in housework in scenarios where their time was extended, such as paternity leave, and that this involvement decreased after a certain period of time (Hook 2010). Therefore, in a similar way, even if increased time at home had a positive effect on men's involvement in housework in the first place, it was very likely that there would be a decline in involvement as this period lengthened. Moreover, in a scenario such as the pandemic, where the need for unpaid domestic labor is increasing, the burden on women could be expected to increase almost logarithmically. A comment that can be seen as a sign of this came from a participant woman as follows:

“The pandemic period generally affected our diet, our sleeping hours, everything. Our lives have been completely turned upside down. Everyone being at home, the comfort of no work tomorrow, no school, I do not know, sitting until the morning, getting up late at noon, really disrupted our order, but it was a great pleasure to be at home, the home environment. Maybe it would be a bit boring if everyone left and we stayed, but of course, we enjoyed it when everyone was at home. (Oğuz: How was it for the children, I mean what was the experience of spending 2 years with children in this way?) It was very challenging. I was really begging God, please let them go to boarding schools, let them stay for a while, let me miss them a little bit. It was a period when they were fighting with each other a little bit, you can imagine that it was very difficult for the mothers.” (Esra, Participant 50, 45y/o, Woman)

Although this participant thought that being together was a pleasure, she emphasized that this period became more difficult, especially with children. In my interviews, I also thought that this increasing need for care was not always observed correctly by men. For example, a participant man made the following comment:

“Pandemic period was not a difficult time for me, but it was very difficult for X [says his partner's name] and the children. Not for a certain period, the first 3 months, 5 months, but then it was difficult. Three people hanging out in the same house; one is a child, one is a teenager, and one is at work, it was difficult. It was very difficult for them. But of course, when you spend so much time in the house, there are no problems like cleaning and cooking. Because there is already so much time that all these things are done somehow.” (Müfit, Participant 25, 52y/o, Man)

My participant was part of the group that kept working during the pandemic. He is well aware of the increased unpaid labor at home as a result of this phase. However,

he believed that the increased time spent at home would mitigate this labor. For that kind of reason, I think that unpaid labor on women increased logarithmically during the pandemic, as suggested by the literature. Because the extra time creates myopia about the importance of housework. This myopia is caused by viewing the change during the pandemic solely as increased free time and ignoring the increasing mental load. As Esra pointed out, the pandemic has made it difficult to plan how to meet unpaid labor demands because it has disrupted all household routines, from sleeping to eating. As a result, there is an increase in free time spent at home, but I have also noticed an increase in a workload such as mental load, which is difficult to see in normal times.

One of the factors that made this process even more difficult was the presence of children. Because of the pandemic, mechanisms that reduce the burden of care labor, such as outsourcing cleaning services or sending children to school and kindergarten, were unavailable during this time. Similarly, care labor support from family elders decreased during this time period. As a result, men spending more time in the kitchen, even if just for enjoyment, were viewed as an important support mechanism for women. However, given the increasing burden, I have found that this assistance is insufficient in many households.

## 5.2 When the Child Gets into the Game

I conduct detailed research with adults with their permission in order to understand the emotions-dynamics behind specific processes such as housework. When it comes to childcare labor, however, a non-adult variable enters the picture. Understanding the emotional bonds that parents form with their children, in particular, is not something that can be accomplished with a few questions from this type of research. At this point, it is best to make room for studies that employ more tools and are more focused on this issue. What interests me here, however, is understanding how processes like feeding the child after breastfeeding and unpaid domestic labor that changes with the child are built.

People's routines can change quickly, sometimes as a result of factors such as pandemics. On the other hand, there are other changes that can significantly alter routines, such as having children. I can say that having a child, whether planned or unplanned, can cause drastic changes in the lives of partners. The inclusion of a person in various developmental stages who requires care labor for extended periods of time, in particular, causes these changes in routines.

The primary focus of having a child, whether planned or unplanned, is the care labor required by the baby-child. The multidimensionality of care should be particularly emphasised here. At this point, Con Wright and Çevik (2022) divide care labor into two as direct and indirect. While breastfeeding or changing nappies for baby care can be included in direct care labor, washing the baby's clothes or preparing the baby's food is included in indirect care labor. Especially the indirect care labor group also intersects with other household chores. This multidimensionality can often be an obstacle to the correct calculation of the workload required for the care, as in the mental load debate. For this reason, it is necessary to take a more detailed look at work that requires direct or indirect care labor, especially in the context of children. Throughout this study, I have focused on the sharing of many household tasks by two partners. Twenty-two of the participants were parents. The ages of these children ranged from one to twenty-eight. So, I think I gained an important understanding of how processes can change at various stages of having children.

Increased care work begins with the birth of the child and can continue into adulthood. Because of the child's relationship with the mother, it is normal for the mother's care labor to be greater than that of other members of the household when the child is first born. Is this, however, absolutely necessary? How much can men participate in processes other than breastfeeding? Most of the participants were interested in involved fatherhood at this point. Almost all of them thought he was attempting to offer fatherhood in ways other than traditional man roles. When I asked them about the child, they initially stated that they share the child's care equally. When I asked about the processes beginning with the child's birth, they stated that their partners provided more care labor, particularly in the early childhood stage, and that this was natural. This situation was most clearly observed during an interview with İrfan. He described how beginning with their child's infancy, they followed the following procedure:

“Even though my wife tries to do the division of labor as much as possible, I mean, mostly the burden of the children is on the wives. I can say that. So our participation in that is very, very little if you look at them. My personal discomfort with the upbringing of the children is that my wife is a teacher, so the education aspect of the job is professionally hers. So I cannot say that I participated much. So I can say that the enjoyable part of the work is mostly left to us, to men. We have the enjoyable part of the job. On the other hand, if we have any task to do, we either do it without them saying so or someone pokes us. We do it somehow; that is, we are poked and pushed. Take the child out, take them there, do this, clean this. But in general, if we are talking about children, of

course, the mother is more at the forefront in terms of feeding, but I can say that I am more at the forefront in terms of cleaning as much as possible. Other than that, I do not want to intervene too much and disrupt the environment, I do not want to disrupt the order, or I do not want to disrupt something healthy. On the other hand, the part where I can intervene, for example, children, you know, get sick every period, children are living beings who need all kinds of cleaning and hygiene more, they vomit, I try to clean them. As much as possible, I try to take those chores away from her. I mean, I don't interfere with my wife; I do not involve her in the subject; I am more involved in cleaning. So we can differentiate there." (İrfan, Participant 36, 27y/o, Man)

The conceptual difference between doing or helping to do housework or care work, which I will discuss in more detail in the next chapters, emerges clearly here. In early childhood, women were positioned as the main caregivers, and men were positioned as the ones who helped with this care work. As I previously stated, while men can participate in many processes other than breastfeeding in early childhood, the fact that the mother is seen as the primary caregiver at this point is shaped by different dynamics.

Based on the interviews I conducted with the participant group, I can see that parental leave is one of the factors that shape child-oriented care labor in the household, particularly in early childhood. While fathers can only spend a limited amount of time with their children after they have children, mothers have longer parental leave. In fact, if there are no support mechanisms for childcare, such as family elders, I have seen women consider or implement options such as taking unpaid leave. I have not seen any men take additional unpaid leave if both partners work. Men are positioned from the start of the process as people who assist the mother in childcare labor in the evenings when they return from work. Unfortunately, this assistance does not translate into time for women to spend on themselves. While fathers spend time with their children, mothers continue to do unpaid domestic work at home. We only see fathers for short periods of time when we are doing things like playing games, bathing, or changing diapers. With the following narrative of Birol, I can illustrate the situation where the mother takes leave after childbirth, the father takes a supportive position, and the labor support provided by the father often does not return to the woman as personal time:

"When we had our daughter in March last year, she did not go back to work during that period, so she is at home. Naturally, she is responsible for the childcare since I continue to work. I was working from home until October, and since October we have been working almost 100% from the

office. When I am not at work, I try to take care of my daughter or take care of other things at home. My wife spends almost 90% of her time on the child and 10% on her own personal care and maintaining her mental health. The babysitter started to work in October, before that it was a bit like that when it was just the two of us; I work during the day, meetings, etc. My wife takes care of the child. After the work is over, either I take care of the child, she takes a break or prepares something to eat or she puts the child to sleep, I prepare dinner, then the dishes, etc. are done. Since the child was born, I have been working an intensive shift at home from 6 pm onwards, which continues until 10 pm and consists of the child, food, dishes, and sometimes laundry. By 10 o'clock we have finished a little bit of this, we have eaten dinner, and we are in a position to take a break. After the caregiver arrives, my part of the job has not changed much, she comes from 9 am to 5 pm. During the day, she helps my wife a little bit, a little bit with the child, but mainly with the tidying up of the house, and occasionally she cooks." (Birol, Participant 4, 38y/o, Man)

As the child's early childhood period progresses and the child begins to receive food instead of breast milk, fathers become more involved in the child's food-related processes. Fathers help with technical processes like disinfecting the child's utensils like bottles or plates. Men can be seen on the side of the child's dishes that are suitable for technicalization, such as disposal and sterilization, just like the placement of dishes in the six steps of the meal.

Elders in the family are also involved in the childcare process. The most common support mechanisms I encountered in this process were the mothers' own mothers. The fact that women share unpaid domestic labor with their mothers, in particular, influenced the dynamics of unpaid domestic labor. The process is not limited to childcare but also includes processes such as cooking and cleaning. At this point, the relatively low participation of male family elders in the process demonstrates the persistence of traditional gender norms. Women's mothers usually come to support care work if both mothers are alive and at similar distances. At this point, the continuity of intergenerational care work is highlighted. This not only allows the older mother to share her experience, but it also reduces the burden of domestic labor on the younger mother. In such a case, the man withdraws his second-ranking position after the mother to the grandmother who arrives to provide care labor. While the mother and grandmother alternated in the first and second-ranking roles, the man frequently appeared in the narratives as the third-ranking decision-maker after these two ruling figures.

Some of the participants' kitchens have also changed since the pregnancy was announced. When a child begins to consume solid foods with family members, the



search for cooked meals or organic meals begins. People may ignore the fact that they are unhealthy because unhealthy diets are convenient for them. However, the responsibility that comes with having children pushes these conveniences into the background. The family's diet changes as the child's access to healthy food becomes a priority. For example, Cahit stated that after having a child, their diet shifted to healthier options as follows:

“Before, we did not have a lot of fast food style orders from outside, but with the child, you turn to foods that are consumed directly at home, such as more juicy food, organic or a meal that the baby can also eat, but you can also create your own menu from there. Preparing that kind of food, there have been such changes. I had never cooked anything steamed before, for example, when we had a child, we bought that steaming device and cooked it, but we ate boiled more at first. For example, we did not make lentil soup much at home, we had soup every 2-3 days after the child.” (Cahit, Participant 2, 36y/o, Man)

Food content and food preparation styles, as in this example, can change as the child grows. This shift has an impact on people's food preferences. This can even have an impact on vegan-vegetarian diets. Because the priority is the child's healthy nutrition. Metin, for example, described how a household that had previously switched to a vegan diet altered this pattern with the child as follows:

“Honestly, when I met my wife, she was already a new vegan and I started to follow her a little bit. Until the child was born, we were both going full vegan, but with the pregnancy and the child, since we did not want to raise the child as a vegan, at least at this stage, we thought that the child would make this decision on the child's own, so we started to consume it at home a little bit for the child to eat it, for the child to take care of it. You know, we still do not eat meat, we eat fish, I can say pescetarian, but except for milk, we consume dairy products such as cheese and yogurt at a minimum level.” (Metin, Participant 49, 27y/o, Man)

Because there is an initial period of adaptation following the birth of a child, spontaneous chaos is acceptable. When the child is old enough to establish a routine, family members begin to adjust their new routines to accommodate the child. Their kitchen routines are naturally affected by the change in diet. Easy-to-consume alternatives and outsourcing practices are frequently the first victims of this transformation, particularly in households where both partners work. Ulvi, for example, summarized such a radical shift as follows:

“Mostly, we would say, "Let's go straight home, we are tired anyway. We will buy something on the way." This is very famous, we will buy something on the way. In other words, you can come up with things that will not take you into the kitchen at all, or that will take a very short time even if they do, but after we had children, the scene became a little different. Then a kitchen life is born, it has to be born anyway. Because a child is completely under your responsibility and you will completely suppress that hunger. I do not know whether you will open ravioli, make cutlets, or whatever in the kitchen anymore. Children do not care much anyway, they say we are hungry. Then the solution is directly up to you. At least that's how my life has been. (Ulvi, Participant 31, 43y/o, Man)

In addition to changing routines, meal processes with children are becoming more technical. Almost the whole week is spent planning what to cook according to nutritional value, and within this plan, a new routine is established in a way that leaves little room for surprises. Things that the child does not like to eat are put into formats that the child likes. Metin expressed how complex this process can become as follows:

“When the child was small, we began to focus on what the child would eat, and the time we allocated to food for ourselves decreased. That was a more difficult process because the child eats more meals than we do, 5-6 meals per day. You have to make everything you eat very little because the child doesn't eat a lot, it should not exceed 1-2 days and the child have a habit of not eating the same thing again. You try to feed healthy, you try not to give junk food, and you do not want the child to consume syrupy, sugary products or anything like that, so the child's food options are limited. As a result, it is a little more difficult. But, in our minds, what did the child eat today, did the child eat this and that, did the child consume carbohydrates well, and should we give the child a cranky dessert today? In general, the structure is based on the child's framework, and unfortunately, because the child has been sick for the last two days, we have something based on pasta, but let's sauce it, shape it, color it, what can we do?” (Metin, Participant 49, 27y/o, Man)

Especially when the child's picky eating progresses, the routine changes again, and instead of meals that are considered healthy, the routine changes back to meals that the child will at least eat. At this stage, the fact that the child has at least eaten his/her food overrides the concern about healthy nutrition. At some point, these frequent changes also change the pleasure people derive from the kitchen. Because what the child likes to eat is cooked, not what the person enjoys cooking. This puts

the process of being in the kitchen for pleasure on the back seat, at least until the child reaches a certain age.

Men's memories of the kitchen during child-related processes were frequently limited. Their memories of the kitchen before or after the child reached a certain age were far superior to their memories of the kitchen during the child's early childhood. At this point, my main conclusion is that all of these changes, as well as the decline of cooking for pleasure, have undermined men's motivation to be in the kitchen. The kitchen could no longer be considered professional. Because no professional restaurant works with so many unknowns, and its most important customers are not a single gourmet who cannot speak but is nonetheless picky. Similarly, the chef's special recipe is frequently inappropriate for this nonverbal gourmet customer in early childhood. It is understandable that these male chefs would be less motivated when their recipes are for pleasure dishes like pizza and meat. İhsan, for example, commented on the banalization and simplification of menus as follows:

“Our range has actually narrowed a little bit because, you know, children's menus are not very rich. Because there are restrictions such as I eat this and I do not eat that. Because food cannot be cooked according to the tastes of four or five different people at home, more precisely because of time. So we had to move towards more layered, flat flavors that they can eat.” (İhsan, Participant 24, 39y/o, Man)

In early childhood, a participant man frequently served as their woman partners' assistant in kitchen-related processes, as well as in all home processes. They were not the primary coordinators of child-related processes, with the exception of a few participants. However, as the child grew older, the process changed once more. They now have a gourmet clientele who will eat the food they make for pleasure and will even insist on eating the food the man makes for pleasure rather than healthy cooked meals. At this point, involvement in the kitchen increases once more, and a kitchen-specific relationship with the child is established within the context of involved fatherhood. Hicran, for example, described how her husband began to become more involved in the processes once her child was old enough to eat more adult food:

“She (her child) joined us for dinner. We did not do much extra for her, but my husband would occasionally prepare things for her in a way that she would like, such as meat, in a way that she would like more. That was starting to bore me. I am not sure, he would string the meat on toothpicks or something. To be honest, that type of work bores me. I

just throw it away and cook it in a pan. I am not particularly interested in that type of work. But I do meat seasoning, I don't know, I season the chicken, I do that. But he doesn't get bored with the other details, I cannot be patient. He does it without getting bored, and he still continues to do it that way." (Hicran, Participant 43, 54y/o, Woman)

I have noticed that routine changes are usually more drastic with the first child. The unknowns are much higher with the first child, and motivations such as healthy eating are also at a similar peak. Children after the first child, on the other hand, do not cause these levels of uncertainty or motivation, such as healthy eating. There is a probability projection in the next children due to the parents' experience. Türkan, for example, summarized the differences between children as follows:

"I could breastfeed X [she says the name of her first child] very little, and we switched to solid food after 4 months anyway. For a while, I was making soups for X [she says the name of her first child] with 15 ingredients, each one was tiny, because you are only going to feed it to a 5-month-old child; I was going to buy the best meats, and then I would make them in a pressure cooker because, for example, making something in a pressure cooker is a serious job. It means washing pots and in a huge pressure cooker I would make a tiny soup and then feed it and pour the rest out or I would eat it. I turned it into a very tricky business. It was never like that with Y [says the name of her second child]; I was very relaxed because this is the mindset of the second child." (Türkan, Participant 29, 50y/o, Woman)

Transitions between children are smoothed out in this way in many households. However, if there is more than one child, the father is more involved in the care of the older child while the mother is more involved in the care of the smaller child. In this period, the father again positions himself as an assistant to the mother and plans according to her instructions.

The final topic I would like to discuss in terms of children is their relationship with the kitchen as they grow older. I would like to provide a brief overview of the situation of children in the kitchen in the families I interviewed here. Children's involvement in the kitchen is typically in the form of assisting with basic tasks. I noticed that children are included in the kitchen in areas such as bringing some basic items into the kitchen and including them in non-risky processes such as whisking. I realised that mothers take extra precautions in this regard. Mothers who believe that children should be aware of such household chores in order to stand on their own two feet frequently involve their children in a variety of household chores, including

the kitchen. Esra, for example, stated her motivation for involving her children in household chores as follows:

“I mean, because I am in favor of sharing life, I am in favor of sharing everything. I want to encourage them, you know, I grew up with this perception that girls do this job, boys do that job and I do not find that right. I have already tried to teach my children many jobs to overcome this. I definitely try to keep it equal, because I want the wives of my sons not to have as much difficulty as I did; I want everything to be more comfortable, how can I put it, easier for them. For that, and apart from that, the children are growing up, you never know what time will bring, maybe they will have to study outside the city, maybe they will have to live abroad. I want them to be able to take care of themselves, I want them to see that they can do things without being dependent on anyone. That is why I train them more in that direction.” (Esra, Participant 50, 45y/o, Woman)

As we can see in this example, they frequently stated that they try not to make a distinction between girls and boys at this point. However, I noticed that boys who were not interested in cooking were given a little more flexibility. In general, family members felt the need to specifically indicate that the boy was interested in the kitchen if he was interested in the kitchen. However, if girls were interested in the kitchen, they made no other indication until the question was directed at them. At this point, every family I spoke with stated that they wanted to raise their children outside of the traditional norms. However, as we can see in the general picture, we cannot get too far away from normative behaviors. We put the norm to the center and position ourselves accordingly. Instead of creating a new normal, we are constantly comparing where we are to the old norm. Although this is regarded as a progressive approach, it is instructive to consider the side that pulls social assumptions backward. In chapters six and seven, I will go over the risks to gender equality that arise when men are positioned differently than other men and placed in the spotlight.

## **6. A RECIPE FOR COOKING MASCULINITY IN THE KITCHEN: MASCULINITIES, MASCULINITY PERFORMANCES, AND THE KITCHEN**

This study focused not only on the contexts in which men are present in home kitchens but also on the contribution of their presence to unpaid domestic labor. In this way, I wanted to know whether men's involvement in kitchen processes is more egalitarian as an example of inclusive masculinity or from a point of view that deepens inequalities as an example of hybrid masculinity.

The discussion of inclusive masculinity in the literature is based on the premise that men are no longer afraid of being perceived as feminine or homosexual by social norms due to changing world conditions, and therefore appear more frequently in contexts where they used to hesitate to be present. In a system of norms that have long been seen as a natural responsibility of women and in which the nutritional needs of the household are attributed to the woman, men's lack of involvement in kitchen processes and, on the contrary, their ability to stay away from these processes are seen as a privileged position granted to them. Within the scope of this research, I focused on the motivations of men who are more often found in home kitchens, a place where their presence is not obligatory due to their privilege.

To search for historical motivational sources, I questioned the participants about both their past and present. Particularly, I endeavored to identify the role models and significant turning points they encountered in their homes at various stages of their lives. I tried to examine the positions of the men participants not only in the context of the kitchen but also in all other work groups that require unpaid domestic labor. Because a broader perspective is required to assert that solely an egalitarian masculinity has emerged. Due to the main focus of the research, most of the themes I have discussed from an equality perspective provide a picture that is specific to the participant group and the events that occurred in the context of the kitchen. Even for this participant group, it would be insufficient to interpret their participation in the kitchen as evidence of egalitarian masculinity in all areas. It would be more

accurate to make sense of and discuss the egalitarian or non-egalitarian/ostensibly egalitarian nature of the masculinity performances constructed for specific groups and contexts by means of numerous relational networks.

Considering these limitations, in the interviews, I conducted with both men and their partners, I observed a common pattern in which one group of men participated in all domestic unpaid labor processes, while another group of men participated only in processes related to the kitchen. In this context, it would be appropriate to examine these two different groups within themselves, to try to understand their sources of motivation, to understand why they only participate in a specific area such as the kitchen, and to discuss to what extent the masculinities constructed an egalitarian form. In this section, I will first take a closer look at the concepts of equality used in this research, and then examine the motivations for men's involvement in the kitchen in two dimensions in terms of equality debates.

### **6.1 First, the Ingredients: Defining Gender Equality, Justice and Equity**

Through the interviews I conducted, I tracked men's involvement in the kitchen within the scope of the research. In doing so, I also learned how other unpaid domestic labor tasks are divided among the participants because I wanted to look at multiple unpaid domestic labor tasks to see if egalitarian masculinity is constructed in the context of unpaid domestic labor. At this point, it is best to define what I mean by equality. In this study, equality does not mean adding up all the jobs that require unpaid domestic labor at home and then dividing them in half. Such a mathematical division, in this view, would be impossible in a space like the home, where processes operate dynamically. I think such claims should be viewed with skepticism because keeping everything equal in a dynamic system is practically impossible. In this chapter of my research, I will discuss the inequalities that arise precisely under this impression of equality. I purposefully avoid using a static concept of equality from academic literature. Instead, I seek to develop a concept of equality by combining the concepts of equality from the participants' perspectives, academic definitions, and my own as a researcher in these discussions. Because, as I frequently point out, the most dangerous and critical issue in gender studies is that what works for one group may not work for another. Because intersectional differences frequently cause this situation, I think it is important to add the perspective I establish with the participants in my research to the literature.

I asked each interviewee, "What does gender equality mean to you?" in order to try to identify the definition of equality based on people's experiences rather than mathematical equations. I received responses that I could categorize into three groups. People in the first group responded "I do not believe in equality" in far greater numbers than I anticipated. I was initially surprised by the responses of participants, to whom I had repeatedly mentioned equality throughout the interview, that they did not believe in equality. As I investigated this concept in depth, I realized that mathematical equations actually influenced the thinking of many of them. Nobody thought things could be split 50/50. The second group of participants was also anti-equality. However, based on what they perceived to be biological arguments, this group did not believe in the concept of equality. Men and women cannot be biologically equal in their eyes. Men and women can, should, and should not do certain things. As a result, seeking equality in everything goes against human nature. The third group stated that they believe in equality and that they make it a priority in their daily interactions.

As I previously stated, the size of the groups that did not believe in equality surprised me. Instead of equality, these two groups emphasized the concept of justice. When studying gender equality in Turkey, substituting justice for equality can create a problematic dynamic. This is because gender justice is a term frequently used by anti-gender movements in Turkey to argue that full equality is not possible due to biological differences. While this group makes various arguments for improving women's lives without overstepping patriarchal norms, they oppose many of the debates in today's gender studies literature, particularly LGBTIQ+ rights (Celebi 2022). Those in the second group of participants construct the term gender justice precisely from a point positioned by the anti-gender movement.

As I previously stated, the first group to use the term gender justice did so instead of gender equality because they believed that perfect equality could not be achieved technically. This preference is actually a synonym for the English term equity, as I discovered after thoroughly analyzing the interviews. This approach, which considers the resources required for everyone to achieve an equal outcome in light of the fact that their circumstances differ, necessitates a concentration on the content of the intersectional processes that individuals encounter. The various needs mentioned here are not based on claimed biological or cultural differences. The partners, in particular, believed that they were going through different stages in their personal lives, that their workloads increased at times and decreased at others, and that at the end of the day, it was important to support the person who needed it at the time while also ensuring that this long-term support did not remain on one side.



At the end of the day, I noticed that the concepts of gender equality, equity, and justice were used with very different meanings and as substitutes for one another. This may also have something to do with the semantic power of Turkish concepts. Regardless of the terminology, the first group understands gender equality as gender equity, the second as gender justice, and the third as gender equality. To avoid misunderstanding, I will refer to all initiatives that seek to eliminate gender inequalities caused by social norms as gender equality. However, because this expression encompasses two distinct approaches, we must pay close attention to how these initiatives produce results. We must consider whether the resulting situation is a mathematical equalization or an equalization that emerged from the internal dynamics of inequalities. In this section, I try to understand how the motivations behind men's entrance into the kitchen have shaped the path to equality in light of these conditions.

## **6.2 Hiding Inequalities via *Mise en Place*: Ostensibly Egalitarian Men**

Other forms of unpaid domestic labor must be considered when tracing equality or inequalities in the kitchen. At the same time, this becomes more significant when we consider the division of domestic unpaid labor. Because participants focused on equity rather than mathematical equality. The division of other unpaid domestic labor, according to this approach, can create different pictures in the kitchen.

When I asked about unpaid domestic labor in the interviews, men frequently started with the kitchen, which could be because I stated in the participant call that I was looking for men who were interested in the kitchen. As a result, I frequently tried to ask detailed questions about other household chores at the start of the interviews, but because these steps were not as detailed as the kitchen, the focus began to shift back to the kitchen. For example, when I asked one of the men participants what he thought about other household chores, he replied:

“All work other than cooking is a bit of a burden for me. Food is different for me, the kitchen is more to my liking. Especially cleaning is a bit repulsive for me. Cleaning is something I do when I am in a very difficult situation.” (Volkan, Participant 23, 56y/o, Man)

I asked this participant, as I asked all participants, what equality meant to him. Part of his answer to that question was as follows:

“It is more logical not to assign a workload to one gender. There should not be such a thing in the job description, such as women and men, or this occupational group will be women, and that occupational group will be men. [...] Sometimes my wife criticizes me because I do not do much cleaning work: ‘I come home tired anyway, you’re at home, why do not you do it’, but I do not do it because it does not interest me. I am perceived in my circle as a person who helps his wife, who supports her in everything, and since I am a psychological counselor, we discuss such issues with many people. We also meet with people with very different sexual orientations, such things are always on our agenda, and that is what I advocate, that there should be no distinction between men and women in this work. This is also the case in the house, in the kitchen.”  
(Volkan, Participant 23, 56y/o, Man)

When I asked the participant if he considers himself an egalitarian man, I received the following response:

"Maybe there may be points where I am criticized on some issues, maybe I may not be like that according to my wife. If I see myself as 90%, my wife may see me as 80%, and maybe I am seen as 100% from the outside."  
(Volkan, Participant 23, 56y/o, Man)

As we can see in this example, the fact that the person defines himself/herself as egalitarian shows that processes do not always proceed in an egalitarian manner. When I read the narratives of the participant’s partner, I notice that she does all of the work except cooking, and the woman partner continues to do side dishes like salads and rice. His wife, as he stated, criticizes him on these issues. This situation was not unique to this household; while many women stated that their partners did the cooking when we dig a little deeper into the interview, we see that they are still present, at least in the kitchen. In other words, the disappearance is not complete. However, men are absent from other household chores. If one of the other processes is seen as clearly responsible for women, almost all of them are carried out by women. At the same time, it is important to remember the discussion of mental load that I mentioned in the previous chapters. In any of the households I interviewed, women were not completely absent from the kitchen, which is a large area in terms of mental load.

Again, while speaking with the participant woman in the previously mentioned household, the participant frequently mentioned that her partner was separated from other men and was in a different position. In a similar manner, I came across

this case in many other households. One observation that can be made at this point is that when men begin to exist in a field outside of the norm, it can cause myopia both within and outside the home. Non-normative behavior may be perceived as more significant than it is, increasing the man's overall egalitarianism score in the eyes of his partner or third parties. This situation can be considered along with the theory of hybrid masculinities.

According to this theory, men are now seen in spaces and practices that were previously thought to be feminine. However, this theory calls into question the reasons for this from a different angle. The Hybrid Masculinities Theory interprets these alterations as an extension of the crisis tendencies of masculinities. This theory expands on Connell's argument by claiming that crisis tendencies as part of gender relations can be used to make sense of changes (Bridges and Pascoe 2018). It is claimed that these changes are a means of overcoming the crisis that occurs when men's privileges become visible and begin to diminish as a result of feminist gains (Bridges and Pascoe 2018). This leads us to the conclusion that inequalities are flexible and can change shape in times of crisis. To overcome the crisis and reclaim their privileged position, the masculinities constructed change their forms (Arxer 2011; Eisen and Yamashita 2017). From this point of view, hybrid masculinities are basically defined as "selective incorporation of elements of identity typically associated with various marginalized and subordinated masculinities and—at times—femininities into privileged men's gender performances and identities. These transformations include men's assimilation, among others, of 'bits and pieces' of identity projects coded as 'gay', 'Black', or 'feminine'" (Bridges and Pascoe 2018).

Consequently, what roles do these changes play in eradicating gender disparities? Is it possible for hybrid masculinities to achieve gender equality in this case? At this point, according to Bridges and Pascoe, the emergence of hybrid masculinities "indicates that normative constraints associated with masculinity are shifting, and shows that these shifts have largely taken place in ways that have sustained existing ideologies and systems of power and inequality". Based on this, hybrid masculinities actually demonstrate pragmatic changes carried out in order to maintain hegemony over a specific time period. According to Demetriou "By making gay culture more visible, capitalism makes it possible for many men to appropriate bits and pieces of this alternative culture and produce new, hybrid configurations of gender practice that enable them to reproduce their dominance over women in historically novel ways." (Demetriou 2001, 350).

According to Hybrid Masculinities Theory, these changes intensify gender inequality rather than providing gender equality. How do the hybrid masculinities that are con-

structured give the appearance of egalitarianism and respond differently? According to Bridges and Pascoe, this occurs in three ways. They call these as discursive distancing, strategic borrowing, and fortifying boundaries (Bridges and Pascoe 2018). I can quote different authors to summarize how each of these methods deepens gender inequalities and at the same time creates the image that these inequalities are decreasing:

**Discursive Distancing:** Bridges and Pascoe define this concept as "Hybrid masculine practices often work in ways that create discursive space between privileged groups of men and hegemonic masculinity, enabling some to frame themselves as outside of existing systems of privilege and inequality." (2018, 260). For example, the "My Strength is Not for Hurting" campaign against rape can be given as an example. This campaign develops an argument that "real" and "strong" men will not rape, and rapists are "unmanly" or "weak". Although there is an anti-violence work here, this campaign is essentially a practice where "a group of" men pretend to be anti-system and still construct hegemonic masculinity (Masters 2010).

**Strategic Borrowing:** Bridges and Pascoe define this concept as "Hybrid masculinities has shown that men who occupy privileged social categories "strategically borrow" symbols associated with various Others in ways that work to reframe themselves as symbolically part of socially subordinated groups." (2018, 264). For example, a study by Casanova, Wetzel, and Speice shows that white-collar men who identify themselves as metrosexual strategically adopt this gender configuration to gain an advantage in their careers, but they are not challenging to hegemonic masculinity or masculine norms in their daily life (Casanova, Wetzel, and Speice 2016).

**Fortifying Boundaries:** Bridges and Pascoe define this concept as "By co-opting elements of style and performance from less powerful masculinities, young, straight, white men's hybridizations often obscure the symbolic and social boundaries between groups upon which such practices rely. [...] Hybrid masculinities fortifying boundaries further entrench and conceal systems of inequality in historically new ways, often along lines of race, gender, sexuality, and class." (2018, 266). For example, under the concept of "new fatherhood", fathers may seem to transcend current norms by pretending to be more interested in their children. They propose this as a "style" of the real man as part of the "biblical" notion of "the family". But these "new fathers" are also putting new responsibilities on women by highlighting the "biblical" notion "the family". In this way, they are reproducing inequalities, although it may actually seem like a step towards Equality (Bridges and Pascoe 2014).

In the field, Hybrid Masculinities Theory is frequently used in the analysis of daily practices of concepts such as fatherhood. Within this framework, for example, the

practice of fathers sharing the burden of childcare, known as "responsible fatherhood," is researched (Messner 1993; Stein 2005). As a result, some men who support childcare under the concept of "responsible fatherhood" do so not to reduce gender inequalities, but because new fatherhood is the man's new modern and strong parenting style in the neoliberal era. Furthermore, these men have established a new area of power within the family, and family inequalities have deepened as a result of these new masculinities (Messner 1993).

According to the theory of hybrid masculinities, the presence of men in spaces where they previously hesitated to exist reflects their crisis tendencies, because gender relations are not stable and tend to produce crises. These crises have arisen as a result of the removal of men's privileges today. To reclaim their privileged position, men use strategies such as discursive distancing, strategic borrowing, and fortifying boundaries to reproduce inequalities. Inequalities that are reproduced become more invisible because they exist in places where they did not previously exist, often with more egalitarian discourses. As a result, it is critical to investigate the presence of men in previously feminized food-related practices and spaces in order to bring to light inequalities that have become more invisible.

If we consider the household I cited as an example, the reason for myopia about reality may be the risks pointed out by the theory of hybrid masculinities. Men are losing their privileged position in today's changing world. This theory discusses how they need to make various maneuvers to reach the new "acceptable" man position by positioning themselves outside of hegemonic masculinity at this point (Bridges and Pascoe 2014). My findings corroborate this theory. Small maneuvers can put men in the position of being acceptable to their circle as well as their partners. This allows them to gain new privileges. This is most visible when men enter the kitchen for their own personal hobbies and pleasures rather than to meet the household's mandatory nutritional needs. For example, Berrak described how this hobby is presented to the guests as follows:

"As I said, after the pizza hobby developed, he would often invite my friends over and serve them while we were sitting. There were many days when he cooked the pizza, served it, continued to make the dough there, rolled out the dough, and made even me feel like a guest in my own home. He loves it very much, and I think people praise him a lot for being in the kitchen so much, and I really like it, to be honest. On the other hand, I don't like this; by the way, it is very interesting that a man is praised for being in the kitchen because a woman is never praised for being in the kitchen. So I try not to praise too much. I do not praise him to his face, but I praise him behind his back. He usually puts on a

show. It is even obvious from the way he carries the pizza; he usually says, ‘Was that your pizza order?’ Like playing a game. He may not be doing this for lack of show. I mean, for him, the show of cleaning is to spray air freshener in the house after the last cleaning. But while spraying air freshener, a place that should be dusted is not dusted. That is why the show is not complete. But in the kitchen, I think it creates more satisfaction for him because he does a great job and puts on a show at the same time. The visible housework is then more attractive to him.” (Berrak, Participant 47, 30y/o, Woman)

When examining unpaid domestic labor in general, the majority of participants who do not exhibit behavior that can be described as egalitarian relate to the kitchen in terms of pleasure and hobby. Nevertheless, this behavior of men who engage with the kitchen, even if for pleasure and hobby, positions them away from hegemonic masculinity in the eyes of many people in their social environment. However, it became clear from the interviews I conducted that hegemonic masculinity and positioning outside the norms do not result in equality in the context of unpaid domestic labor.

As I mentioned in the previous chapters, I have often observed that the burden of unpaid domestic labor continues to fall on women when men engage in relationships for pleasure and hobby, except in compulsory cases, in many areas including the kitchen context, especially the mental load. In parallel with the literature, I can infer that these representations of masculinity, which we can read as hybrid masculinity performances, offer men new privileged spaces willingly or unwillingly while deepening existing gender inequalities in the context of the private space and/or encouraging the formation of new invisible inequalities.

Why does the kitchen appear to be a suitable space for the production of hybrid masculinities when there are many areas that require unpaid domestic labor? For example, can we see similar representations of hybrid masculinities in the laundry process? To provide a definitive answer to this question, it is necessary to conduct extensive research on other forms of domestic unpaid labor. We can form some hypotheses about what is different in the kitchen.

The kitchen and cooking is a space that can function as a stage in itself. It is a space where contact with people outside the household is especially high. In the chapter where I presented the literature, I pointed out that Carrington’s concepts borrowed from Bourdieu and Goffman suggest that the kitchen plays the role of a stage, a stage with a front and a backstage, even like a real stage (Carrington 2012). Preparing food in the kitchen can be seen as backstage and the tables where guests

are entertained can be considered front stage. It is more efficient to perform various performances in the kitchen, which is a stage with a direct audience. For example, it may be difficult to find a front stage where you can show the laundry you have washed to the guests, or the mirror you wipe before the guests arrive may not always attract as much attention as the food. Because of this structure, which opens up space for different performances and is in front of the eyes, the kitchen and food create a suitable environment for us to observe hybrid masculinities.

In addition to the structure of the kitchen and cooking, the representations that emerge here also offer insights into the debate on hybrid masculinities. In the previous sections, I mentioned that home kitchens are being transformed into professional kitchens with the involvement of men. This professionalization changes the dynamics that led to the perception of the kitchen as feminine and creates a perception of change towards professional kitchens perceived as masculine. This situation blurs the status of being in the kitchen for pleasure or a hobby. The fact that their fathers were only in the kitchen for processes such as barbecues did not make them look like active men in the kitchen. However, entering the kitchen on a more regular basis, but again with meat-based products, can provide an image of an active man in the kitchen. This actually creates a suitable space for fortifying the boundaries.

Social expectations also play an important role in this equation. When I asked people during the interviews how they reacted to men being in the kitchen, I received both positive and neutral responses, as it is now a necessity. Neutral reactions or lack of reaction were based on the belief that in today's conditions, men should help in every task. Especially in households with two working people, social groups have a positive view of men being in the kitchen due to the idea that all members should be involved in the process. These expectations and positive feedbacks are in line with the view discussed in the theory of hybrid masculinities that men are losing their privileged position. While being involved in housework provides a positive return, not being involved in housework creates a negative image. For example, Ersin summarized how both his and his partner's mothers reacted to his relationship with the kitchen as follows:

“Both mothers are divorced and divorced with a lot of pain. They are not people who say that a man cannot be in the kitchen. On the contrary, they are the ones who say that we are tired of spending time in the kitchen and that we serve men too much. When those mothers see me today, they would not applaud me and say "Of course X [says her own name] will be in the kitchen; she is a person living at home; Y [says her partner's name] will not do everything.” (Ersin, Participant 38, 29y/o, Man)

But these views are not based on how deeply men are involved in the process. The benchmark for the formation of this view is still men who are not involved in housework at all. Men who are not involved in these processes at all are positioned as bad examples. Men who are involved in some of the housework are positioned in a positive light compared to this bad example. One of the most suitable places to receive this social credit is the kitchen. The fact that the food served when guests arrive is made by a man creates the phenomenon of a man who is involved in all kitchen processes. This effect plays an important role in the formation of a more modern and acceptable man image in today's conditions. Especially when we consider that it is an action that needs to take place every day, men's involvement in kitchen processes has a much greater impact than their involvement in other household chores. For example, Şebnem interprets such situations as being the face of advertising with the following sentences:

“He is seen as a role model in his circle of friends because, well, others do not do it much. In fact, when guests come to our house, he usually, well, he takes care of the guests. If tea or something is to be brought and taken away, he always does it. In this way, it is like he is the face of advertising. And everyone thinks he works hard. Actually, I do the preparation process until the guests arrive. There is a distribution of duties there, and he takes care of the service part. But compared to the others, he is definitely much more interested, much more organized.” (Şebnem, Participant 30, 40y/o, Woman)

In parallel, being interested in the kitchen also helps the man who is interested in the kitchen to draw a boundary between himself and other men. Sometimes this boundary is between men of his age, sometimes it is between generations. In some cases, women recognize this. For example, Türkan summarized her current observation as follows:

“Younger generations are more capable of these things, partly because of the generation gap. In our generation, we took men who looked very intellectual, who seemed to have studied at some school or other, and then their fathers came out from under them. I tell my husband that I bought you as an intellectual, but you turned out to be macho.” (Türkan, Participant 29, 50y/o, Woman)

Considering all these contexts, I can say that the kitchen and cooking open up suitable spaces for Strategic Borrowing, Discursive Distancing, and Fortifying Bound-



aries, the three different paths that Hybrid Masculinities Theory opens up for discussion. The kitchen and cooking are suitable spaces and actions for the formation of an ostensibly egalitarian man perception without being too involved in other tasks that require unpaid domestic labor, and even without being involved in many sub-steps of the kitchen, especially those that require mental load. Ostensibly egalitarian behaviors that do not extend to all areas, especially other jobs that require unpaid domestic labor, actually cause other inequalities to be rendered invisible. In fact, as mentioned in the theory, this situation can turn into a struggle for hegemony. For example, Şebnem, who says that her husband turns into a face of advertisement in front of the guests, reads the behavior of a neighboring man as follows when comparing his husband's involvement in housework compared to other men:

“I have never seen anyone who is as involved as X [she says her partner's name], who is as involved in domestic labor, in sharing the living space. But we have a friend, we live in the same apartment building. I also observe this; I observed it there, the man is very involved, but he is involved because he sees it as a space of hegemony. In other words, he intervenes in order not to leave it to the woman. I mean, his problem is not to share all kinds of responsibilities. He does things when he feels like it, but he also sees himself as having the right to intervene in everything else, because it contributes to the division of labor.” (Şebnem, Participant 30, 40y/o, Woman)

This can be read in parallel with the debate over fortifying borders. At the end of the day, there are new areas of hegemony and inequalities that need to be conquered. Similarly, the image of a more egalitarian man compared to other non-egalitarian men can almost serve as an invisibility cloak for the inequalities that the person continues to benefit from. Because as other inequalities that these ostensibly egalitarian men continue to benefit from being made visible, other members of society can often underline this apparent egalitarian side and render this act of making visible dysfunctional. In the following section, I will go into detail about how other inequalities become invisible and the additional burden they place on women.

### 6.3 Sprinkle of Egalitarian Masculinity

It would be incorrect to claim that I work with a large group and encounter only one type of masculinity representation. The kitchen and cooking, like many other fields, can form multiple and diverse masculinities. As a result, hybrid masculinities were not the only phenomenon I came across. Apart from the behaviors that produced the inequalities mentioned in the previous subsection invisible, there were also behaviors that demonstrated a more egalitarian point when we look at unpaid domestic labor holistically. Although this is a smaller group than the first, it is important to examine it closely because these situations can provide various clues for actions to be taken to reduce gender-based inequalities. As a result, I intend to investigate the motivations of this group as well.

My first thought was to look for the motivations and origins of the masculinities constructed by men who exhibit egalitarian behaviors in their personal stories. My strongest hypothesis was that fathers or other man figures could have served as role models. However, when I looked at my group of participants' personal histories, I could not find a pattern of such role models. Some participants remembered fathers who interacted in the kitchen, while others remembered fathers who were never in the kitchen. In fact, I could not find a pattern in how or how long the fathers of those who had kitchen-related father narratives acted. Similarly, I did not find that the father's absence from the kitchen had a negative impact on the group I discussed in the section on hybrid masculinities or paved the way for these masculinities. The patterns that the data does not reveal are sometimes just as important as the patterns that it does reveal. As a result, based on the pattern that did not emerge here, I can conclude that participants' engagement with the kitchen is shaped by personal factors rather than the visibility of men in their personal history. This could point to the establishment of a more egalitarian masculinity. It may make sense to utilize the literature on inclusive masculinity in order to comprehend the motivations underlying the display of a more egalitarian behavior pattern outside the norm, particularly among individuals of a similar age.

One of the re-formulations that have been developed in recent years to fill in the gaps left by hegemonic masculine theory is known as the Inclusive Masculinity Theory. According to the Inclusive Masculinity Theory, hegemonic masculinity explains social dynamics such as homophobia and rejection of the feminine (Anderson and McCormack 2018; Luisi, Luisi, and Geana 2016). Furthermore, according to hegemonic masculinity theory, homophobia plays a role in shaping and controlling masculinity and gender relations (Plummer 1999). However, the fact that men are now

beginning to exist in spaces that are perceived as feminine becomes a paradigm for this assumption. As a result, the Inclusive Masculinity Theory provides a different perspective on the current situation. Homophobia is a term used by Inclusive Masculinity Theory to describe the fear of being perceived as gay due to homophobia, which plays an important role in hegemonic masculinity. According to this theory, for a society to be homophobic, three basic conditions must be met. They are as follows:

- “(i) the culture maintains antipathy towards gay men,
- (ii) there is mass awareness that gay people exist in significant numbers in that culture,
- (iii) the belief that gender and sexuality are conflated.” (Anderson and McCormack 2018, 2).

When these three conditions are met in society, homophobia begins to police gender because people fear being perceived as gay. According to Anderson and McCormack, in homophobic societies, “men’s behaviors are severely restricted, and archetypes of masculinity are stratified, hierarchically, with one hegemonic form of masculinity being culturally exalted.” (Anderson and McCormack 2018, 2).

To make sense of today’s changing masculinities and behaviors, the Inclusive Masculinity Theory employs homophobia. Men were not supposed to be present in previously feminine-attributed spaces and acts, as shown by homophobia theory, because they were afraid of being perceived as gay (Luisi, Luisi, and Geana 2016). According to the Inclusive Masculinity Theory, homophobia has decreased in some societies (Anderson and Bullingham 2013). It is important to note that what is being claimed here is a decrease in homophobia, not homophobia. Although homophobia persists, it is claimed that the fear of being perceived as gay and the tendency to avoid femininity have decreased. This decrease in homophobia has an impact on homophobia’s ability to police gender (Anderson 2018; Anderson and McCormack 2018). According to Inclusive Masculinity Theory, there is a noticeable change and shift in masculinities as a result of decreased homophobia. In this context, the stigmatization of femininity among men is decreasing, non-hegemonic masculinity is becoming less regulated, and the stratification of men is becoming less hierarchical (Anderson and McCormack 2018). In a brief, a more inclusive masculinity has emerged. Today, this theory is frequently applied to the study of issues such as more inclusive fatherhood and changing attitudes in education or the workplace (Gottzén and Kremer-Sadlik 2012; Roberts 2012). This shift in constructed masculinities and

behavior can provide insight into how gender inequality can be transformed in a positive way. The transformation of hegemonic masculinity in these ways, which is a significant barrier to gender equality, can create an opportunity for equality.

As previously stated, I did not find a strong correlation between these egalitarian man behaviors and their historical role models. As a result, the social changes mentioned in the inclusive masculinity discussion may be effective in producing these behaviors. Given the socioeconomic status of participant group, this could have been more likely. At this point, I tried to concentrate on the men's negative reactions. I specifically asked if they had received negative feedback from their social circles as a result of their involvement in the kitchen. Negative comments are frequently made in the context of "setting a bad example" to other men. When a friend or family member expresses an interest in the kitchen, if there is a man present who is not involved in the kitchen processes, the comment "you are setting a bad example" is made. The implication is that if such behaviors are visible, they will expect us to try to copy them. A woman from a household where such comments were frequent and who eventually began to ignore them described the process as follows:

“They think my husband is a bad example. I mean, when I tell people how much X [says his partner's name] helps me, we often hear, ‘Oh, brother, you are always a bad example.’ As if their wives will make such a demand from them. I mean, X [says her partner's name] helping me at work, helping me with the dishes, or when guests come, he says to me during the tea service, "Honey, you sit down." There, where other men are, my husband serves tea. He does not even pick me up. "Honey, why do not you sit down, I will do it." So I have given it up now. But it is not very welcomed by the other circle, so they say that too. It is not a problem for us, but I know it is not a problem for him because he has never changed his attitude.” (Algin, Participant 34, 35y/o, Woman)

This comment was received by a large number of participants. Participants frequently claimed that the comment was meant as a joke and had no real meaning. However, the fact that different participants made the same observation demonstrates the frequency of this situation. This, in my opinion, should be interpreted as a manifestation of the fact that men's current privileged position is under threat. Although participation in kitchen processes is perceived as normal, these jokes can be interpreted as a representation of existing resistance to normalization. As a result, I can say that the presence of men in the kitchen is not completely normalized in terms of their social environment, even for this group.

Does the fact that negative comments remain at this level today really give us the context of decreasing homophobia in the theory of inclusive masculinity? At this point, I talked with participants about the memories in which homophobia has not declined and is even stronger. Participants were exposed to homophobic behavior, particularly during their childhood. They encountered such behavior, especially in their childhood, because they were children who were interested in the kitchen. For one of the men participants, for example, such a comment from his relatives was almost his first memory of the kitchen. In fact, the policing effect of homophobia in the discussion of masculinities with content was so strong that participants stayed away from the kitchen for a while. This is how he described the process:

“There was resistance from the men’s side, but mainly masculinized women found it strange. I bring water for my mother, according to some of my sisters-in-law, they were acting like there is something wrong with that. Or when you do something extra in the kitchen, for example, making a salad, I remember it very well, let me explain it with an example, I wanted to make a salad, I felt bad, I wish I had not done it, I remember, maybe this is one of my first memories of high school because my sisters-in-law looked at me in the mode of, I think there is something wrong with this boy, otherwise why would he want to go into the kitchen. I wanted to, but of course, a serious barrier kept me away from there at least until the beginning of university.” (Necati, Participant 12, 30y/o, Man)

I find the participant’s expression "masculinized women" particularly important because we can infer the message that the reaction is aimed at protecting the patriarchal order. People’s comments marginalize those who behave outside the patriarchal order and point out that they are not acceptable men. Therefore, this narrative is highly consistent with the discussion in the literature. However, the participant continued to encounter this homophobia in his later years. The participant said the following in the rest of the interview:

“I say this with apologies, once or twice there were people who made ridiculous, stupid, unthinkable epithets like faggot. To be honest, I do not care much about this, but it bothered me at the time. Similarly, if something happened to my cousin today, I would probably stand behind him, because there is no one in our family to stand behind him.” (Necati, Participant 12, 30y/o, Man)

On the one hand, we can see from the participant's narrative that homophobia has not decreased. Today, he believes that other young men in the household will be subjected to similar treatment, and he does not believe that anyone other than himself will normalize this. This demonstrates that, while homophobia can serve as a policing function to keep people from exhibiting non-normative behavior up to a point, it also demonstrates that people can begin to exhibit non-normative behavior in the communities in which they live without falling into homophobia. At this point, their motivation to remain in the kitchen despite being exposed to homophobic behavior as a child is a critical issue. Homophobia, as in the previous example, does not decrease in the context of many of the participants. On the contrary, some participants continued to experience homophobia. For example, despite the fact that the topic of sexuality was never brought up, one of the participants wanted to add the following at the end of the interview:

“I read or heard something like this when I was in college. I even jokingly mentioned it to my girlfriend at the time. Something like research or a study that the masculine aspects of men who are interested in domestic work weaken sexually. When you sent me this thing, I thought of it. I even mentioned it to my wife, just like I mentioned it to you. I said I had read something like this; have you ever heard of it? She said no. There is no such thing, brother; I will tell you that. You are working on this. I do not think that engaging in domestic work has any effect on one's sexual life or masculine impulses. At least I did not feel it. Think of it this way, we are a race, a species with a primitive, hunter-gatherer history. And while we were gathering, let alone settling in a cave and finding fire, a woman will take care of the child, blah blah blah. Let's go back before we got there. When we were gathering, we never did anything like that, men gathered stones, women gathered berries, you know, blackberries. There was nothing like that, everyone was collecting everything. Everyone lived side by side. I mean, think about it, brother, we watched a documentary with my wife. It made a big impression on me. I watched a documentary about the chimney and the transformation of humanity. For example, the chimney has a great connection with the division of labor. You ask why? Before the chimney, men used to light a fire in the center, okay? There was a common area, they would light a fire in the center, gather around it, and they would make love, cook, and do everything together in that environment. Therefore, this has no effect on one's masculinity. I wanted to share such an opinion with you.”  
(Gündüz, Participant 33, 36y/o, Man)

As we can see in this quote, the common belief that taking care of the kitchen can have negative effects on the sexuality that men are supposed to realize is also on the participant's mind. Although the topic was not sexuality, the fact that the

research was on the kitchen and masculinity led him to believe that it could be directly related to sexuality. The participant wanted to share the idea that it is widespread in society and how he personally experienced it. From this vantage point, I can state that homophobia persists in the case of this participant and that the participant is aware of it. However, the participant is not afraid to be in the kitchen and even continues to engage in a variety of unpaid domestic labor activities. Based on this, I conclude that homophobia does not always require a stopping feature. When I look at participant group in particular, I can say that the decrease in homophobia does not provide a foundation for the emergence of egalitarian behavior, but rather creates an environment in which these behaviors can be more easily displayed. Otherwise, participants who were exposed to homophobia as children and still experience homophobia today would not have been able to stay in the kitchen and participate in other free domestic processes.

On the other hand, I did not find a different pattern of homophobia-homophobia in the narratives of those in the other group who were not or only partially involved in the kitchen and domestic processes. There were no narratives in that group that would indicate that homophobia was very strong due to the fact that they were not involved in all processes in the kitchen and other unpaid labor at home. On the contrary, like the participants in the other group, the rate of direct homophobia in their environment was very low and they often received negative comments such as "you are a bad example". Today, very few participants in both groups received comments that called their masculinity into question. If the dynamics highlighted by the inclusive masculinity debates were sufficient to explain the origins of egalitarian behaviors, we would expect these two groups to exhibit the same behaviors in the same context. As a result, rather than viewing these dynamics as the source of behavior, we can see them as providing a suitable ground for the performance of masculinities that emerge alongside other dynamics from a more egalitarian perspective.

Finally, I focused on the participants' personal histories in order to find patterns between the motivations underlying egalitarian behaviors. The strongest link I discovered was that many of these men had to enter the kitchen as children. Those who had working parents, in particular, had to feed themselves as children. The strongest similarity between these men was that they had to feed themselves until the elders of the family returned home, for example, by heating ready-made food in the fridge after they got home from school. As his first kitchen experience, one of the men participants described it as follows:

“In that period of middle school-adolescence, my mother’s working period started, and my food preparation started mostly in that period.

There was a period when both parents were not at home after school. In that process, I started to develop my food preparation practices, even with small and very simple things.” (Yılmaz, Participant 1, 31y/o, Man)

Having to do these chores at this point can be a significant turning point in developing a sense of responsibility at a young age. In fact, while most of these people had to cook as children, they felt the same way about most household chores as adults. As a result, I argue that it is critical to infuse in children at a young age that all work requiring unpaid domestic labor is everyone’s responsibility, regardless of variables such as gender. Indeed, based on the stories, I think it is critical not only to convey this message verbally, but also to create safe spaces for children to recognize their responsibilities. Children, who should be fulfilling their own responsibilities, began to support unpaid domestic labor from childhood. In a similar vein, Yalvaç who began to do not only cooking but also the majority of the housework because all members of his family were working, summarized the process as follows:

“For example, interestingly, I like washing dishes a lot, I like cleaning a lot. Of course, this also has something to do with the past. I had a mostly lonely childhood. Of course, my family was always working because they were civil servants. Obviously, out of necessity, you know, in order to manage your own work, for example, cooking started like this. It actually started out of necessity. That’s why I see such things close to me. For example, most people can respond to this by saying, "Oh cleaning, oh dishes, oh ironing. Let them stay away from me." But honestly, there are not many things that I am distant from.” (Yalvaç, Participant 28, 39y/o, Man)

In such stories, the idea of being involved in many household chores since childhood is important. However, it is critical to emphasize that these responsibilities should be safely delegated to the child. Because what I mean here is not the child’s realization of all unpaid domestic labor in the home. What I mean here is simply to create safe and limited spaces for them to participate in the processes. In other words, instead of overloading the child with tasks from start to finish, involve them in the process. Otherwise, the limit of involving the child in the processes from start to finish can easily be exceeded, causing harm to the child’s well-being.

Another significant issue in their personal histories was that many of the men in this group became aware of the inequalities that their mothers had faced as children. Many stories in this regard focused on the connection between realizing one’s mother was subjected to extreme inequality in the kitchen and one’s entry into the kitchen.



For example, Suat summarized his childhood involvement in unpaid domestic labor as follows:

“When my mother came home already very tired and was trying to wash my laundry and put it on the radiator, I started to feel a little bit bad. You know, as soon as she came home this time, I would go into the bathroom and I would wash it myself and then put it on the radiator. As I started to do it like this, I started to think that this is the way it should be. I said, then it should be like this in the kitchen. I mean, I started to wonder what kind of work I could do that would lessen my mother’s burden, because my mother was not only in the kitchen, she was everywhere in the house, that is, everywhere in the image you opened, she was there 95 percent of the time. When this happened, whether it was organizing my own wardrobe, putting away the food I ate, washing it, putting it aside, or preparing the table, during these periods, it was my high school life questioning process, both by seeing and feeling something other than seeing, thinking that it was going wrong. At this point, my relations with the kitchen and other parts of the house started to change.” (Suat, Participant 39, 34y/o, Man)

At some point, this participant, whose mother and father both work, became aware of the gender-based inequalities experienced by her mother and began to feel responsible. Another participant man summarizes a similar process as follows:

“The figure in the kitchen was completely my mother. For example, my mother never let me touch her in the kitchen, but when I reached high school age and saw that my mother was being exploited in the kitchen, I said, Mom, I will take a little bit of the lead.” (Gürkan, Participant 17, 34y/o, Man)

Similarly, both participants stated that they became involved in this process after witnessing inequality in unpaid domestic labor for their mothers. The significance of this finding is that it indicates that pieces of training or studies on recognizing gender-based inequalities given to men at a young age can result in positive long-term outcomes. Directly involving children in the kitchen or other unpaid domestic labor without creating an infrastructure and raising awareness about gender-based inequalities does not guarantee that children will adopt a more egalitarian attitude in the future, in my opinion. Instead, I can conclude from these findings of the research that it is important to make children aware of the inequalities that arise in the society and family they live in at an early age.

However, this pattern poses a risk in and of itself. Because the point at which the narratives intersect was the motivation for “saving” their mothers from this inequality in childhood. Although this motivation underpins egalitarian behavior, it also points to the formation of another inequality. Men’s positioning as protectors can actually bring us back to the topic of hybrid masculinities. Although they are exhibiting a behavior that is out of the norm, the fact that the underlying motivation again includes the motives of a man protecting a woman actually carries the risk of the formation of a new norm. In other words, the fact that men perform unpaid domestic labor not to share but to protect a loved one may reproduce within the norm of the dichotomy of protector-needy to be protected. I did not investigate the relationships participants formed with other people and in areas outside the home in the context of gender equality at this point. I do not have enough data to say whether participants developed their understanding of equality in terms of the people with whom they had emotional bonds or if they drew a broader framework. As a result, further research in this area will provide us with more detailed insights.

An egalitarian attitude towards gender-based inequalities is a type of attitude that should not only emerge when those with whom we have an emotional connection are subjected to these inequalities. Behaviors based on feelings of pity or compassion create a hierarchy in themselves from the very beginning. If we develop attitudes against inequalities only because we have an emotional connection, this attitude can turn into an attitude that feeds inequalities under the egalitarian appearance of the attitude we develop. Because gender inequalities are a process that affects the entire society in various ways. Inequalities in other areas will worsen if we adopt an egalitarian attitude in those areas because some inequalities affect our environment. As pointed out in the theory of hybrid masculinities, ostensibly egalitarian behaviors in only one field, which I also call the risk of not internalising the understanding of equality, can turn into behaviors that can deepen inequalities despite appearing to be equality (Bridges and Pascoe 2014, 2018). As a result, in the strategies for making people aware of the inequality mentioned above, it will be critical to convey the message that equality is for everyone. Furthermore, as previously stated, it is critical to recognize the burdens that emotional hierarchies-based behaviors can impose on those who are the recipients of these emotions. In the following chapter, I will go into detail about the burdens participants felt on their partners.

## 7. WHEN MEN LEAVE THE KITCHEN: NEW SPACES OF INEQUALITY FOR WOMEN

Men's presence in the kitchen, food preparation processes, and emerging masculinities affect more than just themselves. Men's presence in the kitchen has an impact on their partners who share the same household through dynamics such as the distribution of total household workload, the increase in invisible burdens such as mental load, and conflicts-compromises. In the previous chapter, I discussed how egalitarian behaviors have an impact. In this chapter, I will concentrate on women's experiences and discuss the effects of the issues I have researched and discussed in this thesis on women. In previous chapters, I focused on the specific impact of men's presence in the kitchen on women. In this chapter, I will look at how men's non-normative behavior triggers norms on women while also allowing for new norms to emerge. As more of a result, the second section of this chapter will focus on women's narratives.

Before moving on to the next subsections, it would be good to open a parenthesis for the issue of being or behaving in a normative/non-normative manner, which I will frequently mention in this section. As you can see from the quotes from the participants that I shared in the previous chapters and in this chapter, it is the norm in Turkish society for women to cook in the kitchen. In other words, they are the ones who feed the family, just like in the literature. People are aware of the widespread belief in society that it is more acceptable for women to be in the kitchen in the context of gender roles. We can also see in these narratives that men are in a privileged position and that it is widely accepted as normal in society that they do not spend time in the kitchen within the context of gender roles. On the other hand, men, who are the subject of this research, act outside this norm and prefer to be in the kitchen. Men who are not expected to be in the kitchen being in the kitchen or women who are expected to be in the kitchen not being in the kitchen should be normal events that occur independently of femininity and masculinity in a society free of gender roles. However, most of the people I interviewed reacted as if it was against the nature of things when they exhibited

these behaviours outside societal expectations. As a result, I have chosen to refer to these behaviors as non-normative behaviors or behaviors outside the norm, which occur when women and men perform actions in ways that contradict gender roles and social norms. Similarly, I have referred to producing performances that conform to these expectations rather than contradicting social norms and gender roles prevalent in society as normative behaviors. Later in this chapter, I will look more closely at issues like society's reactions to these non-normative behaviors, efforts to transform gender roles, and the performance of acceptable masculinities and femininities as a result of bargaining with society against these reactions.

### **7.1 The Distinct Difference Between Cooking in the Kitchen and Helping in the Kitchen**

How activity in the kitchen is defined is a major determinant of kitchen dynamics. Each person's activity is related to the activity of the other, especially if there is more than one person in the kitchen. As I mentioned in previous chapters, this interdependence creates opportunities for conflict and compromise. In general, the partner who executes the main dish is considered to have cooked it that day, and invisible hierarchies, such as chef-apprentice, can form between the partners.

It would be unrealistic to expect a single partner, regardless of gender, to perform all of the tasks in the kitchen, since kitchen processes do not begin and end with the preparation of a meal, but rather, they begin days before and continue for days after. I have previously discussed how, if these dimensions are not seen, workloads that can be considered mental loads increase and are frequently carried out by women. As a result, we frequently encounter in the flow of life situations in which the man is the conductor of the instant process in the kitchen and the woman is the conductor of the instant process in the kitchen. It is more important in terms of equality that all of these details are seen and maintained through a balance. However, in order to determine whether this balance has been established, it is necessary to examine the dynamics of the establishment of the roles of chef-apprentice. The reasons why the person positioned as an apprentice on that day is in the kitchen and maintains this hierarchical relationship, in my opinion, provide important clues. In this context, I can divide people who are positioned as apprentices on specific days into three groups based on how they position themselves in the kitchen in three basic ways. These are cooking in the kitchen, sharing the work with their partner in the kitchen, and helping their partner in the kitchen.

In this distinction, I can say that the positioning independent of the other partner is most likely to produce egalitarian behavior. That is, presenting oneself as someone who cooks. When I examine it in connection with the previous chapter's discussion of which behaviors can be egalitarian, I find that if people position themselves as being there to cook regardless of the activity they are involved in in the kitchen, the likelihood of this behavior being egalitarian increases. However, positioning themselves in this group, as in the group that produces egalitarian behaviors with egalitarian motivations, appeared to be the most limited group compared to the entire group, particularly for men. This behavior and positioning are consistent with the type of egalitarian behavior I emphasized in the previous chapter, in which egalitarian behavior should be produced for everyone as a responsibility, without relying on the positions of others. As a result, the fact that they establish their relationship with the kitchen not through any other person, but directly and subjectively through themselves, can be an important indicator for the reproduction of egalitarian behaviors.

The most common situation I encountered in this research was men determining their kitchen positioning based on the other. Men used the narratives of sharing kitchen chores and helping their partner in the kitchen to indicate their own positioning. The most fundamental similarity between these two forms of positioning, in my opinion, is that they are parallel to gender norms. Because, despite their differences, both narrative types have a dynamic that places women at the center and positions them. In terms of gender norms, we can say that the perception of home kitchens as women's, even feminine, spaces resurface here. I mentioned similar norms in the fourth chapter, where I discussed the spatial experience. Despite expressing an interest in the kitchen, a significant number of men experienced it as a professional kitchen, leaving behind kitchens that women were responsible for organizing. Parallel to this discussion, the way they position themselves emerges. At the end of the day, they define their relationship with the kitchen as either helping their wives or dividing the work in the kitchen with their wives, despite the fact that they do some of the cooking as well. The fact that they go beyond simply experiencing the space and process together and place women at the center of the narratives about this experience supports my argument that established gender norms are thus re-visible.

On the other hand, we cannot ignore the fact that there is a significant difference between the attitudes of sharing kitchen work and helping in the kitchen. At this point, I compared how men positioned themselves in this process and how their partners felt about it. Men who positioned their involvement in the kitchen as sharing kitchen chores received no significant comments from their partners indicating

that this situation made them feel unequal. This may be interpreted positively by their partners because it is the polar opposite of the current norm of men not being in the kitchen. Kitchen chores or cooking in the kitchen fall right in the middle of the spectrum. As a result, it is difficult to say that this behavior is either not egalitarian or egalitarian in and of itself. Despite the process division, there is a risk that processes such as mental loads will continue to be performed by women. Because the person determines his own position based on the position of the woman, the woman is obligated to determine her own position. As a result, this dependent relationship can quickly devolve into a kitchen-helping discourse. Sometimes, because the behavior of helping in the kitchen is less accepted and accepted today, people may name themselves as sharing kitchen responsibilities. The current position and the title may have an asymmetry. This asymmetry returns us to the topic of hybrid masculinities. Positioning oneself in a more acceptable position from a point where society no longer recognizes privileges and isolating oneself from other men, as in this group, can be a source of positive social feedback. Individuals who benefit from existing inequalities may become invisible as an outcome of this positive feedback. As a result, studies focusing specifically on the transitions between behavior and naming between these categories will enable us to better understand the dynamics underlying the theory of hybrid masculinities (Bridges and Pascoe 2014).

Men who position themselves as kitchen helpers are the third group we need to look at closely in this section. The partners of the men who took this stance frequently emphasized the inequality of the situation. Although men's absence in the kitchen has been invisible for a long time, this invisibility is gradually fading for this sample group. Men are no longer expected to rarely enter the kitchen; this is the most basic level that should exist at some point. The real expectation is for men to overcome this habit of rarely entering the kitchen and take enough responsibility to approach an equal, if not equal, level with women. They should go beyond the tasks assigned to them and become familiar with the kitchen processes. For example, Didem comments on being helped in the kitchen as follows:

“From time to time, according to my husband's mood, I mean, this is "my duty" and he does it as a favor to me, he helps me in this way. Then he regrets them or something, he thinks he should not do it, then he thinks he should do it. There is a transition from emotion to emotion because there is a social thing, there is an established judgment, and no matter how much it is, the man is "helping" the woman. What we perceive as a duty when we walk in the door is not happening because they perceive it as help. If two women walk in the door, they share the work, you go into the kitchen and I will tidy up the house, or if you have children, I will take care of them, and they do not see it as helping me,

it is a roommateship, it is the work of the house. She has to do it too, she has to do it too.” (Didem, Participant 26, 50y/o, Woman)

This comment fits in perfectly with the discussion of hybrid masculinities. Inequalities that were previously hidden by norms are now becoming more visible, and people are demanding action on these issues. As a result, men can no longer easily benefit from these privileged positions, and they are losing them. However, as I mentioned in the previous group, differences between the behavior and its origins can be created and hidden through various maneuvers. For example, when we spoke with the participant I just mentioned, her partner positioned himself as egalitarian. When compared to other men, he claimed that he was advocating for gender equality and doing his part because he did more work than a typical man. During our interview, he stated that outsiders praised his interest in processes like the kitchen and told his wife how lucky she was:

“Yes, it usually comes from my wife’s nurse friends, their husbands are not like that. My wife’s friends come, and when they look at it, they say that Y [says her own name] sweeps the house, takes care of the children, sets the table when there is a very crowded guest, they say "Oh, X [says her partner’s name] you are very lucky" and I hear this.” (Cumhur, Participant 15, 52y/o, Man)

If we analyze this household through the theory of hybrid masculinities, at the point where the privileged position of men is questioned, this position cannot be maintained in today’s conditions. For this reason, maneuvers can be made to put himself in a different position from other men and to open up a new space. For this reason, I can comment that we can now see men at different levels in home kitchens where men did not enter or were not forced to enter before. For example, the same person summarizes his involvement in the kitchen as follows:

“As I said, we are Black Sea men, women set the table and women clear the table, but that was not the case. My wife cooks, sets the table, the children have grown up and sometimes they set the plates, I can also help if I am free, but the clearing is all mine. Of course, it is not that my wife does not help from time to time because if she does not have any work if there is a TV series on TV, she gets up immediately and watches it.” (Cumhur, Participant 15, 52y/o, Man)

This participant, according to this point of view, creates a maneuvering space mentioned in the theory of hybrid masculinities and attempts to distance himself from hegemonic masculinity. However, when we look at the point reached, we do not see a sufficient shift toward egalitarian masculinity, but rather a space is created for new inequalities to become even more invisible. The participant frequently emphasizes Black Sea men, bringing this group to the forefront and emphasizing various differences that set him apart from the group. On the other hand, he is still proud to be a Black Sea man and refuses to abandon this stereotype. This means that while he continues to use the authority that being a Black Sea man gives him in society, he tries to isolate himself from the negative phenomena that come with this authority. However, we can see from his partner's narratives that this effort is no longer sufficient. The woman partner believes that the partner's attempts to distance himself from hegemonic masculinity are inadequate. According to such examples, particularly for participants, the position of helping his wife in the kitchen is no longer enough to distance himself from hegemonic masculinity. Other unpaid domestic labor, such as the mental load of kitchen responsibilities, are currently expected to be shared. At this point, it is encouraging to see feminist gains continue to highlight these privileged positions and demonstrate that the new orders that have emerged are not normal. On the other hand, it is thought-provoking that other members of society do not inspect these dynamics in sufficient depth and declare the other partner lucky, especially when they perceive the other partner's behavior to be out of the norm. As a result, in the following section, I will go over the effects of these dynamics on women in depth.

## **7.2 Women Who are Pushed Back into the Kitchen by Society**

The last thing I would like to talk about in the context of this thesis is the impact of what we talked about during this thesis on women. When I was designing the research for the thesis, I did not plan to talk to women in my initial design. After conducting the five pilot interviews with men, I thought that I needed to hear the other side of the story. For this reason, I also interviewed the partners of sixteen of the participants. I think this thesis would have been very incomplete if I had not made such a decision. Otherwise, I would not have been able to observe that inequalities deepen and become invisible as a result of some of the seemingly egalitarian behaviors of men, which I have often mentioned as a finding in this research. Again, I probably would have thought that most of the masculinities presented were inclusive masculinity rather than hybrid masculinities. However,



including women in the interviews eliminated the most fundamental deficiency of this research. I did not base many of the arguments I put forward throughout the thesis solely on the answers given by men, on the contrary, I often double-checked how women experience the process behind the argument. Although this led to semi-structured in-depth interviews with 51 people and the coding of more than 1500 pages of interview transcripts, the resulting labor helped me understand the dynamics in the households even more deeply.

When I was conducting the pilot interview with my first participant woman, I was not sure whether I would need to access the partners of all men participants whenever possible. Until the end of the first interview. After completing the interview questions, I had the chance to chat with the participant for a while, and she told me that the interview felt like therapy for her and that she realized that she had been unfair to herself about some things. For example, Asiye made the following statement towards the end of the interview:

“On the days when I was working very hard, for example, when I came home, it would sometimes frustrate me to deal with food or not to find food, now that I think about it. This interview will not end well for us. After a while, it is like talking to a therapist.” (Asiye, Participant 13, 53y/o, Woman)

I can say that the reason for such reactions is that the invisible inequality that I frequently mentioned in the previous chapters started to become visible during the interviews. In particular, one of the participants, who thought that her partner had a lot of workloads because her partner was involved in the kitchen, stated that at the end of the interview, she actually took a broader view of unpaid domestic labor and had the chance to think about areas such as mental load that she had never thought about. This prompted me to read the interview more thoroughly and to concentrate even more on future interviews with women. In other words, while the participant saw the interview as a form of therapy that helped her see things for herself, I saw it as a form of therapy that helped me see things for my own research. Hearing this therapy analogy at the end of some of my interviews with women and during others made me realize that I needed to deepen my data coding not only to better understand their partners' experiences but also to better understand their own personal experiences. I open a final parenthesis in this section to share my main findings in light of this realization.

Why is it essential to take into account women when analyzing men's involvement in kitchen processes? The answer to this question is heavily influenced by gender

norms, which I have frequently discussed throughout this thesis. The expectation of who and when a household task will be completed is just as important as how household members will be criticized by society if this expectation is not met. For example, who will be considered guilty first if no food is cooked in a household and household members have problems with this? At this point, Inness summarises the relationship between gender norms and the division of labor in the kitchen as follows:

“This division of cooking labor remains an important element in how we separate our society by gender roles, which often offer more power and status to men than to women. The male cooking mystique, with its assumption that regular daily cooking is a women’s job, has far-reaching ramifications. Women are the ones responsible for a double shift, working a full-time job and then rushing home to cook a meal for the family. Since cooking in our society remains deeply linked to gender, if a wife decides not to cook, this frequently is perceived as a sign that she is “abnormal” and “bad.” Society polices how women (and men) relate to cooking-related responsibilities because this is an effective way to maintain traditional gender roles. Every time a woman goes to a grocery store cooks a meal for a family, or prepares a menu for the week, she reassures society that cooking and other nurturing activities are women’s “natural” activities.” (Inness 2001, 35-36).

This observation serves as a good starting point for my research. According to Inness’ observations, when a task that should be done in the kitchen is not done, women are labeled as "abnormal" or "bad". In my research, I challenge this positioning even further. Where does society locate women in terms of gender norms when the work that should be done in the kitchen is done voluntarily by men rather than by women? To comprehend this positioning, I first analyzed how women perceive and feel themselves in such situations. For example, how does it feel when their partner does unpaid domestic labor or even just cooks? What does a woman partner think about sharing a home with such a man partner? Is she lucky? Is her life easier than that of women who share a home with other men? Does she do less housework than other women? Different people may respond differently to these questions. When most people think of other normative households, they may even answer yes to these questions. However, based on my interviews with participants, I can conclude that only answering yes to these questions may indicate that we are missing something. When I look at the common denominator of the interviews I conducted, in all households without exception, the increase in men’s involvement in the kitchen leads to an indirect increase in social pressure on women, even if indirectly at different levels. So how does this situation occur?

At first glance, men's transgression of social norms and their involvement in unpaid domestic labor, especially in the kitchen, can be seen as a dynamic between them and the norm. Whether through homophobia, as inclusive men claim, or through countless other ways in the literature, it is possible to identify many systems that police those who act outside the norm. This is actually nothing more than various dynamics that ensure the continuation of the norm and the movement of new individuals who join the society around this norm. These dynamics constitute an important research area of gender studies. At this point, based on my own research, I can say that when a behavior outside the norm is exhibited, the norm does not only use tools against the one who exhibits non-normative behavior in order to protect itself. The policing of the norm through various members of the society can be realized with different tools, and instead of the person who behaves outside the norm, sometimes power can be established over the people around this person in order for this person to return to the norm.

One of the strong findings of my research was that when men transgress social norms and undertake unpaid domestic labor, especially in the kitchen, social pressure is placed on the woman rather than the man who transgresses this norm. One of the most important dynamics underlying these tools is that society still places women at the center of the kitchen as the dominant norm, sees women as the person responsible for feeding the kitchen and the household, and sees the lack of women as the motivation for men to enter the kitchen. My argument here extends Inness' (2001) argument that women's lack of work in the kitchen is perceived by society as "abnormal" behavior. It is not necessary for the work to be completed in order for this viewpoint to be formed. I think that women's behavior is still regarded as "abnormal" even when the work is performed by someone other than women, namely men.

Men's entrance into the kitchen and their egalitarian behavior are often not read through men's own decisions. On the contrary, there may be a perception that men must exhibit this behavior because women do not carry out their responsibilities adequately within the existing norm. For example, Aytakin described how his involvement in the kitchen was perceived as his wife's deficiency by his relatives as follows:

“When it moves outside my nuclear family, it becomes a bit of provincial/local culture, you know, there are aspects of Turkish culture that we do not want, unfortunately, and they do not do it, you know, why does not your wife do it. I explain this, you know, my wife is also a working person and less interested. For example, my wife is very good

at cleaning the bathroom. I clean the bathroom too, but not as good as she does. She also does this, so there should be a division of labor. You know, my wife is not my slave, she is not a person who was born to do these things. I react by saying that I also have my hands and arms, I have a certain knowledge, I have a certain talent, and I can do it too. You know, such things can come from my distant relatives, I have also heard negative things about me spending more time in the kitchen. But is it important for me? Honestly, it does not matter at all because my wife is not a slave and I should definitely help her with something. It does not matter if it is the kitchen or something else, I will definitely do it.” (Aytekin, Participant 37, 29y/o, Man)

This is one of the ways that other inequalities are rendered invisible in combination with egalitarian behaviors. This dynamic has also been observed in women’s relationships with people outside the household, and the reactions during these relationships provide important clues for us to understand these dynamics. In the interviews I conducted, the relationships in which the mentioned dynamic emerged most frequently were those between people and their elders. If they have not previously encountered a man profile who is involved in the kitchen, women’s elders may find this involvement of their children’s partners strange. This is especially true when family elders visit. Arsen, for example, summarized her relatives’ reactions to the fact that her partner prepared the meals when they came to visit as follows:

“At first, there were some people who were strange from the elders of my family. I have a great aunt who was very surprised "How so, did X [says her partner’s name] do it or did not you?" or they come to us for dinner and said "Y [says her own name], thanks to your hands". I said I only did the salad, for example, "how really" (they said).” (Arsen, Participant 35, 35y/o, Woman)

This kind of feedback from the man’s transgression of the norm risks putting pressure on the woman and making her feel inadequate. In order to avoid such tensions, couples sometimes even develop their own methods and try to perform differently to avoid such feedback from the society. For example, Miray summarizes this kind of situation as follows:

“For example, guests are coming, I do not know how to make tea, it is something I have never been able to do, I mean X [says her partner’s name] brews tea very well, he always makes the tea and he never forgets, for example, he can keep track of when people run out of tea and he can always bring tea, for example in a teacup. For example, would it be okay

if I put it in a coffee cup, let's not get up, but he does the opposite, he can also host guests. So people started to say, look at her, she never gets up from her seat, he does everything. At first, he was teasing me about these things, he would say to me, I brewed the tea, you take care of it, and so on. I do not know if it was so that I would not be embarrassed, as if I had done it, or so that he would not look ladylike, I do not know, the two may have been mixed together at that time. Then he started to not care about it at all and he started to see it as a thing, which is a plus for me, it changed his ideas for him." (Miray, Participant 32, 39y/o, Woman)

It is understandable that behavior that deviates from the existing norm may be perceived as strange by those who have long accepted the norm as correct. They may not recognize at first that there is an alternative way of relating outside of the norm, especially if they are of a certain age and have been exposed to it for many years. However, as we have seen in the second example when this situation occurs in other relationships with people who are not seen more frequently, those who behave outside the norm feel obliged to make some decisions. The most common of these choices were to wait for acceptance of their out-of-the-norm behavior, to make the out-of-the-norm behavior accepted, or to pretend to be within the norm when necessary to save energy. This last situation can be interpreted as an indication that, rather than struggling against society and its norms, they attempt to negotiate with them at some point. Sometimes both partners can bargain, while other times only one partner attempts to bargain. For example, in one household I interviewed, both partners were bargaining, and when they went to woman participant's family, it was almost like a theater. The following is how the participant described the situation:

"Now my family is a traditional family. In fact, this was one of the reasons why I chose X [says partner's name] or one of the reasons why I set this criterion. My mother is also a working woman. It is a pity she spent her whole life working. I should not do this. [...] Is X [says her partner's name] very helpful with my family? You know, when we are with my father, when we go to our family when we go to home visits, my father is chatting and X [says the name of his partner] has to continue his conversation. So we women continue to do housework. But he still picks up his tea, cup, plate, and so on. My mother must like it. For my father, maybe he is pleased because I am his daughter, but in my extended family, this is not something that is acceptable because men are usually served. [...] I give a brief to X [says his partner's name] according to where we have been before. I am from Ankara because I have an Anatolian mindset. By the way, it's not something that comes from education. You know, almost everyone in my family is a bureaucrat, my parents are bureaucrats, my aunt, my aunts, so this is the case even

if they work, even if their wives are bureaucrats, and even if they have a university degree. I have poked X [she says her partner's name] a lot and said, you stay, and we will pour your tea, do not make too many moves. We do not specify it much, I mean, at home, they do not ask anyway, they do not ask how the housework is going, because there is nothing extra in their minds because someone has to do the housework anyway. And that person is a woman. I want to protect the image of X [says partner's name] because as I said, I have been doing it since I was 7 years old. I do not need an extra image, but I didn't want to bring my husband and my father into it for the first time, like 3 weeks before we got engaged, but we dated for a very long time. I said, don't laugh too much in front of my father, do not laugh. He said why, by the way, although my father is a university graduate, a bureaucrat who has spent his life in a government office, I emphasize, and as a man who spent 20 years of his life in Izmir. We always put the boy in such a situation of oppression, it is traumatic. [...] I don't think X [he says his partner's name] has much difficulty. He is a smart man, he does things at every point, and he adapts." (Gülce, Participant 45, 30y/o, Woman)

As this example shows, it is an important decision whether or not to create a climate of conflict, especially with relatives with whom one does not see frequently. Because of the conflicts that can arise, people try to act as if they are within the norm, even if they are acting in the opposite way.

This is similar to what I mentioned earlier about the kitchen being a stage with both a front stage and a backstage. In the context of these negotiations, the processes carried out in front of and behind this stage, particularly when guests arrive, may differ. Backstage, where the majority of the work is done, egalitarian behavior can be displayed, whereas front stage, a different performance can be displayed in order to avoid clashing with the norm and society. This is the polar opposite of what those who do less backstage and receive credit for it in front of the stage experience. If your audience, your guests, is a group that cares about transgressing these norms, we can see men in front of the stage more often. If the audience has a more critical and conservative nature, as we can see in the example I gave above, men may prefer to stay behind the scenes. For this reason, the performances of masculinity in the kitchen not only change according to the dynamics between the people in the household but also according to the guests they will stand in front of and their relationship with the norm.

Why do people feel obliged to make these negotiations? I think that one of the reasons behind this question is parallel to the expectations of acceptable femininity and acceptable masculinity in society. Especially the structure of the kitchen and cooking in contact with other members of the society causes people to make decisions

on how to perform masculinity and femininity against these expectations. At this point, DeVault states the importance of being the one who feeds the family in terms of societal expectations as follows:

“It is not just that women do more of the work of feeding, but also that feeding work has become one of the primary ways that women "do" gender. At this level, my approach to the concept of gendered activity draws on the understanding of gender as a product of "social doings" [...] In this view, activities like feeding a family are understood by those in families as "properly" women's work, and therefore become resources for the production of gender. By feeding the family, a woman conducts herself as recognizably womanly. [...] Doing gender, in this approach, is not just an individual performance, but an interactional process, a process of collective production and recognition of "adequate" women and men through concerted activity. West and Zimmerman propose that members of this society, at least, are virtually always "doing gender" in this sense—that is, they are conducting interactions, together and collaboratively, so as to mark themselves and identify others, as acceptable men and women.” (DeVault 1994, 118).

In the previous sections, I have shared the forms in which the expectation of being an adequate man and an adequate woman in interactions with society, which DeVault also draws attention to, emerged in my research. Although most of the participants of my research think that social norms have started to be overcome, the negotiations show that these norms actually significantly affect the performances of femininity-masculinity that individuals put forward. People who perform differently in contexts where there is less interaction with society or less normative criticism may feel pressured to perform what is expected of them at the end of the day in front of people with normative expectations. DeVault explains this bargaining situation in the following sentences:

“Through this ongoing process, activities such as feeding, which members of the society have learned to associate strongly with one gender, come to seem like "natural" expressions of gender. This observation does not imply that all women engage in such activity. Some choose not to do the feeding. Others improvise and negotiate, developing idiosyncratic versions of this "womanly" work. And of course, some men do feeding work and remain recognizable men. But as long as feeding is understood, collectively, as somehow more "womanly" than "manly," the work stands as one kind of activity in which "womanliness" may be at issue. Thus, many couples apparently do organize their household activity around shared (or contested) assumptions about gendered activity, their versions

of "properly" masculine or feminine behavior." (DeVault 1994, 119).

I frequently observed this conclusion made by DeVault while analysing my data. When people do not show behaviors that are considered "natural", "adequate" or "normal" in terms of their gender identities, they are subject to judgment by other members of society. In order to escape this judgment, to be accepted, and to avoid conflicts, couples may engage in various bargains. These bargains often take place in the form of performing behaviors as if they are within the norm in front of the members of the society who strictly adhere to the norms. Otherwise, other members of society who strictly adhere to the norm make people feel in various ways that these "unnatural", "inadequate" or "not normal" behaviors are not acceptable. This can occur even if all processes within the household are carried out without interrupting the needs of any household member. This shows that being engaged in the kitchen and cooking goes beyond just meeting the need for nutrition. In this context, being engaged in the kitchen and cooking is also a reflection of the decisions taken on how gender is to be performed in society. People can perform differently in their interactions with people who strictly adhere to norms or those who do not. I see this situation as cooking gender in parallel with the tastes of the person interacting with them. When people perform the gender they feel they belong to, they cook and exhibit gender according to the expectations and tastes of both themselves and the members of the society they interact with at that moment. This performance does not have to be continuous or constant, on the contrary, it appears in a constantly changing form in order to be brought to the most acceptable form through various negotiations.

On the other hand, in bargaining with society on the expectation of behaving within the norm, people do not only behave as if they are within the norm. At some point, some people may be tempted to change this bargain at the expense of conflicting with this norm. When men continue to walk against the norm rather than negotiate with it, a space is created for other men to question themselves. Şebnem, for example, summarized her father and husband's relationship as follows:

“We are four sisters. When we first came here as friends from university, we were friends and we used to come to our house. At that time, my father would say, "You don't do it, why are you doing it?". My husband would explain that we should do it together. After a while, my father started to put his own glass, plate, etc. away after seeing my husband. His family never intervened in such a thing because he would get up and help at home, even at his mother's house. That's why the families never intervened in this matter, they did not intervene that much. Only my



father had a hard time getting used to it at first, and then he respected it, so he probably thought it was a good thing.” (Şebnem, Participant 30, 40y/o, Woman)

This story shared by the participant may actually contain clues about how egalitarian behaviors can spread in other segments of society. We can observe here that men have the possibility of spreading the egalitarian behaviors they produce in the form of learning from peers or other men. At this point, those who produce egalitarian behaviors may have to play a proactive role and explain the correctness of what they do to other men. For example, Suat describes his experiences with other men in his family as follows:

“My cousins, the ones I am closest to, are my aunt’s children, 6 brothers, and sisters and they have a traditional family life. When we meet them, especially at my aunt’s house or they have a big house where everyone comes together. Now everyone is married, in different houses, but when they come there and we are invited, what I do there is just to hold the ends of 2 plates and take them inside, that is all. Even that is too much, you know, stop, do not get up, sit down, eat your food, the women will take it away anyway, what they say they will take it away anyway, by the way, 4 women are inside, we are 20 people outside, we are eating and one is always ending and the other one is starting. I mean, it is like a robot, I mean, there is actually someone doing it, but there is no how it is done, how it is done. They will do it because there the relationship is established like this, they are already at home, they do not work, they say we work from morning till night, and so on and so on. When I do this, not only my male cousins but also my aunt’s daughter, there is only one girl, you know, maybe she is there to show her power of being a sister-in-law, I do not know, she says do not touch, they will do that. You know, the discussion of this with my cousins is that they are the ones who make fun of me the most in this period, I mean nowadays. Of course, I do not stay down there like I used to. With a very simple question, I try to explain how inappropriate it is for them to question things. When that happens, of course, they run away this time. You know, you have your hands and feet, thank God you do not have any disabilities, so what? So you ate, your hand is in your belly, go and take a plate inside. It is very simple. No answer. Around here, you know, the work I do at home, especially in the kitchen, is not right, that it is women’s work, that is where I do the most, I get criticized.” (Suat, Participant 39, 34y/o, Man)

Although these proactive initiatives frequently fail the first time, as in this case, we can infer that for long-term changes, egalitarian behaviors and inequalities within the

system must be highlighted to other men. Because simply sharing unpaid domestic labor is insufficient to eliminate inequalities. We can see why this division of labor is required to eliminate the norms of inequality in society and why every member of society must demonstrate to the other members of society that they should take a stand for this. The need to make invisible inequalities visible and transform these inequalities may require more collective expression in peer groups. Although not always successful, an increase in the number of men acting outside the norm can be a motivator for men who want to behave outside the norm.

Another effect of men's active visibility in the kitchen on women is that their behavior is seen as a blessing. For example, Hicran summarizes how her partner's involvement in the kitchen reflects on her as follows:

“They say that you are very lucky, but sometimes I feel like, I mean, is it my duty, why is it perceived in this way, if women have to do it, then men are very lucky in other jobs too, if we think of it as luck. After all, there is a division of labor, there is such division of labor, everyone is doing what they like, but those kinds of things, jokes were happening a lot. [...] Of course, it is never said that of course, because it is always adopted as a woman's role, it is a blessing, it is accepted as a blessing that the man did it. And that, to be honest, made me a bit uncomfortable when they said that.” (Hicran, Participant 43, 54y/o, Woman)

On the same subject, another woman participant summarized her own experiences as follows:

“So there is feedback that I am lucky and ungrateful. You know, they compare it with, you know, there is no one around you who does this much, you know, be satisfied, say thank you. Why criticize? But when the issue is my level of fatigue and exhaustion, nobody cares. So there can be a more equal sharing.” (Şebnem, Participant 30, 40y/o, Woman)

As seen in these two examples, if the reasons for men's involvement in the kitchen are not adequately explained to the community, and if this is not done by the man, society can stigmatize the woman at the end of the day as "lucky" and as "ungrateful". This is because the man who behaves outside the norm is considered to be exhibiting a "blessing". When I asked whether this perception of blessing works in reverse, I was told that no man has ever been called lucky because his woman partner is in the kitchen. Or the fact that their woman partners are in the kitchen has never been described as a blessing for any man. Because while the woman being in the kitchen

is a continuation of the norm, the man being in the kitchen is a transgression of the norm. For example, I asked one of the women participants, who constantly received feedback that she was lucky because her partner was in the kitchen, whether you think your partner was called lucky in this context because he was with you in a similar way. She said, "I do not think so. Maybe because I do not show off. I do not show off like that. I do not present to people that I cook like this. That's why I do not think it was said." (Berrak, Participant 47, 30y/o, Woman). This response can actually be read in parallel with the performances made according to acting within or outside the social norms. If you produce a behavior within the norm, the spotlight does not highlight you. If you are acting outside the norm, the spotlight will highlight you. If your audience is an audience that will applaud this performance, you can continue the performance. On the other hand, if you have an audience that will be disapproving, you will either try to be invisible or you will have to struggle to put on this performance, as I mentioned in the previous examples.

Calling women lucky actually allows us to look at the deepening of inequalities in the theory of hybrid masculinities from a different angle. A man's non-normative behavior allows him to put a distance between himself and other men. Sometimes these distances are made apparent by other members of the society. For example, one of the female participants expressed how her mother differentiated her husband from other men in the following sentences:

"My family is very small; I only have my mother. My mother always admires my husband very much, she always says that there is no one like him. Sometimes we argue, for example, she hears it, she says "What more do you want-jam on it", she says things like "he does not gamble, he does not drink, he does everything, yet you still get angry". My mother appreciates my husband in many ways." (Miray, Participant 32, 39y/o, Woman)

I have often seen distancing with other men, either directly in person or through some other behavior. We can see this as discursive distancing, as I mentioned earlier. In this way, they separate themselves from unacceptable men with very small maneuvers while still benefiting from the privileged positions and inequalities of those men in other contexts Bridges and Pascoe (2014, 2018). On the other hand, in my research, I also found findings that would broaden and deepen the discussion on the deepening of inequality mentioned in this literature. In particular, these findings go beyond the idea that men benefit from inequalities and offer insights into how inequalities deepen and the effects of deepening inequalities on women.

While men are rewarded for non-normative behaviors, women are almost punished for men's non-normative behavior. The fact that women are considered lucky or that the behavior they are subjected to is presented as a blessing becomes a psychological oppression on women. This can act as a barrier to women speaking out against other inequalities. Because women who want to speak out or who do speak out are categorized as ungrateful. In this way, social dynamics not only give men invisibility in deepening inequalities but also create a favorable ground for women not to speak out. Despite all these equations, sometimes women try to speak out against the behaviors they are subjected to. For example, Ajda explained how she now reacts to these behaviors she has been subjected to:

“I mean, I feel uncomfortable when they say that. You are very lucky, for example when her mother says that. I mean, her mother is actually very happy with this situation and my husband has already taken this shape because of his mother, because of that relationship, but you know, sometimes it can be said in passing, you are very lucky, he does this, your husband does this, so I react then, I mean, I react. I say he is lucky too, I do the same, he works, I work too, we are in equal conditions. I am not saying that I am very lucky, I am just saying that my husband may be more organized than me in terms of closet organization, he is that kind of person. The way he folds the closets, the way he folds the laundry, his organization is very good. That is all I am saying, my husband may be more organized than me, but other than that, we work equally, you know, it is normal to be like that. I am not saying I agree with you, I mean most of the time.” (Ajda, Participant 51, 33y/o, Woman)

The social feedback machine does not only work in a passive way to prevent women from speaking out. It also actively works to push women back into the norm, often through family elders. Some of the women I spoke to expressed that people around them are just as surprised that men are in the kitchen as they are that women are not in the kitchen. It was not only out of the norm for a man to be in the kitchen, but also for a woman not to be in the kitchen. Women are not only called lucky but also ungrateful if they speak out when they see another problem. They were also subjected to various discourses to get them back into the kitchen. Especially the elders of the family, who say that men work too hard and get tired, take various actions in this regard. These actions can sometimes take the form of friendly advice from the elders of the family to the woman to get back into the kitchen. On the other hand, these actions could also take place when a man entered the kitchen while the elders were at home and the elders would take pity on him and enter the kitchen. While the underlying message in both of these actions is that the man is doing more than he should, the intention is often to make women feel bad and keep

them in line. For example, Ajda, who I have just shared that she received feedback that she was lucky, described how the guests made her feel when family elders such as aunts came to visit, while her partner did most of the kitchen work:

“In the first years of our marriage, I received different things from her aunt, another aunt, etc. I mean, for example, when my husband brought tea, when he brought tea, I mean, they were surprised by their faces, movements, looks, and it was as if I should do it. [...] I mean, I could feel those looks from the people who rarely come to our house in a month or a year. [...] My husband does it more in such situations, to be honest. For example, he tells me to get out of the kitchen, I am going to put the dishes away. I am strategically doing something there, let you go, you go, I will stay, your relatives are here, spend time. I say I will stay, he says no, I will do it. There is a conflict there between us. Then I think my husband exaggerates a lot, he says no, you will sit down, I will do everything, I will do the dishes, I will set the dishes, I will bring the tea, you sit down. My husband has such a strategy. I want to stay in the kitchen so that I do not feel uncomfortable, but my husband definitely takes me out of the kitchen. [...] It is like when I am sitting there in the living room, when my wife is in the kitchen, I feel these strange looks and I do not want to be there. I do not want to explain anything there, that it’s normal. I mean, I do not want to be there at that moment; I do not want to feel those looks. And then there is this. The guests say to my husband, you come, now they call him. It turns into you go out and we do it. [...] It is like they are surprised, they feel shame, they feel condemnation. I feel bad, I do not know, I feel bad at that moment. You know, they make me feel as if I am being unfair to my husband. It is like there is an unfair situation and I... or it is like this, I am too lazy, I cannot do anything, my husband does it. [...] I feel inadequate in such situations.” (Ajda, Participant 51, 33y/o, Woman)

I think this narrative is an important example of how outsiders try to bring the individuals in the household back into the norm. Outsiders do not give direct orders, but they can make people feel bad about out-of-norm behavior through their behavior. Yet, women in these households continue to have other responsibilities in the division of labor. While women are doing the work in their areas of responsibility, a similar operation of making men feel guilty is not carried out. For example, Türkan summarized the comments from her mother for both herself and her husband and how she felt incomplete and wrong in this process:

“While talking to you, I also realize that I also have those roles in me. I struggle with those roles too, in fact, I basically see it as my own work. It doesn’t happen in the circle of friends, sometimes I feel it, I even feel it

often, I feel that my mother is doing something. My mother is actually surprised by this situation. We go to the summer house, we stay together for 3-4 days, etc. According to my mother, I am a very bad housewife. She is also a person who has worked on the one hand, but as she got older, she became something. When she was young, she was a person with more liberal ideas, but as she got older, she got out of it, the thing of a Central Anatolian town, I mean, I say you've gone back to factory settings. Sometimes I feel this in her; she is surprised. She praises X [she says her partner's name] a lot when he does something, but when I cook 40 different dishes, she says okay, it is good. It is like I am not a very good wife, X [she says her partner's name] is someone who deserves it very much, I am not a good enough wife for him in terms of food and drink. It also happens in the relationship with children, for example, I tell Y [she says the name of her child], to get up and do something, get up and get it, I care about this very much. If it were up to my mother, I do not do it out of laziness, I do it because I think it is an important motive for a person to do their own work and I want to raise my children in that way, but (my mother) just gets up and does it. I say no, do not do it, she should get up and let her take it. According to her, my attitude does not fit with what she understands in the roles of a woman. She does not tell me I am inadequate, she makes me feel it by getting up and doing it. When you get up and do it, you realize that you think this is the right thing to do." (Türkan, Participant 29, 50y/o, Woman)

Women may react to these interventions in a variety of ways. One of them is frequently waiting for the family elders to accept this division of labor, but it is also one of the most exhausting. Many people believe that after a while, families accept and become familiar with this type of division of labor. Others play various roles to prevent it from becoming a pressure mechanism on both men and women. Especially when they come together with family members who operate such a control mechanism but who they see less frequently, they take on different roles. For a short period of time, they try to escape from the pressure mechanism by pretending to be within the norm. In this way, they try to prevent various conflicts. The bargaining with the norm I mentioned earlier comes into play here. In fact, this bargaining with the norm sometimes occurs with the demands of women. Because they understand that if there is a conflict, it will create psychological pressure for both men and women, and they believe that waiting for them to accept it will be more damaging.

An additional indicator of the effects of non-normative behavior on women is the questioning of gender roles. A small number of households have experienced reactions based on gender roles. This is basically realized in the form of the environment openly expressing to household members that gender roles in the household operate in the opposite way. I have often heard this debate in households where the man is

responsible for a lot of unpaid domestic labor on his own and women have a more equal workload. First of all, these feedbacks come from people who realize that they can no longer put women and men into the norm. Despite the fact that this situation appears to be taken for granted, various jokes based on the reversal of gender roles are produced. For example, Serpil expressed her feelings in response to a sentence from her mother as follows:

“I hear some expressions from my mom about X [she says her partner’s name], but I ignore them. "You are the husband, he is the wife," my mom has said, and when I do not care and give her a harsh look, she stops talking. So this comes from women too. I think women are the gatekeepers of this much more, I mean women have adopted that role a lot, I also wonder if it is more attractive for some women to have silent control of everything, everything in the house, the child, everything in the kitchen, everything in the background.” (Serpil, Participant 7, 42y/o, Woman)

Here we encounter again the association of "normal" "ideal" "adequate" or "natural" femininity and masculinity with the role of being the feeder of the family pointed out by Inness (2001) and DeVault (1994). These jokes are frequently perceived as innocent by participants at first. However, when we consider the content, we can conclude that both femininities and masculinities are called into question. Indeed, it is completely contradictory to ideal masculinity and ideal femininity. This makes us wonder if there is a message in the joke about people’s femininity and masculinity being called into question. To make a clear comment at this point, it will be necessary to interview the creators of the joke. However, I can draw some conclusions based on the participants. The guilt that women are forced to feel is the issue that needs to be addressed in terms of gender roles being reversed. When men behave outside the norm, the burden of this inequality is again tried to be placed on women with the message that gender roles are reversed. In this dynamic, the message emerges that men, like women, work more than they should within the norm and that their labor is exploited. The interpretation that gender roles are reversed by people who make a reasonable division of labor in reality, without paying attention to the division of labor, conveys the message that women benefit from this inequality in the same way that men do in the norm. Women who find themselves in this situation may feel guilty. After a certain point, being seen not as the party subjected to inequality, but as the party practicing inequality, leads to this sense of guilt. However, when we discussed the processes of unpaid domestic labor with them step by step, they usually realized at the end of the interviews that there was no inequality at a level that required them to feel guilty. As I previously stated,

many of them saw these interviews as therapy. On the other hand, this situation persists for women in a context in which the invisibility of their work grows while the guilt they feel multiplies.

To summarize, men's production of egalitarian behavior outside the norm does not provide returns only on men. On the contrary, the effects of this non-normative behavior on women can be more frequent, intense, and hidden. These effects are sometimes in the form of making women feel inadequate, while sometimes they are aimed at preventing them from raising their voices against other inequalities. This situation actually exhibits a parallel pattern with the discussions in the theory of hybrid masculinities in which inequalities become even more invisible and deeper (Bridges and Pascoe 2014, 2018). Unlike this literature, my findings also give clues about the channels through which these inequalities deepen and how women feel during this deepening process. According to my main findings, these dynamics are usually put forward by family elders. While egalitarian behavior is supposed to open up a space of emancipation for women, the negative balance of this egalitarian behavior is again placed on women. As I mentioned, this burden can be placed on women by different people through different means. However, without exception, women participants stated that they were exposed to at least one of these tools. This shows how widespread this situation is. I think that especially the spin off effects of the implementation of egalitarian behaviors by men should be examined more and in different dimensions. In this way, we will gain important tools to remove the obstacles to the spread of egalitarian behaviors and to combat the mechanisms that help deepen inequalities.



## 8. KNEADING THE RESEARCH: A CONCLUSION

It has always been difficult for me to write the research conclusion. Because the conclusion is where I gather all of the burdens I have carried throughout the research and take a final look. This chapter's introduction could have been much more professional. However, as I stated in the first chapter of this thesis, this was a research project in which I pursued my feminist curiosity based on my own personal experience. As a result, from the day I posed the first question to the day I designed the research, from the day I conducted the first pilot interview to the day I am writing these final lines, I have been on a journey with the curiosity that underpins this research. Writing a thesis on men's presence in the kitchen was a process that blurred boundaries for me as a man and someone who is interested in the kitchen. As a result, I wanted to say my personal farewell before discussing the academic findings. I would like to thank the participants once more for allowing me to learn from them throughout this research. Some of my analyses may not make some of the participants happy. They may think that I misinterpreted them. Or some participants may feel that the therapy process they experienced during the interview continued after reading this text. At this point, it is worth reminding again that this research is one of the small puzzle pieces that make up the field by centering on the interviews I conducted with the participant group. Over time, as other studies are positioned, we will be able to understand this field better. But for now, I would like to summarize what I talked about in this thesis and present how I tried to leave a mark on the field.

"What does the kitchen tell us about gender equality?" was the first question of this research. Following this question, I examined the dynamics within the kitchen by focusing on different households. Due to the profiles of the people who responded to my call for participants, I conducted this study with a group of 51 people, the vast majority of whom are white-collar people, who can be considered middle or middle-upper class. My main call was to find participants who identified themselves as a man. At this point, although I did not have a criterion such as assigned gender, I

did not have any trans-experienced participants or they did not want to share their experiences with me. There were trans-experienced people in the applicant pool whom I personally knew, but I did not include them in the participant group due to various ethical concerns. At the same time, all of the people I interviewed have been sharing the same household for at least 2 years with woman respondents. Therefore, I tried to answer the question "What does the kitchen tell us about gender equality?" with a cisgender participant group.

Eventually, this thesis contributes to the literature in four major areas, which I summarize below as the main discussion topics of the thesis's chapters. First, this is one of the first studies to examine the discussion over unpaid domestic labor in Turkey from the kitchen and from the perspective of critical masculinity studies. It is critical to examine unpaid domestic labor from the kitchen because the kitchen is a critical point in terms of the relationships established by household members within the household as well as creating a contact area with many different people, particularly guests from the public sphere. The planning and carrying out of the act of eating, which every member of the household has to perform at least once a day, is one of the biggest issues of unpaid domestic labor. However, unlike other domestic work that requires unpaid labor, since the work done in the kitchen is directly presented to the taste of the guests, it also functions as a suitable stage for the reproduction of various performances. This stage is also a good place to demonstrate various gender-related practices and to present "acceptable" or "ideal" femininities and masculinities in terms of society. I think that the kitchen is a place that needs to be analysed in terms of gender dynamics due to its multidimensional structure. This research is based on this need and focuses on men's performances and constructions of masculinities in the kitchen. This research, in this context, maps the positions of people in the participants' kitchens and provides insight into how processes in home kitchens work. This six-step mapping will be especially useful for future research. It will be easier to understand the gender-related dynamics that emerge in the kitchen if each step is examined separately. Simultaneously, it will be easier to identify areas where gender-based inequalities pervade unpaid domestic labor and go unnoticed. For this reason, the findings of this research in terms of mental load are also important within the scope of this field. Each of the six steps I used in the mapping of kitchen processes contains a significant amount of mental load. Most of this mental load is carried by women in these households, and many people, especially women, do not even see the tasks that require mental load. This study adds a specific and valuable contribution to the literature on mental load in the kitchen. In this regard, I think it is especially important that I did not limit these discussions that I contribute to the literature to interviews with only men

participants, but rather that I conducted interviews with both men and women participants in order to better understand intra-household dynamics.

The second contribution of this research to the literature is in enabling an understanding of the dynamics underlying the behavior of men who are more visible in home kitchens. The literature frequently emphasizes that home kitchens are perceived as feminine spaces in society and that men are less engaged in home kitchens than in professional kitchens. However, the literature indicates that men are becoming more visible and involved in home kitchens. One of the primary motivations for this research was to better understand the dynamics underlying this change. My main finding in this field is that, while men are involved in kitchen processes, they are not involved in the processes and spaces that are associated with the feminine, as the literature suggests; rather, they attempt to bring these spaces and practices back to a masculine point. This situation, known in the literature as the masculinisation of the domestic space, was common in the households I studied. Men frequently attempt to professionalize and technicalize processes related to the kitchen and cooking. In this way, previously perceived as feminine home kitchens are attempting to resemble professional kitchens that appear more masculine. I occasionally encountered this situation in the form of men cooking authentic-exotic-special-technical dishes or professionalisation of kitchen tools. On the other hand, I noticed that in some households, while household members were working in the kitchen, the processes were divided into stations, and roles such as chef and pupil were distributed in the same way that professional kitchens do. This masculinisation of the domestic space takes cooking in home kitchens beyond meeting the compulsory nutritional needs of household members and turns a process that is a hobby and a pleasure for men into a professional activity. Meanwhile, the compulsory and healthy nutritional needs of household members are often fulfilled through women. I found that women still enter the kitchen when necessary and undertake unpaid care labor.

The third main area in which this research contributes to the literature is my observation that men are more often seen in the kitchen for hobby or pleasure rather than sharing the obligatory care labor and that their motivation to exhibit egalitarian behavior is often less. In terms of gender equality and unpaid domestic labor, I tried to understand whether men's more frequent involvement in the kitchen was motivated by more egalitarian behavior. This situation, which I can read in parallel with the theory of inclusive masculinity, could be an egalitarian behavior that we encounter especially with the decrease in homophobia in today's societies. However, when I look at the men who participated in the research and the dynamics within the household, the fact that men are more frequently associated with the

kitchen shows an image more parallel to the discussions in the theory of hybrid masculinities. In particular, the fact that men take part in the kitchen more often for hobby-pleasure purposes and that women continue their unpaid domestic labor processes as a necessity supported this conclusion. At the same time, the fact that invisible processes such as mental load are still often carried out by women reinforced these conclusions. When I look at this whole picture, I can say that men's being in the kitchen is a maneuver to protect their privileged position, rather than an egalitarian motivation to perform a non-normative behavior. This is because men who undertake a very small part of the compulsory labor are seen in a different position from other men in the social groups they are in, and the place of the man who exhibits limited behavior is underlined as being different from all other men. Men who seem to have distanced themselves from hegemonic masculinity in the eyes of society with some minor behavioral changes they make can receive the label of egalitarian masculinity without having to produce egalitarian behaviors on all issues that require compulsory unpaid domestic labor. However, when I took a closer look at the dynamics, I observed that inequalities in unpaid domestic labor based on gender not only persist but may even deepen. Women who bring these inequalities to the agenda are accused of being ungrateful and are often advised by society to realise that they are lucky and grateful. On the other hand, I also encountered men who exhibited egalitarian motivations to engage in the kitchen. However, I argue that it is difficult to label these men's behaviors as egalitarian masculinity or inclusive masculinity because these men's behaviors are often rooted in the narrative of saving another woman in their lives and offering her a better life. I can say that this discourse of saving one person is again hierarchical in terms of gender and far from the understanding that equality is for everyone.

The reflections of men's ostensibly egalitarian behaviors on women was the fourth area in which this research contributed to the literature. Within the scope of this research, I have observed that men's ostensibly egalitarian and seemingly non-normative behaviors often cause women to experience conflict with other members of society. This ostensibly egalitarian behavior of men leads to the fact that women who share a household with these men are often labeled with adjectives such as lucky. These labels become convenient tools to invisibilise inequalities. If women speak out against these inequalities, the adjective "ungrateful" is used to deepen these inequalities. I have also observed that in order to prevent other members of society from exerting such influence on the internal dynamics of households, many households engage in various bargains with society. Thanks to these bargains, people behave as if they are within gender norms. In this way, they try not to be subjected to the questioning of "acceptable" masculinity-femininity.

The main contributions to the literature in these four areas are the result of a long research and it will be important to summarise the main findings of these contributions in the context of this thesis. Firstly, in order to understand what the kitchen tells us, I analyzed the cooking experience in six steps: tracking the fridge, shopping, deciding on the food to be prepared, preparing the food, washing dishes and cleaning, and garbage. I observed more man engagement in the steps, especially in the preparation of the meal. The other steps were particularly important in terms of the risk of mental load. The mental load in these steps appeared to me as processes carried out by women in particular. Even though men stated that they manage all the processes related to the kitchen, I frequently saw that women were involved in at least one step, or even if they were not involved, they took on the mental load.

In many households, there was a division of labor within or across the steps of cooking. I often encountered a 60-40% split, but this often referred to the step of preparing the meal. Looking at the whole process holistically, I observed that women were often more involved in the kitchen than they had anticipated. Although the participants specifically stated that there was no conversation about work division strategies and that they developed on their own, I can say that the conflicts and compromises in the kitchen created these work divisions. These conflicts and compromises also determine the frequency of cooking alone and together. In the case of cooking together, hierarchies with the appearance of compromise can be formed, with one party taking the role of master-chef and the other taking the role of apprentice-pupil. Although these hierarchies are often thought of as static, they can often change depending on the dish. Whoever cooks the main dish usually also takes on the role of the master-chef. Therefore, I can say that the main dish determines the dynamics in the kitchen. In terms of what the main dish is and who cooks it, we again see gender-based divisions. Pleasure, hobby, and experimental trials are the most common motivations that determine men's main course preferences. Women, on the other hand, often carry out processes that fall outside of these experiments and are necessary to fulfill the compulsory nutrition of the household, such as one-pot and vegetable dishes. The majority of men usually turn their motivations such as pleasure, hobby, or experimentation into experiences, either through meat-derived foods or by making things like pizza at home that are normally bought ready-made. For these experiences, they buy special instruments such as knives or cast iron pans. This whole set of dynamics signals the professionalization of home kitchens, especially when men are in the kitchen. In particular, the boundaries between home kitchens, which are seen as women's spaces or feminine spaces in social norms, and professional kitchens, which are seen as men's spaces or masculine spaces, are blurring. By bringing the processes of the professional kitchen into the

home kitchen, the experience in home kitchens is transformed. While the processes of home kitchens are blending with professional kitchens, home kitchens continue to be the domain of women. Although the tools that require special equipment are bought by men, women are still the ones responsible for the general organization of the kitchen. Planning such as what is where and when to buy ordinary products needed for routine tasks is still carried out by women. This is another manifestation of mental load.

Kitchens and cooking in themselves require specific performances for these spaces and actions. Where and how these performances are presented is also of great importance. While people can be more involved in backstage work, such as taking an active role in preparing meals before the guests arrive, they can also take part in front of the stage at the point of presenting these products to the guests. Especially men do not hesitate to be in front of the stage with the special dishes they produce with their own recipes. This situation also changes with the profile of the audience in front of the stage. If there is a group of viewers who have not yet accepted the fact that men are in the kitchen as a non-normative behavior, men sometimes do not want the works they do backstage to be visible in front of the stage. Or, if women think that the audience will respond to this non-normative behavior with a conflict, they may prefer to be in front of the stage instead of the man, or even prefer to be backstage themselves. This situation, which can be seen as a bargain with existing norms, is especially practiced against conservative circles, which are not frequently encountered.

Kitchen routines can undergo various changes within themselves, but they can also face bigger changes. In this context, Covid-19 and having children were the two developments that caused the biggest changes in participants' kitchen routines. With the Covid-19 pandemic, lockdowns and the introduction of concepts such as working from home have led to an increase in the time spent at home. Due to the socio-economic class to which participants belonged, the number of participants who experienced processes such as working from home was high. At first, there were various initiatives on how to channel this increased time, and the kitchen became an important area to make use of this increased extra time. In this period when new things were tried, I can say that men's relationship with the kitchen improved. However, as the pandemic conditions decreased, there was a decrease in this surplus time. On the other hand, the amount of services such as professional care support or cleaning support has decreased in addition to the increase in surplus time due to the pandemic. In parallel with the increase in the time people spend at home, there has also been an increase in the need for unpaid domestic labor. Although men are more active in kitchen-related processes, this involvement is not always equal for all

work groups. In fact, disruptions in some processes were reproduced as a mental load on women. For example, online shopping, which used to be the task of men in the public space, is now performed more frequently by women. In contrast to the increased extra time, these burdens did not tend to decrease at a similar rate towards the end of the pandemic.

Another important issue that significantly changes routines is having a child. Especially in early childhood, the relationship that the child establishes with the mother puts the mother at the center of all these care labor processes. The mother takes the center stage and becomes responsible for the management of all processes. I observed that men who were previously involved in the kitchen or other household chores become secondary at this point and support the processes according to the directions of the mother at the center. While mothers often try to perform this care work by taking unpaid leave, fathers are often involved in these processes after work. When the early childhood period passes and the systems become more established, I have observed an increase in the participation of fathers in the processes. Men, as involved fathers, try to be involved in the care labor of children, especially when they reach school age. However, when we look at it comparatively, it cannot reach a level similar to the unpaid care labor provided by mothers.

Within the scope of my thesis research, I tried to read these descriptive findings within the scope of various Critical Masculinity Theories. By making use of the theories of hybrid and inclusive masculinities, I tried to look at the motivations behind men's being in the kitchen as non-normative behavior and to make long-term projections. My main finding in this section was that the kitchen provides an important ground for hybrid masculinities to be seen. The fact that it provides an opportunity to perform on stage against people outside the household is one of the main factors of this fertile ground. As often discussed in the theory of hybrid masculinities, men's privileged positions in society are being questioned and their privileges are gradually diminishing with feminist gains. Exhibiting traditional norm behaviors is no longer acceptable today. For this reason, we can see various maneuvers by men to protect these privileged positions. Especially positioning themselves away from the existing hegemonic masculinity and men can be seen as the most basic maneuver in this process. In doing so, being seen in areas where they were not seen before or where they did not have to be seen facilitates the process. In this way, they can distance themselves from other men. While a man who behaves outside the norm in a certain area can be considered acceptable again, the unequal behaviors he continues to exhibit in other areas and the privileges they benefit from can become invisible. We can see this invisibility in the discourses on women. Women who appear active in their partner's kitchen-related processes may be labeled as "lucky" or "spoiled"

when they talk about their unequal behavior in the kitchen or other areas. Women can be dictated by their close circle to be grateful for this situation by drawing a distinction between the husband and other men.

The critical approach here is to consider whether egalitarian behavior is really motivated by egalitarian motives. Especially behaviors that appear to be egalitarian may hide new inequalities underneath. This can be exemplified by sharing certain steps of kitchen processes but not sharing the mental load. For this reason, it is necessary to look at whether behaviors that appear egalitarian in certain areas also spill over into other domestic tasks that require unpaid labor. As a result of such an examination, seeing that these behaviors often do not spill over into other jobs gave me the impression that the arguments of the theory of hybrid masculinities may be more valid.

Men who went outside the norm and produced egalitarian behavior were not absent in this process. Even if they were a small group, egalitarian behaviors in participation in unpaid domestic care labor were produced by these men. We could have read these egalitarian behaviors produced by these men with the inclusive masculinity theory approach. However, when I look at the interviews with these men, I see that the decrease in homophobia played a very small role in the production of these egalitarian behaviors. In fact, some men in this group continued to produce these behaviors even though homophobia was strong. For this reason, I searched for the pattern behind these egalitarian behaviors in the personal histories of the individuals. As a result of this examination, I could not identify a common pattern, especially to understand whether there were man figures in their personal histories who produced egalitarian behaviors. Rather than role models, I observed that people's awareness of inequalities in childhood is an important motivation for them to produce egalitarian behaviors in adulthood. For this reason, I think it is important to conduct awareness-raising activities on inequalities in society, especially in childhood.

Recognizing inequalities in childhood and being in a position to produce egalitarian behavior also has various problematic aspects in itself. I noticed that especially the men in this group mostly observed these inequalities through their mothers. The most common discourse I encountered was to save them from these inequalities or to reduce these inequalities by supporting them. The fact that the main motivation for wanting equality, especially gender equality, is loved ones is a problematic motive here. Because equality is unconditionally necessary for everyone. Here, constructing equality through the people they are in a relationship with may create the risk that this behavior may not emerge in other areas. I did not talk to participants about



their behavior in areas where other types of relationships occur, such as business life, so it is difficult for me to say to what extent this risk is realized. For this reason, the behaviors of men who create motivation for egalitarian behaviors through the people they associate with should be closely examined in other relationships, especially in professional relationships.

The last area I looked at within the scope of this research was the effects of men's non-normative behavior in the kitchen on women. For this purpose, I first focused on the relationship structures of the partners in the kitchen. In this context, I found that men construct their presence in the kitchen in three ways. The first one is those who are in the kitchen to cook. This group appeared to me as a parallel group to the people who exhibit the egalitarian behaviors I mentioned earlier. These people did not feel the need to position themselves according to the other partner in order to be in the kitchen. They were directly performing unpaid domestic labor as a responsibility. In this context, I observed that the mental load was divided more equally. The other group was those who helped their partners in the kitchen. This group was the group where I could observe the hybrid masculinities thesis most clearly. In general, this group was either in the kitchen for pleasure or as a hobby, or they were in the kitchen to perform the tasks that their partner assigned them. It was very difficult to see these people in other jobs that required unpaid domestic labor, and the mental load fell mostly on women in this group. The last group I came across was those who divided labor with their partners in the kitchen. This group can be seen as a transitional group between the first two groups. This group cannot carry out the processes as independently as the group I called those who cook in the kitchen. Since they had to somehow position themselves according to their partners, the mental load was mostly on women in this group as well.

While men engage with the kitchen in so many different ways, their engagement with the kitchen is often an additional burden on women. Men's out-of-the-norm behavior is often made felt to women in their close circles as their failure. This can be a direct warning, or it can also be realized through insinuations. These relationships, which I think are aimed at pushing women back into the norm, can turn into a constant feeling of guilt on women. Because women are constantly labeled as lucky to have a man who takes care of the kitchen. Women who are told to be grateful for being with such a man are expected to be more active in the kitchen. While forming these criticisms, the dynamics of unpaid domestic labor are often not looked at holistically. In this way, a man's egalitarian behavior in the kitchen can hide his unequal behavior in other areas. Based on these findings, I think that when examining the masculinities produced by men in future studies, we should definitely take a closer look at the effects of these behaviors on women.

In the chapter of my research where I presented the six steps of cooking, I said that this process was like playing a game of "Where is Wally?" Indeed, I searched for men in very complex networks of relationships, in different places, in different time periods and under different conditions, almost like looking for Wally. This process is one of the most valuable aspects of this study. At the start of this thesis, I shared gender-based distributions of unpaid domestic labor time from various data sources. Although even minor changes in each data set are important, I have discovered in this research that it is also important to investigate what happens in the background of these changes. Although men's involvement in the kitchen is growing, it is crucial to understand the shapes and forms of this involvement. In the background, quantitative increases may tell qualitatively different stories. In fact, this is the same as looking for Wally. The quantitative increase in men's participation in unpaid domestic labor can be seen as a sign of hope for a more equal future. When we look closely, however, as in this study, we can see that what we actually find may not be Wally, or that what is visible is not similar to Wally.

In this thesis, which is the biggest output of this research, I tried to give various recipes on how to find Wally. The recipes I gave often led to discussions on hybrid masculinities and inclusive masculinity. I was often in dilemmas as to whether I should read the reasons behind men's production of non-normative behaviors as a sign that they are on a more egalitarian path or as a sign of deeper inequalities. Because more complex networks of inequality emerged underneath what often appeared to be egalitarian behavior. This situation also demonstrates the importance of examining qualitative data using tools such as ethnography, as well as quantitative data, when investigating unpaid domestic labor. If this had been a quantitative study that collected data directly through a survey, the men in the participant group might have shown a positive shift in their involvement in unpaid domestic labor. However, when I examined the ethnography I conducted, I discovered these networks that hide other inequalities. It may seem egalitarian to perform a demonstrated and non-normative behavior in a certain narrow space, for example by cooking for pleasure in the kitchen. On the other hand, when I took a closer look at other household chores in the house, even other chores in the kitchen, I saw that these behaviors can hide other inequalities. This is because people's social circles do not observe and closely analyses other household chores as I do. On the contrary, through this performance presented to them, they were getting ideas about whether the individuals were performing an egalitarian approach or not. This is actually the biggest indicator of how important a point the discussion on hybrid masculinities wants to draw attention to.

However, one person does not construct a single masculinity or a single masculinity is not constructed in a single space. For this reason, we basically name the field as Critical Masculinity Studies. For this reason, it will also be important to open a space that will allow for egalitarian masculinities. Especially when I isolated unpaid domestic labor, I observed that egalitarian dynamics were established in some households. However, the picture given by this isolated experimental environment will be incomplete. For this reason, I did not want to refer to these egalitarian behaviors as egalitarian masculinity anywhere. In order for me to call this behavior egalitarian masculinity, I need to include behaviors in many different contexts and relationships in this discussion. But within the scope of this research, I tried to understand something by looking through the kitchen door. Maybe I have a little idea of what happens in the laundry room, but I have almost no data on the behavior of these people in business life, for example. For this reason, there is a need for much more follow-up research that will eliminate the limitations of this research that I have often mentioned. In this way, we will be able to better understand this multi-layered field. It is especially important that these studies are supported at the end of the day with the knowledge of those working in the field, especially civil society, and that they turn into various materials to be used in their work.

I hope that this study will pave the way for future research. Because this is one of the pioneering studies in the field, I prioritized the study to cover a broader range of topics in order to gain firsthand knowledge on as many as possible. This broader contact area also allowed me to get a variety of ideas about which areas new studies should be expanded on in the long run. For example, while I have defined cooking in six steps, cooking is much more than that. Many more areas can be related to cooking, ranging from the farms from which the products you choose are sourced to how your waste is recycled at the end of the day. These new areas will not only increase the number of intersections between the kitchen and public space, but will also introduce many new themes into the discussion, such as environment, ecology, ethics, and sustainability. For this reason, I think that it would be valuable to expand this research with new steps and to evaluate these new steps through masculinities. The research can be expanded with new steps, but it can also be deepened with its current structure. I mentioned that I conducted this study with a class that I can define as upper-middle-middle class. Repeating the same study with lower or upper classes will give us different insights. Even class nuances that are similar to but different from my participant group, such as blue-collar workers, I think can provide important insights in this context. The fact that almost no blue-collar workers applied for this study gives us a hint. Do not these men position themselves as active men in the kitchen? If the answer is yes, what are

the underlying causes? What do these men think of men who actively participate in the kitchen? Such inquiries are limitless. These studies, in my opinion, should be repeated with different groups in order to deepen the social implications of the findings. At the same time, different routine-changing processes such as short-long term unemployment can also have important things to say in this context. In the interviews I conducted, people defined their relationship with the kitchen through their current routines. In this thesis, I discussed the effects of routine-changing phenomena such as the pandemic and having children, but I think that other routine-changing phenomena with different dynamics, such as being unemployed, may offer us significant insights. These are areas that need to be explored further in the broad scope of this research. At the same time, there were several findings for which I collected data as part of this research but could not mention because they were outside the scope of the thesis. People's relationships with chefs on social media, for example, and the characteristics they attribute to them, will be important starting points for future research. Similarly, reflections of reality shows on food, which are popularized in many countries around the world at specific times, in home kitchens will provide an opportunity to look at the bridges between home kitchens and public spaces from a different angle.

I wrote at the beginning of the conclusion that I did not start very professionally because of my relationship with the subject. At this point, I would like to close with a similar unprofessional approach for the same reason, because the first and last sentences of a thesis are usually the most read sentences. I deliberately did not share my own personal experiences throughout this research. I did this consciously so that the information I received from the participants would not be distorted and so that I could keep my distance from their narratives. The main spotlight of this thesis was on the participants, so I constructed this thesis based on their underpinnings. Maybe I will publish a separate publication on the process of discovering my own experiences under the spotlight. But I should mention that during the process of this thesis, it was a process of reviewing my own relationships with both the kitchen and the people around me. This research was not only a therapy for women participants, it was also a process of self-discovery and therapy for me. Perhaps it is not the right approach to use the very technical term therapy here. But I can only describe the state of being relaxed and more aware of things, which I felt similarly to participants, as therapy. At this point, perhaps it would be meaningful to put here the first and only memory I discovered from me during my research. In this process, I tried to recall my first experiences and memories of my first relationship with the kitchen. In the case of the kitchen, my mother's words when I was not even in school have remained in my memory as the first memory of my first relationship with the kitchen

and the first time I started to perceive it as a responsibility independent of gender norms. Therefore, it deserves to be the last sentence of this thesis.

*"If you know how to eat, you must know how to cook. Just as there are no girls and boys in eating, there can be no boys and girls in cooking. It is as simple as that."*

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