

Everyday Performances in U.S. Household Kitchens

Mireilly Ann Rosado-Bonilla

MS Candidate, Applied Anthropology
University of North Texas, Denton

Susan Squires PhD, Committee Chair
Andrew Manning PhD, Committee Member
Alicia Re Cruz PhD, Committee Member

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BMA Innovation Consulting is committed to serving consumers products that can play a more meaningful role in household cleaning. So far, their innovation department has used psychology-based principles and approaches that have helped them understand consumers' preferences, attitudes and claimed needs in household cleaning. That said, little information has been collected on the active role that products play or could play as participants in the everyday dynamics of US consumers. An anthropological approach to the study of U.S. kitchens, as an important center of family interaction in U.S. households, should yield important insights to the design and development of products that can more effectively and more actively participate in those dynamics.

With this project I am fundamentally proposing a new approach to the identification of critical product design requirements. Figure on the right shows the key differences between the psychology-derived principles the organization is mostly using today vs. the anthropological lenses through which I will be conducting my research. Overall, I will be leveraging existing knowledge in the "individual desires" realm, connecting it to the collective situation & cultural context within which "cleaning action" emerges.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

For centuries, cleaning has been an everyday human activity often central to the dynamics of families and society in general, both in “developed” and “primitive” cultures (Douglas 1966/2002). Throughout history, it has held an important place in religion, social organization, aesthetics, health, and others (McHugh 2006, Bushman and Bushman 1988). In the last 150 years, heightened awareness of cleaning has also become an important element in the western household. This has been prompted in part by medical advances in bacteriology beginning with Pasteur’s “Germ Theory of Disease” in the 1880s. It has also been due to advances in the household domestic realm, such as better access to water in the home and relative ease of domestic activities through breakthrough inventions such as electricity, stoves and refrigerators, advances in food preservation, and the access to a higher variety of foods. All have contributed to a completely revolutionized way cleaning had been thought of and done, largely in the kitchen space, and the activities taking place U.S. kitchens.

These were not the only changes that these technological advances brought about. In just a few decades, American families went from being the producers and manufacturers of their own goods to becoming the consumers of the products that industrialization made possible. A new era of consumerism begun and, with it, mass advertising through new communication devices like the radio and television also begun to dictate the nature of domestic work in U.S. households (Strasser 1982). Since then and through the last half of the twentieth century until today, “consumers” have been informed and persuaded to buy different kinds of cleaning products for their homes.

But the intended reduction in the complexity of domestic work with most of these technologies and products did not really play out in the everyday reality of U.S. families. “Women continued to spend about as many hours doing their housework as they had done before, substituting extra hours spent with children and in shopping” (Strasser 1982:251). Further, with the demographical and social pattern shifts in the United States, such as an increased number of working parents and a resulting increase in child care

outside of the home, the home environment is also becoming an important source of spread of infectious diseases (Larson et al. 2004). Household and kitchen tasks have stayed complex, a confusing amalgamation of products to use and techniques to perform.

To give an example, recent trends in “green” cleaning products represent a major paradigm shift versus “germ” cleaning products. Although both “green” and “germ-free” messages carry strong and intuitive connections to health, the specific household cleaning practices that actually yield better health outcomes are still greatly disputed. On one hand, the new millennium has been characterized by strong publicity against the use of traditional surface disinfectants (Chillot 2001; Donohue 2007), which range from their environmental footprint (Okumura 2009), to the inhalation of toxins (Sawchuk 2009) to the poisoning of children (McKenzie et al. 2010). On the other hand, concerns have also been publicly expressed regarding the ineffectiveness of green cleaning products in providing equal or greater level of surface sanitation versus traditional surface disinfectants (Light 2009). Moreover, the relative novelty of the “green cleaning” movement has resulted in rather low regulations on products marketed as “green”, which can severely mislead consumers in their household cleaning choices (Belew 2010). This is just one of the many predicaments that consumers face when it comes to choosing the “right” cleaning products or “right” cleaning practices for themselves and their families. In the meantime, they keep receiving contradicting or even misleading messages, leading to still complex, arbitrary and/or plural cleaning practices that, in the end, might or might not result in healthier household environments nor increased satisfaction.

Although qualitative and quantitative research has been conducted on the topic, ranging from attempts to determine which cleaning practice is healthier (Larson et al. 2004) to efforts to improve the formulations of cleaning products (Okumura 2009), little ethnographic research has been done to understand the effect that this amalgamation of often incompatible messages have on actual cleaning practices in US households. There is still a need to understand how consumers are translating the plethora of advertising we see today into their actual everyday cleaning practices. Furthermore, none of these views had been understood in the context of the profound evolution that has marked the kitchen space as

an important center of family interaction, how consumers are interpreting these through their own values and traditions and how well the cleaning products that we see today actually match their everyday realities.

The project described herein offers a unique opportunity to explore every day household cleaning practices with an aim to inspire products and services that can play a more meaningful role in one of the most dynamic places of U.S. homes: the kitchen.

Chapter 2 Project Description

2.01 Purpose of Study

Understanding cleaning behaviors is an important topic at the individual, family and community levels. While it seems widely accepted that household cleaning behaviors today have less to do with aesthetics and more to do with achieving a certain level of health and wellness (Sawchuk 2009), not all the “cleaning” tools that consumers use actually yield such results in a satisfactory nor fulfilling way. Albeit today’s consumers have access to an unprecedented variety of cleaning products, tools and methods, they still report dissatisfaction in household cleaning (client data).

With the ethnographic exploration of everyday dynamics in the kitchens of U.S. households, this project aimed to uncover insights that can inspire products and services that better satisfy consumers in their “everyday” realities at home. The anthropological analysis of these different “cultural scenes” can reveal subject needs appropriate to their specific family dynamics and context. This can in turn inspire new ideas for meaningfully designed product innovation that truly satisfies consumer needs for cleaning and health, in a way that also positively fits the unique dynamics of their daily lives.

2.02 Research Questions and Hypotheses

The questions that derive from the above objective can be divided in two primary lines of inquiry, which I am describing below.

1. What is the historic, social and symbolic background that is associated to current cleaning practices in U.S. households?

To address this question, I did a literature review on the history of cleaning and American domesticity, with emphasis on the kitchen. This provided the appropriate background as I elicited consumers’ definition of “clean” and “dirty”, the signals and requirements for a clean home, the certainties and concerns surrounding her current cleaning practices, the expectations, the social

relationships involved and other key influencing forces including media and advertising. I planned to get this data in several different ways, including the building of taxonomies and free lists, specific interview probes and the observation of behaviors.

2. What are their everyday cleaning actions in the kitchen, including the use of cleaning products and artifacts in their specific kitchen settings?

To answer this question, I focused my research on “everyday” observations in *weekday* morning and evening routines, the effects of her surrounding physical environment, the use of cleaning tools, and the kinds of messes produced. I also investigated the nature of the different kinds of actions partaking in the kitchen space, the articulated or unarticulated tensions and the compensating behaviors used to resolve them. Most importantly, I sought to understand the role that cleaning products and tools played or could play in this; the characteristics and features that could help satisfy those tensions and better blend into the dynamics observed.

In both of these research questions, I paid special attention to potential changes in patterns of thought and behavior due to differences in household structures. This responds to the two main hypotheses underlying my investigation of everyday actions in U.S. household kitchens, which are described in Table 1 below.

Table 1 *Major Research Hypotheses*

Major Research Hypotheses
H1: Generational differences between <i>Baby Boomer</i> women (today approximately ages 50 to 68) and <i>Millennial</i> women (today approximately ages 20 to 34) will result in fluctuations in the actions, beliefs, attitudes, values and symbolic significance of household cleaning practices.
H2: The presence or absence of kids will also influence the actions, beliefs, attitudes, values and symbolic significance of household cleaning practices as well as their choices in selecting cleaning methods, products and tools.

2.03 Project Description

The following presents an overview of the approach and scope of the work that I proposed in service of BMA Innovation Consulting, a firm for which I have been conducting household cleaning research in the last couple of years. I will begin with a description of the approach I took in first obtaining

the funding for this particular project, which was part of a broader product innovation strategy effort. This took several months since the client from the specific department I sought sponsorship from was relatively unfamiliar with the advantages of anthropological approaches in the space of product design. The steps taken in getting the client's buy-in also set the foundation over which I designed my project proposal to them, which consisted of three main stages: (1) literature review and assessment of client's data and current knowledge; (2) design and execution of a rapid ethnography on four household structures of interest; and (3) analysis of results and recommendations. Stage 3 will be discussed in detail in the "Deliverables" section of this chapter.

2.03.1 Preliminary Activities: Client Buy-In

On September 4, 2013, I met my client for the first time. He is the associate director of a department responsible for generating insights and developing technology for next generation products and services. His department had conducted consumer research before, which included several quantitative surveys of consumer habits and practices and qualitative models of *individual desires* and *claimed needs*, all primarily rooted in the paradigms of psychology. Although anthropological and extended research approaches were not common, his department was very interested in new approaches to consumer understanding that will yield new and different insights to their programs.

From that conversation I understood that one of the main tasks that I had ahead was to convince him and his organization of the unique contribution that anthropology could have in the design of products and services that can play a more meaningful role in household cleaning. In anthropological words, I had the task of translating their known "native language" to the "native language" of anthropology, and vice versa, before I could have them buy into my research ideas.

On March 24, 2014 I presented my research proposal to the client, which began with an explanation of the main differences between anthropology and psychology-based approaches to human understanding. While his organization seemed to dispose of a wealth of quantitative data, models, claimed data and individual-based information, little had been done in defining the role that their products could play as *dynamic objects* playing in everyday household *actions*. Furthermore, individuals seemed to have been

also defined on the basis of their claimed needs, cognitive responses, and normative behaviors and opinions. An anthropological approach to the study of “everyday” household cleaning would complement these by adding the study of *social situations* in the kitchen, which includes observed behaviors, collective action and interaction with the place or setting, with objects and with people; but, most importantly, the study of kitchen dynamics as a *cultural scene*, which adds the element of shared *meaning*, the “knowledge that actors employ in a social situation” (Spradley and McCurdy 1988:27). This adds considerations of history and the socio-political landscape within which even “everyday” human action is embedded. In short, from an epistemological standpoint, I would be leveraging their existing knowledge in the “individual desires” realm, connecting it to the collective situation and cultural context within which “cleaning action” in the kitchen emerges. As an important center of family *interaction* in U.S. households, the anthropological study of U.S. household kitchens should yield important insights to the design and development of products and services that can more effectively and more actively participate in those dynamics.

Figure 1 below shows the schematics that I used in explaining this to the client. To note, I chose to create these schematics because they are part of the client’s “native language”; a quick communication tool they are used to using when illustrating an otherwise complex idea or concept. Using their own ways of communication significantly helped me “sell” my research “product” in the short amount of time I had with them. Final research proposal submitted to the client can be found in the Appendix of this thesis.

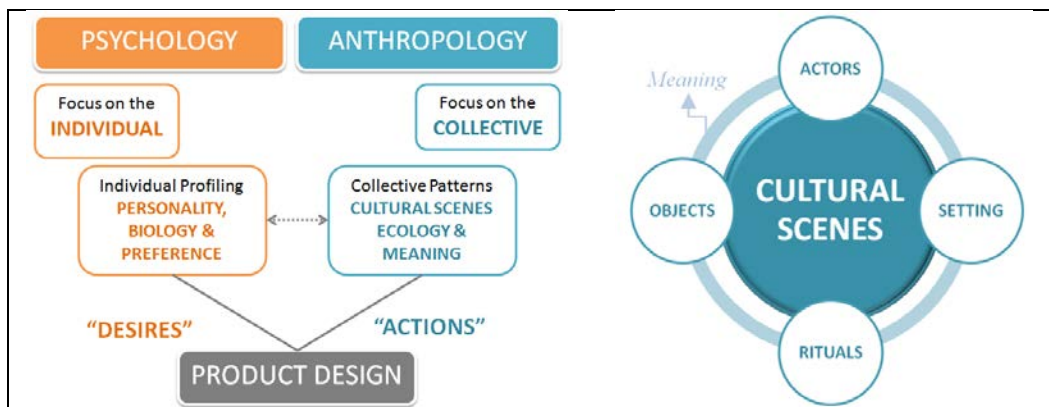


Figure 1 Schematics used in Explaining the Anthropological Approach to the Client

2.03.2 Stage 1: Literature Review and Assessment of Client’s Data

BMA Innovation Consulting had already collected a wealth of demographic and attitudinal information around consumers claimed habits and practices in household cleaning. I was given access to this data for analysis, with the intent of: (1) further informing the details of my research design and the selection of a representative class of individuals previously identified; (2) the construction of investigation instruments to be used; and (3) defining a baseline over which I could build upon, answering questions and identifying linkages and/or discrepancies between individual claims and observed household actions, whenever possible. Furthermore, my analysis of the client’s quantitative data helped me identify variables that could yield observable differences in household kitchen “cultural scenes”. This analysis was the foundation to my proposal of the specific four household structures that I investigated. I clearly stated the use of this and other data available in UNT’s IRB documentation I generated in preparation for this project. I also referred to these data sets during the analysis of this research, as part of my process of triangulation of insights from different data sources. Table 2 below shows some of the demographics that I examined from the larger quantitative data set that I evaluated. In total, 2,000 individuals were surveyed, 1,610 of which were women. From these, 967 were non-Latino, white women ages 18 to 34 and 45 years or older; and 100 were African-American women 45 years or older, which were the specific groups from which I selected my four expert informants.

Table 2 *Demographics from quantitative data set on consumer household cleaning attitudes, values and practices*

Ethnicity: Age Groups:	White		African American
	18-34	45+	45+
BASE - Total Respondents	235	732	100
<u>East North Central - IL/IN/MI/OH/WI</u>	34	128	18
<u>Yearly Household Income: \$40-100K</u>	113	281	48
<u>Education</u>			
High school graduate	26	144	16
College graduate	99	229	31
Post graduate	54	128	15
<u>Two-four children under 18</u>	83	79	12
<u>No children under the age of 18</u>	77	473	49
<u>Single member household</u>	30	103	24
<u>Size Of Household</u>			
One	30	103	24
Two	72	363	42

Three	42	114	17
Four	50	72	6
Five	27	51	5
Six	11	21	4

Additionally, I conducted an extensive literature review on the history of cleaning and relevant theoretical paradigms that can help explain some of the client’s data as well as the data I was to generate in Stage 2 via rapid ethnography. In particular, researching the history of cleaning and American domesticity was an important piece for the client, who did not have this background.

2.03.3 Stage 2: Rapid Ethnography

According to H. Russell Bernard (2006), “rapid assessment means going in and getting on with the job of collecting data without spending months developing rapport. This means going into a field situation armed with a list of questions that you want to answer” (2006:352). Handwerker (2001) further supports this approach, further suggesting that the key to a successful rapid ethnography is to *go into the field with a clear question and limit the study to no more than five focus variables*. This rapid assessment anthropological approach has been successfully applied in the past, as in the case of the focused ethnographic study method (FES) created by medical anthropologist Gretel Pelto and physician Sandy Gove, which they developed to study acute respiratory illnesses in children (Gove and Pelto 1994). In all, rapid ethnographies are now a common research device that has proven successful in applied anthropological work, which is often done in a few weeks (Beebe 1995). I also felt particularly comfortable pursuing this approach with this specific project, since I already have years of experience studying informants in the field of U.S. household cleaning.

As such, and based on my findings in Stage 1, I proposed the execution of a rapid ethnography consisting of three to four weeks of research in the homes of four representative cases that I identified based on the client’s larger quantitative data set as well as the data that I’ve personally gathered in the last couple of years through in-home observation exercises and interviews with at least 40 informants, all in the field of household and kitchen cleaning. In terms of demographics, I defined the participants for this project as middle class, U.S. Caucasian females living in the Cincinnati tri-state area, representing one of

four groups of interest: (1) Ages 18 to 34 with no children; (2) Ages 18 to 34 with children 0 to 12 years old; (3) Older than 50 years old with no children; and (4) older than 50 years old with teenage or adult children. I also recommended that the research design that I developed was applied to eight other participants, totaling three women in each of the four groups described above. For this, I personally coached and supervised a team of experienced researchers who were to conduct the same exercises and research protocols with these additional informants. All of these additional informants signed an informed consent to participate in this study using the client's current guidelines and research protocols. They were also all reassured of the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to terminate it at any point during the research. Although I referred to video recordings and data from these informants to confirm trends and consistencies, for the purposes of this thesis I will only refer to data and testimonials from the four participants that I personally visited for four weeks, all of which were approved through the formal UNT IRB process. Once again, these four informants represent cases within the much larger ethnographic work that I have done for BMR Innovation Consulting in the last couple of years, all in the area of household cleaning.

The research methods and techniques, detailed in Chapter 3 of this thesis, spanned three to four weeks of interviews, exercises and participant observation, situated during weekday "morning routines" and "evening routines". In this time, I collected approximately two hours of data per week for each informant as follows:

- Week 1: Introduction; structured and semi-structured interviews; home "grand tour"
- Week 2: "Evening Scene" observations in the kitchen; unstructured interviews
- Week 3: "Morning Scene" observations in the kitchen; unstructured interviews
- Week 4: Wrap-up; product design ideas; semi-structured interviews

Insights on their expressed and observed cleaning concerns and needs were ultimately analyzed and translated into specific product design ideas that would meaningfully impact and improve household kitchen cleaning experiences.

2.03.4 Stage 3: Analysis of Ethnographic Data and Reporting of Results

Inspired by Spradley and McCurdy’s definition of “cultural scenes” (1988:23-37), the project proposal, data analysis and reporting of results were organized and explained to the client as being comprised of four key domains to explore: (1) Subjects, (2) Objects, (3) Setting and (3) Rituals. Research instruments were created accordingly and data was gathered for all four domains to complete the picture of “everyday kitchen cleaning” as a cultural scene of interest. Figure 2 shows the original schematic used to present this approach to the client.

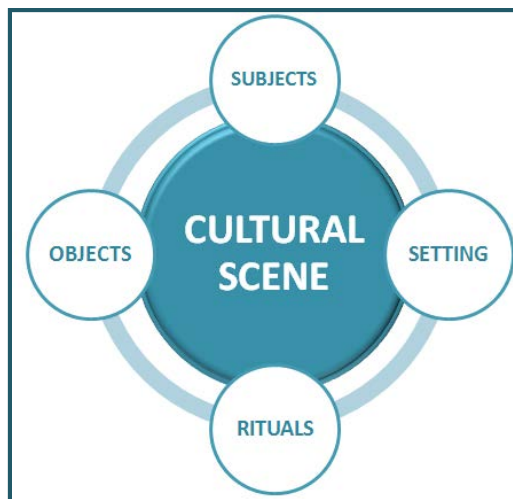


Figure 2 Research Domains to Explore

As I completed the review of the theoretical paradigms to pursue with this project, the names of these four domains evolved to: (1) “The Actors”; (2) “The Props”; (3) “The Stage”; and (4) “The Action, which is how research results and the remainder of this thesis were organized.

2.04 Deliverables

My agreements with the client included frequent progress reports during the course of the research preparation and execution, and the delivery of results in three “waves”: (1) a presentation describing the “topline” insights from the research; (2) a final, more exhaustive presentation to their “core team”; and (3) a detailed written report.

To ensure I delivered progress reports in the frequency needed, I was given time in the agenda of already recurring meetings with the broader team, which happened every two weeks. I also scheduled time in the agenda of their “innovation core team” monthly meeting, about two weeks after completion of ethnographic exercise. I used this to update the team and provide topline insights. Finally, about two months after topline presentation, a formal written report and presentation brief was also delivered to their core team. Based in the insights and per client’s request, I also developed a proposal for the design of a quantitative survey instrument that can help generalize some of the patterns found amongst a representative sample of the U.S. population.

Table 3 below presents the timeline of all events explained above, which was also presented in the formal proposal to the client.

Table 3 *Research Timeline*

STAGE 1	Weeks 1-4	Landscape Assessment and Ethnographic Research Preparation	
STAGE 2		Objective	Key Variables
	Week 5	Introduction to household; learn explicit & implicit notions on kitchen cleaning practices	External/Internal states & physical artifacts: The effects of age & presence of children stage in consumers’ attitudes, values & perceptions associated with cleaning & hygiene practices
	Week 6	“Evening Scene” participant/ observation	External states, observed behaviors and physical artifacts: The effects of age/life stage in observed cleaning and absorbency behaviors, habits and practices
	Week 7	“Morning Scene” participant/ observation	
	Week 8	Product Design Ideas and Wrap-Up	
STAGE 3	Weeks 9-10	Ethnographic analysis	
	Week 11	Topline Presentation of Ethnographic findings	
	Weeks 12-20	Final Presentation, Recommendations & Survey Instrument Proposal	

2.05 Limitations

Some of the limitations found in the execution of this study included:

- Research was conducted in Cincinnati, OH, located in the north-east of the U.S., and among females of specific age groups. Results might not be translatable to females of other age groups living in a different region of the U.S.
- The original intent was to perform this investigation with participant ethnicity held constant, focusing on Caucasian head of household females. However, after recruitment process was finalized and

during first home visit, one of the participants was identified as African American, (50+ year old with children). Although ethnic heritage is outside of the scope of this study, I decided to still incorporate the data from this participant and consider it in light of the broader data set that I had analyzed, which included 167 cases of non-Latino African-American women living in the U.S., 100 of which were 45 years of age or older. I also had the opportunity to review about ten cases from previously generated qualitative information.

- The researcher, a first generation Hispanic female not raised in the U.S. and with high school, undergraduate, and graduate education, may have been perceived as an outsider from a different national and cultural background. Similarly, the research assistant, an African American female born and raised in the U.S. and with high school, undergraduate, and graduate education, may have been perceived as an outsider or insider by participants.
- The researcher was in the early stages of pregnancy. Although this was not disclosed nor was physically visible to participants, the researcher was not feeling physically well at times, especially during morning observation exercises.

Chapter 3 **Research Design & Methods**

3.01 Research Paradigms

Within the anthropological approach, there are two specific research paradigms that I used in this project. The first and main one is the *interpretive paradigm*, which assumes that the actors' perception is essentially *constructed* or “made up”. That ways of knowledge and action derive from their interaction with others in a specific environment or setting over the course time. In the interpretive mindset,

culture, then, is an abstract “construct” put together or “constructed” as people interact with each other and participate in shared activities (...) [it] defines shared constructs and meanings as “situated”; that is, they are located in or affected by the social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, age, gender and other contextual characteristics...An important element in the interpretive position, then, is first to define the socio-political status of each speaker or participant before his or her place in the web of meaning is articulated (LeCompte and Schensul 1999a:49)

Most importantly, in order to achieve an understanding of these “meanings”, the interpretive paradigm mandates interaction; researchers “must participate in the lives of research participants in order to observe social dialogue and interaction—the process of creating constructs, ideas and meanings—as it occurs” (LeCompte and Schensul 1999a:49-50). I specifically attempted to achieve some of these goals through participant observation research, which I detail in section 3.05 of this Chapter.

The second paradigm, which I am following is the *ecological paradigm*, which reinforces “the idea that individuals do not function alone (...) [and] directs attention to individual and group interaction with the natural environment and demands recognition of the effects of landscape, location, natural resources, climate, and environmental depletion on human behavior and interaction” (LeCompte and Schensul 1999a: 56-57)

3.02 Rapid Ethnography

As mentioned in Chapter 2.03.3, an ethnographic approach was used for this research. The landmark of anthropological research and analysis, it contextualizes people and events *occurring in their*

natural settings; what they do versus just what they say they do or would do. In all, it is a holistic research approach that can help uncover important areas of knowledge that go much beyond the understanding of consumers as rational individuals. This mode of research focuses on how people “behave, how they define their world, what is important to them, why they say and do what they do, and what structural or *contextual features* influence their thoughts, behaviors and relationships” (LeCompte and Schensul 1999a:85, emphasis added). Because of time and budget constraints, I only had about a month to conduct this research. As such, I developed a timeline composed of three to four weeks of fieldwork armed with participatory rapid assessment procedures (Bernard 2006). I felt comfortable doing this because the research would be focused in U.S. household kitchens, which is a narrow and very particular aspect of U.S. culture that would be expressed by expert informants and that is also familiar to the researcher. LeCompte and Schensul (1999a) further explain this rapid approach, which they call “contemporary ethnography”:

Contemporary ethnography tends to be problem oriented, addressing specific issues or problems in a community context, which also serves to narrow and focus the research endeavor (...) To accomplish high-quality ethnographic research despite relatively brief periods of research time and limited resources, researchers restrict their studies to a topic or ‘lens’ through which to view the community they are studying” (LeCompte and Schensul 1999a: 5)

In my case, this would entail the detailed observation and participation in the *everyday* dynamics of families in their kitchens, which I specified even more to focus on weekday mornings and evenings.

3.03 Research Sampling

In this research I used a non-probability, quota sampling. As I suggested before, the understanding of “cultural scenes” via use of rapid ethnography entails the use of “expert informants” that can help streamline the learning. H. Russell Bernard (2006) explains that this type of sampling is appropriate when “collecting cultural data, as contrasted with data about individuals” (2006:187).

Based on the quantitative data of 1,067 women detailed in Table 2 and the qualitative data from over 40 informants I have interviewed in last couple of years, I selected three informants for each area of

interest, for a total of twelve informants participating in this specific portion of the client’s broader project. The selection of three participants per group was the minimum I recommended based on the client’s available budget and resources that still enabled the triangulation of data. In total, there were twelve mid-class, head of household females, residing in the Cincinnati tri-state area, who were 18 years of age or older at the time of recruitment, eleven of which were Caucasian and one African American. Participants were split in two age groups of six “Millennials” (18-34 years old) and six “Baby Boomers” (50-68 years old). Participants within each age group were selected in a way that three had children and three did not. As explained before, all participants agreed to their voluntary participation and signed an informed consent per client’s research guidelines. I personally conducted research on four specific representative cases (one from each group) that I consented through UNT’s IRB process and whose data I will specifically refer to for the purposes of this thesis. Table 4 below summarizes this sampling.

Table 4 Quota Sampling Criteria including Cases Recommended to the Client for Further Research

	Children	No Children
18-34 years old	3 participants	3 participants
50-68 years old	3 participants	3 participants

3.04 Research Assumptions

The following assumptions were made in the design of this research:

- The selection of participants by age group and presence of children will elicit sufficient cultural and environmental variations to investigate.
- Unbiased by incentive, participants were interested and willing to participate and their responses were accurate to the best of their knowledge.
- Researcher was able to establish rapport with participants in a way that she was able to obtain reliable information participants.
- Participants were not able to establish any link to the identity of the client.
- A female investigator was appropriate to conduct the study.

3.05 Research Techniques

In conducting this rapid ethnography, I used three main techniques: participant observation, structured interviewing and semi-structured interviewing. I organized these overall techniques by phases in the fieldwork requiring different levels of rapport.

I chose to begin the first phase of fieldwork with *structured* and *semi-structured* interviews, which are more predictable and typically more familiar to the participants in this study. For the semi-structured components I created an interview guide to ensure certain topics were covered in the same order for all participants. In these I include “grand tour questions” to survey the “cultural scene” of their homes (Spradley and McCurdy 1988). In fact, I followed almost exactly Spradley and McCurdy’s suggestion that “an investigation of a housewife’s culture could begin with a request for a grand tour of her home. Moving from one room to another she would name places and things as well as indicate some of the activities that were carried out in each location” (1988:62). The structured components included a few exercises like the creation of “maps” or taxonomies on the spot (Spradley and McCurdy 1988); building picture collages; and picking cleaning products of their choice to use them as “object probes” in our conversations (De Leon and Cohen 2005). Having the informant build these materials and choose what is important created an environment of shared control over these first interviews, which made my first encounter with participants a little easier and predictable.

The second and third phases of the research were mostly of *participant observation* and *unstructured interviewing*. H. Russell Bernard (2006) makes an important distinction when it comes to the role of participant observer in the field. He describes three very different kinds of roles: (1) *complete participant*, which entails becoming a member of the group without others knowing of your research intentions; (2) *participant observer*, where the researcher can be either an “observing participant” or a “participating observer”; and (3) *complete observer*, which involves the recording of behaviors with little or no interaction with those involved (2006:347). Of these, I mainly acted as an *observing participant*; I observed and recorded the actions around me, engaging in little to no actual participation in the actions

and routines of my informants. Again, in considering different levels of rapport with time, I chose to begin with evening observations, where participants felt more settled and in control (i.e. just coming back from work) and then early morning observations, which tended to be quicker and more stressful (i.e. getting ready for work). For the most part, I used unstructured interviewing with these observation exercises. As Bernard (2006) explains, although I had very specific aims in mind with our conversations, “the idea [was] to get people to open up and let them express themselves in their own terms, and at their own pace” (2006:211) as they went about their daily endeavors.

Finally, the fourth and last visit was again almost completely of unstructured interviewing using their current cleaning tools as “object probes” to discuss new ideas for products and services.

3.06 Instrumentation

As mentioned, I used several research instruments and exercises throughout the research. I did this for two reasons. First, compressed ethnographic research designs must rely on the use of good instrumentation and exercises that can help elicit key information in a lesser amount of time. As suggested by LeCompte and Schensul (1999a), “favored for this purpose are cognitive elicitation techniques, such as listing...in-depth interviews with cultural experts or key informants, and brief surveys... Triangulation of these multiple data sources is necessary to produce a comprehensive and consistent picture of a specific cultural domain” (1999a:89). Second, I personally like the control that these exercises give to informants, especially during the first encounters which tend to be the most difficult. It very intuitively places them as “the teachers” and us as “their students”, which is exactly one of the main pursuits of anthropology: to understand culture, knowledge and meaning from the informant’s point of view.

To begin with, I mailed two templates for participants to complete in preparation to our first encounter. One of them prompted them to write down general information about themselves: who lives with them, a few words that describe them, their role in the home, a few favorite memories, etc. The second was to build a picture collage or write a story about their “current household cleaning experience”

and another of their “ideal household cleaning experience”. Having participants show me their work and tell me their stories significantly aided in “breaking the ice” and begin building rapport from our very first interview. From an analytical standpoint, they also helped me delineate fundamental knowledge about them over which I would continue to expand.

In addition to semi-structured interviewing, the first phase of fieldwork had two other exercises. I began with a “free-listing” exercise, which I treated as a “game” (Brewer 2002). In this “game”, participants had fifteen seconds to state out loud as many words that came to mind after my mention of a key word or idea. We began with a “practice word” unrelated to our topic (“pen”), then created three of these free-lists: one for the word “clean”, one for “dirty” and one for “hygiene”. This was a fun and very informing start to our first conversation. I video recorded and wrote down their responses in a template that I created. The other exercise was the building of a taxonomy or “map” of the “different kinds of clean” and the “different kinds of dirty” (Spradley and McCurdy 1988). We referenced these throughout the research experience as their organization of meaning for “clean” and “dirty” in their homes.

Lastly, in preparation to the second and third phases of fieldwork—the observation of “evening scenes” and “morning scenes”, respectively—I asked my participants to keep in their kitchens a diary template that I created for them to record as many “evening messes” and “morning messes” that they encounter before my visits. After my observation of their evening and morning actions and a brief unstructured interview, we again built a taxonomy or “map” of the “different kinds of evening messes” and “different kinds of morning messes”, which we then discussed in the context of their “mess diaries”.

Table 5 below summarizes research techniques and instrumentation used through the course of my fieldwork.

Table 5 *Fieldwork Techniques and Instrumentation*

	Main Activity	Total Time Spent	Main Technique	Instruments Used
Phase 1	Enter the field	8 hours	Structured & semi-structured interviewing; object probes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Picture collages - ID template - Free Lists - Taxonomies of kinds of clean/dirty
Phase 2	Evening observations	8 hours	Participant observation, semi-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evening/Morning mess diaries - Evening/Morning taxonomy of

Phase 3	Morning observations	6 hours	structured and unstructured interviewing	kinds of messes
Phase 4	Exit the field	4 hours	Unstructured interviewing; object probes	

3.07 Data Collection

LeCompte and Schensul (1999b) explain that “ethnographers have only three basic kinds of data: information about what people say, what they do, and what they leave behind in the form of manufactured artifacts and documents” (1999b:1); and that is exactly the kind of data that I collected. So in addition to the instrumentation described above, I created observation templates to ease the recording of the action and ensure I collected specific information that the client was interested in. I also created note-taking templates to use during the interviews, again to enable good recording of certain topics, such as the more open conversations using pictures and cleaning products as “material probes” (De Leon and Cohen 2005). I also video recorded my entire visits, including the interviews and observation exercises, which I later transcribed for analysis. Finally, as part of my investigation of the environments and architecture of U.S. household kitchens, I recorded housing data from the Hamilton county auditor.

3.08 Data Analysis Approach

After the research was completed and before I looked at my data, I took some time to review the literature and the theory that I had been collecting since I began to be interested in the topic of household cleaning; references I have read years ago, and references that were more “fresh” and top of mind. As I reviewed my existing materials, I found new leads and new theories to consider. My thesis committee members and even my classmates also gave me new sources to consider. I did this to ensure I had fresh theoretical perspective to use as the lenses through which I would be able to find, analyze and *interpret* patterns and domains of knowledge in my data.

Inspired by LeCompte and Schensul (1999b), I followed an analysis process that begun by analyzing the most “raw” pieces of data, like the videos and interview transcripts, ending with the most structured pieces, like the instruments that I used, the exercises that the participants completed and the client’s existing data sets and relevant documents. This process allowed me to triangulate all data sources such that it was all rooted in the “raw” data, closest to the realities that I observed.

I first transcribed all of my interviews and observed interaction that was recorded in the videos. I then read all transcripts and field notes several times, often times referring back to the video recordings. After reading and re-reading the transcripts and my notes, I began to notice recurring and important themes across and within research participants, which I coded manually, by highlighting hardcopies of the transcripts and using small post-it notes to record the code. I also coded the information from their homework where they wrote down aspects of themselves, their families, favorite memories, etc. The primary literature and theoretical sources that I used in this process were: Mary Douglas’s *Purity and Danger* (1966/2002), which gave me much of in the understanding of classifications of clean, dirty and associated rituals; Ervin Goffman’s *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1973), which helped me find codes for the way participants described themselves and their roles; Kathleen McHugh’s *One Cleans, the Other Doesn’t* (2006), which also presents ideas of clean and dirty, culture and nature, and the social standing of women in cleaning; and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s *Play and Intrinsic Rewards* (1975), which provides guidance in identifying individual traits, perceptions and modes of action that can help define otherwise intrinsic behaviors.

I then triangulated the codes from the video transcripts and homework to the picture collages that participants created. I did this by first mounting the picture collages on a wall, which I organized in a 2x2 matrix as shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6 *Organization of Picture Collages as Framework to Data Triangulation Process*

Older participant with children	Older participant without children
Younger participant with children	Younger participant without children

Organizing the picture collages in this way helped me begin to identify broader patterns in the data in a way that also considered the primary hypotheses that the client was interested in. I then took the post-its that I had created during my reading and coding process and posted them on top of the picture collages as patterns and domains became more and more apparent (see Figure 3a). Finally, compared and contrasted these with the other instruments that I used in the research—free lists, “maps” and taxonomies—which I also mounted using the same 2x2 matrix shown in Table 5. Leaving the comparison of these instruments to the end helped me identify appropriate domains and patterns in the free list and taxonomy exercises, which I coded last, using a red marker (see Figure 3b). Throughout this process, I reviewed the video recordings as often as needed to ground myself again in the dynamics of my observations and to make sure I also considered the body language and facial expressions of informants. I also referred back to my theoretical references and the patterns uncovered in the previous quantitative and qualitative data sets as I analyzed and interpreted the data, especially that which was not explicitly articulated.



Figure 3 *Triangulation of Picture Collages, Taxonomies and Transcript Codes*

Finally, as part of my process of interpretation of findings, I created conceptual frameworks and diagrams (LeCompte and Schensul 1999b:188-189, 201), built contingency tables (LeCompte and Schensul 1999b:198-199); and used taxonomies, classifications and componential definition techniques (Spradley and McCurdy 1988:63-72), most of which I included in the following Chapters. As an example, Figure 4 below shows the evolution of one of my conceptual diagrams into its final version, which can be found in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

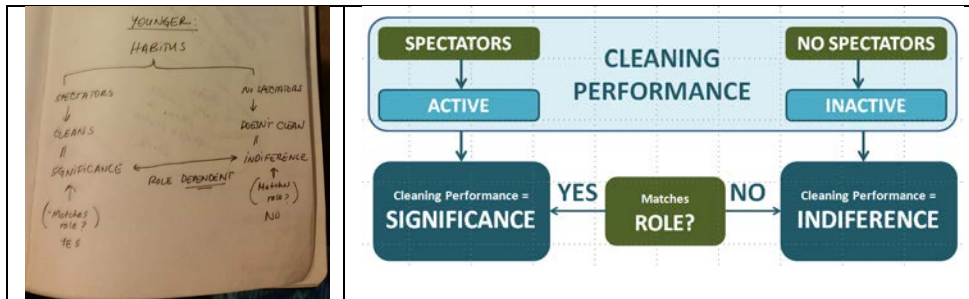


Figure 4 Evolution of Conceptual Diagram on the Influence of Cleaning in the Attitudes of Younger Participants

3.09 Methods Conclusion

In my opinion, one of the most important steps in research design is the acknowledgement and commitment to a paradigm of knowledge to pursue. This epistemology should then inspire the purposeful design of methods and instruments that will help the researcher achieve the objectives set. Moreover, this level of research planning and purposeful execution also helps synthesize the rather large amount of fieldwork data that is typically generated, and streamline the analysis process by enabling focus on particular areas of interest.

All of this is especially important in today’s environment, where cultural shifts and client demands for quick and tangible results are the norm. Furthermore, because the applied anthropologist often times does not have the luxury of spending months or years in a given field, the preparation of a research analysis plan that includes multiple data gathering tools to use in a shorter period of time is vital. In the absence of time to confirm patterns, these data sources also act as validation devices to the research findings. As LeCompte and Schensul (1999 b) explain, “patterns emerge as one piece of data is corroborated by others. The process of triangulation often can unearth patterns as responses, items, events, or themes from various sources of data begin to corroborate one another” (1999b:102). This is why the triangulation process through multiple sources of qualitative and quantitative data as described in Chapter 3.08 was so critical to this “compressed” ethnographic research of three to four weeks. In this case, the research was also conducted in a field that was familiar to the client and to the researcher and for which many documents and data were already available to facilitate triangulation and further validate the findings.

Chapter 4 Theoretical Discussion of Findings

4.01 Introduction: Theoretical Orientation and Overall Approach to Literature

In his book *The Anthropology of Performance* (1986:72-98), Victor Turner speaks of a “liberated anthropology”; one that breaks free from pressing fit and congruence, from a narrow definition of culture and ritual that has fixed elements to be measured and generalized. His “anthropology of performance”, presents an interesting framework to evaluate contemporary ritual using the analogy of theater. In my view, this framework is balanced. It frees the anthropologist from overtly rigid constructs while still keeping her grounded in the structure and creativity found in ritual as a “dramatic performance”. In fact, Turner explicitly criticizes the traditionally limited approach to the understanding of ritual, arguing against “modern” approaches that have historically avoided ambiguity altogether, treating it, in Mary Douglas’s words, as a form of “pollution” to the discipline. The post-modern turn however, would see “in the very flaws, hesitations, personal factors, incomplete, elliptical, context-dependent, *situational components of performance, clues to the very nature of human process itself*, and would also perceive genuine novelty, creativeness, as able to emerge from the freedom of the performance situation... What was once considered ‘contaminated’, ‘promiscuous’, ‘impure’ is becoming the focus of analytical attention” (Turner 1986:77, emphases added). While examining both religious and secular cleansing rituals, Mary Douglas does focus her analytical attention on the “promiscuous” and “impure”, quite literally. In her book *Purity and Danger* (1966/2002), she speaks of human “performances” too, unpacking the meanings of “clean” and “dirty”, and demystifying rituals of purity and the ritual act itself. She also uses the analogy of theater to describe the powerful effect that rituals and symbols have on human action and on the actors themselves:

[Ritual] is also creative at the level of performance... Actors’ memoirs frequently recount cases in which material symbol conveys effective power: *the actor* knows his part, he knows exactly how he wants to interpret it. But an intellectual knowing of what is to be done is not enough to produce *the action*. He tries and continually fails. One day some *prop* is passed to him, a hat or green umbrella, and with this symbol suddenly *knowledge and intention are realized in the flawless performance* (2002:78-79).

I found this perspective particularly inspiring to the study of everyday kitchen cleaning “rituals” in the household as a form of theatrical “performance”. Because of this, I chose to demarcate my research findings also using the analogy of theater. As explained in Chapter 2.03d, I used a systematic approach to theory to analyze the data coming out of this research, organizing my findings into four domains that I believe make up the cultural scene of interest (Spradley and McCurdy 1988:82). I called these “The Actors”, “The Action”, “The Props” and “The Stage”. Figure 5 below shows a schematic of the thinking and main sources of inspiration underlying the research analysis and discussion delineated in this Chapter.

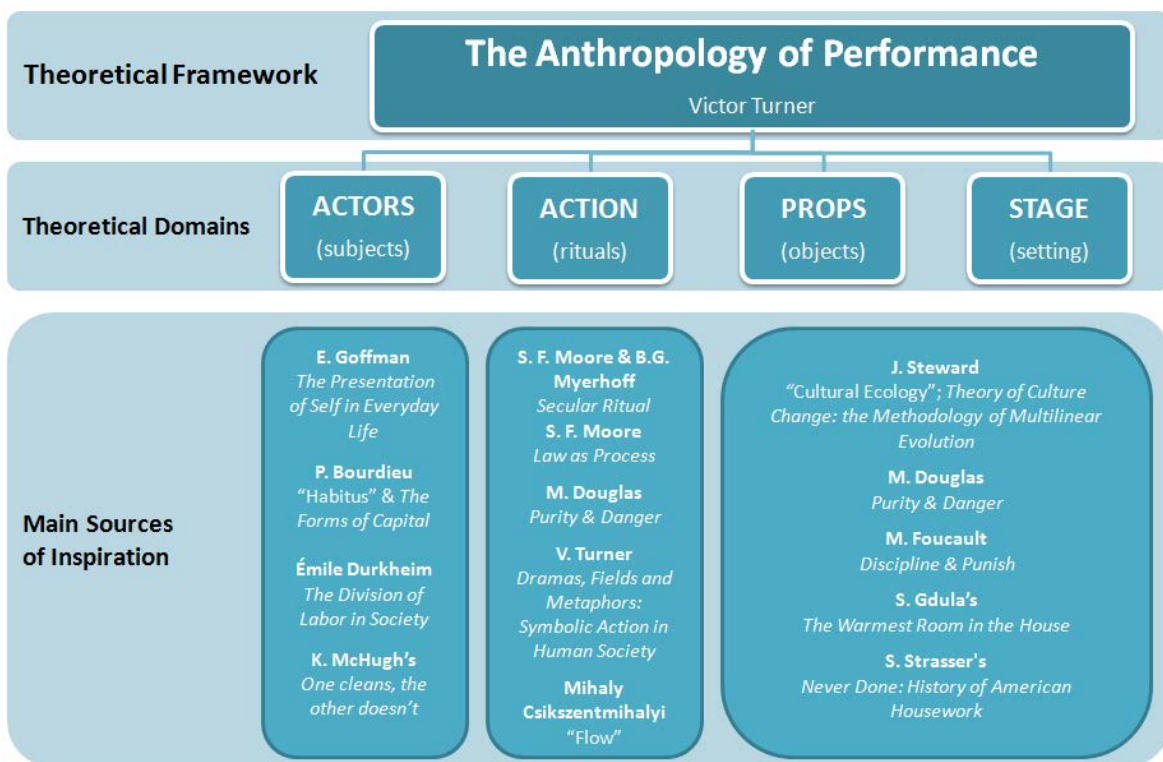


Figure 5 Overall Thesis Theoretical Framework

As shown, although greatly inspired by the “post-modern turn”, and like Turner, I did not limit my theoretical point of view to it, but considered elements of both structuralism and post-structuralism in my analysis; venturing to the possibility of patterns revealed by, and not necessarily delimiting, cleaning “performances” in the home.

The following text will amplify this point of view as I discuss the findings for each of the four domains described above. Each will start with a brief introduction to the section, a review of the associated literature and overall theoretical orientation for that topic, concluding with a detailed discussion of my research findings.

4.02 The Actors

On my third visit to the home of my 60 year old participant, she made dinner as part of her “evening kitchen routine”. To my surprise, right before I left her home, she gave me a bowl to take with me. When I later analyzed her homework collage about her ideal experience, which she prepared *before* we even met for the first time, I saw this aspect of her clearly portrayed. There it was, a picture of a casserole that said “to show my love” (see Figure 6 below). Cooking to her was an act of a special kind, a gift to others.



Figure 6 Participant Ideal Experience Picture Collage: “To Show my Love”

It was also hard to say goodbye to the four children of my 34 year old participant. For three weeks, they greeted me at the door, interrupted my interviews with ideas on cleaning, showed me their pictures and drawings from school, “helped me” with the camera. It was so evident to me. No matter the age or the circumstances, Victor Turner was right:

If man is a sapient animal, a tool making animal, a self-making animal, a symbol-using animal, he is, no less, a performing animal, *Homo performans*...his performances are, in a way, *reflexive*, in performing he reveals himself... the actor may come to know himself better through acting or enactment; or one set of human beings may come to know themselves better through observing and/or participating in performances generated and presented by another set of human beings (Turner 1986:81).

Looking at my participants as actors indeed revealed the essence of who they are or want to be. Indeed, observing and participating in their daily routines in a sense also revealed to me who I was in my own daily routines and cleaning practices; a kind of self-reflection. These interactions only reinforced my intent to use Turner's "anthropology of performance" as the main theoretical platform through which I wanted to understand these "performances" in the kitchen. Evidently, the very first step to achieve such understanding was to learn more about these actors, their beliefs, their stories and history, anything and everything they consciously or unconsciously aimed to reveal through their cleaning performances. As such, the following text consists of three parts: (1) a literature review on the history of American kitchen housework within which my "actors" were born and raised; (2) the theory that I used to better understand the "actors"; and (3) my research findings about them.

4.02.1 The Actors: Literature Review

Who does the Cleaning: a Brief History of American Women Domesticity

Through world wars and economic downturns, household kitchens have been of special importance to American families. Once the realm of slaves and servants, it has also consistently been an important social and symbolic space that American women have occupied. As such, cleanliness and domestic work have been an important part of American history, which has been researched by multiple authors (Kendall-Tackett 2001, Gdula 2008, Strasser 1982, Harrison 1972). The following text summarizes what I learned from these sources, primarily drawing from Steven Gdula's *The Warmest Room in the House: How the Kitchen became the Heart of the Twentieth-Century American Home* (2008) and Susan Strasser's *Never Done: A History of American Housework* (1982). For the purposes of my research, I focused this review from the beginning to the end of the 20th century, which approximately covers the period of time where my participants and their previous two generations were born and raised.

The beginning of the 20th century was marked by a new era of science and technology and its promise of a different and better world. Breakthrough technological advances in the kitchen, such as the stove and the refrigerator, were now affordable and available for purchase to the general public.

Furthermore, the world wars at the beginning of the century brought an increased need to better preserve foods to be sent overseas to U.S. troops. This propelled new scientific advances in the area of food preparation and preservation, unleashing a new era of pre-packed, ready to eat meals. In just a few decades, technology had completely transformed the physical landscape of kitchens as well as the nature of the activities to be performed in them. These had profound implications to the role that U.S. women were to perform as “actors” in society, as Steven Gdula (2008) explains: “With so many changes reorganizing and often dismantling the elements that composed the very structure of a woman’s life, it became difficult for some women to reorient themselves” (2008:2). But this would not be the case for long. While World Wars were being fought overseas, the government- mandated rationing of foods in 1942 brought the conflict closer, to every American home. Women began to see themselves in the social and political map, even from their very homes and kitchens. In those days, “A woman was expected to treat the kitchen as her base of command, and every domestic duty was to be done with a single aim- the winning of the war” (2008:22). Women began to seek work outside of the house while figuring out ways to keep their families, and their troops, fed. But as Gdula explains: “For the generation of Americans who were born on the eve of the Depression of the 1930s, making do was a way of life” (2008:63); and so they did. Besides politics, religious and moral values also continued to preserve and support the role of American women in cleaning and housekeeping as acts of great virtue and social value. Religion, politics, social rank and health were all merged into the discourse on cleanliness. This had important implications for American women, which were placed in what Turner would call a “liminal” social space and therefore a “dangerous” position: “As a result of the imperatives of purity inferred in various aspects of housework, the housewife is placed in what Mary Douglas would call a ‘dangerous’ cultural position. In order to clean, to separate, to keep dirt (nature) out, the housewife must ‘get her hands dirty’, do the ‘dirty work’” (McHugh 2006). Mothers and grandmothers were seen as heroes, especially by their children, and the intrinsic worth of hard work, sacrifice and endurance was further ingrained.

In spite of this, the 1950s were riddled with contradictions: “Babies were born in record numbers, yet to acknowledge sex was taboo. Alcohol flowed like tap water, but no one was ever too drunk to drive”

and the women that had “successfully held their families and their homes together during the war” still saw “themselves portrayed as *unable to survive without a man*” (Gdula 2008:108, emphasis added). Science and technology had not delivered the peace and prosperity it promised, but on the very contrary, it left their generation with even more global chaos and ecological destruction. It is no wonder that the 1960s and 1970s were marked by a generation who wanted to break free from those contradictions. It was a time of protest: protest against the government; protest against the Vietnam War; protest against the use of pesticides and preservatives; protest against industrialization and its resulting ecological destruction; protest against any and every form of oppression: “...everybody was talking about the ‘isms’. Racism denied African Americans their civil rights. Sexism restricted a woman’s potential. Feminism rallied women to demand equality” (Gdula 2008:110). And while a new appreciation towards the homemade and the organic was at play, women also began to look for a life outside the walls of their homes, with a record number of women entering the work force. In just ten years, the number of women working outside the home grew from 45 percent to 60 percent and for the first time in history, the United States census of 1970 reported women outnumbering men (Gdula 2008:138). But as those women took on jobs outside of the home, they were also expected to retain their domestic responsibilities. As Strasser (1982) would put it: “husbands of employed women...gave no more help with housework than husbands of women who stayed home... some women fought with their spouses, some cut their own household work to a minimum with *no compunction*, some cut the work but *felt guilty*...and most struggled endlessly to balance responsibilities” (1982:302, emphases added). Finally, this generation also felt the pinch of time and money in the in a way they hadn’t since the 1930s and 1940s. In 1970, the United States stock market dropped significantly. In 1972 the Consumer Price Index rose 8.8 and then an additional 12.2 percent by 1974. On top, the collective of oil producing countries, OPEC, put an embargo against the United States in 1973, making the cost of feeding the family even more challenging (Gdula 2008:196). In all of this and with both parents working outside of the house, families started to look for ways to maximize their time together. They found themselves congregating in the kitchen, as mealtime seemed to be one of the few

occasions when everybody was present. The older participants in this research belonged to this generation of young adults, the ones who would set the tone for the remainder of the century.

After the socio-political struggles and the economic downturn of the 1970s, the U.S. economy seemed to get back to life in the 1980s. However, this would not last long either. The seeming prosperity came to an abrupt end in 1987, with yet another crashing of the U.S. stock market. By 1993, one in ten Americans was receiving assistance from the government. Once again and as in the past, “the American Kitchen turned to food as a source of comfort in the early 1990s” (Gdula 2008:184) But this time around it was a little different. With all the technologies available in the kitchen and the relative ease with which food was prepared, people were no longer cooking because they had to, but because they wanted to: “Cooking had gone from an arduous task done out of necessity to a leisure activity pursued for the sake of cultural exploration, personal enjoyment, and status” (Gdula 2008:177). Between the honesty of TV shows like “Roseanne”, where the imperfect American family was celebrated, and the seeming perfection of Martha Stewart’s do-it-yourself approach to home living, the kitchen space further opened up and so did the activities performed in them. The younger participants in this research grew up in these days. Most importantly, they grew up in an age where the actions of cooking and cleaning in the kitchen moved with a fluidity and speed that no other generation had ever imagined. Speed, efficiency and immediate results would mark their expectations. This was only to become even more so the case as the new millennium arrived, and for generations to come.

4.02.2 The Actors: Theoretical Orientation

In his book *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893/1933), Émile Durkheim states that “There are in each of us...two consciences: one of which is *common to our group* in its entirety, which, consequently, is not our self, but society living and acting within us; the other, on the contrary, represents that in us which is *personal and distinct*, that which makes us an individual” (1933:129-130, emphases added). He also explains that social life “comes from a double source, the *likeness of consciences* and the *division of labor*. The individual is socialized in the first case...he becomes, with those whom he

resembles, part of the same *collective type*; in the second case, because, while having a physiognomy and a *personal activity which distinguishes him* from others, he depends upon them in the same measure that he is distinguished from them" (1933:226, emphases added). These dualities are summarized in what he calls "mechanical solidarity" and "organic solidarity". While *mechanical solidarity* describes social cohesion coming from our similarities and the "collective conscience" common to our group, *organic solidarity* refers to social cohesion coming from the interdependence of individuals performing different tasks in society.

Although Durkheim developed these constructs mostly in the context of distinguishing "primitive" from more "developed" societies, he also describes them as forces that exist within us, driving the very nature of our everyday actions. In his book *The Evolution of Educational Thought: Lectures on the Formation and Development of Secondary Education in France* (1977/2006), he further explains that "in each one of us, in differing degrees, is contained the person we were yesterday (...) It is just that we don't directly feel the influence of these past selves precisely because they are so deeply rooted within us. They constitute the unconscious part of ourselves" (2006:11). In a similar line of thought, sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, also an admirer of Durkheim, introduces the concept of *habitus* as "a durable, transposable system of definitions" acquired initially during childhood as a result of the conscious and unconscious practices of the family (1992: 134), also concluding that *habitus* is "*embodied history*, internalized as second nature and so forgotten as history - is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product" (1990: 56, emphasis added). This is also consistent with Clifford Geertz definition of *culture* as "a system of *inherited conceptions* expressed in *symbolic forms* by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (Geertz 1973:89, emphases added). Therefore, as I think about "actors" in their cultural settings, I must consider their "inherited conceptions", their "habitus" and shared history as the "collective consciousness" that is passed on from generation to generation; forms of organic and mechanical solidarity. I must also consider the "personal activity that distinguishes us", the organic solidarity that defines our "roles" and interdependencies as "actors" in society. These forms of organic and mechanic

solidarity are two integral constituents of what Durkheim calls “social life” or “social facts”, also described by Ervin Goffman as “social performances”.

In his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1973), Goffman describes a social *performance* as “the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers” (1973:22, emphases added). For the purposes of my analysis, I’d like to propose that this “activity of an individual” that has “influence on the observers” is the same as “the personal activity that distinguishes us” that Durkheim describes in *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893/1933), which produces organic solidarity; that *role* that defines us as “characters” and “actors” in society. Furthermore, the presence and nature of this “particular set of observers” or *spectators* is the third element that I reflected on as a factor influencing cleaning performances.

Lastly, as I considered the elements of “habitus”, their perceived “role” and the presence of certain “spectators”, I also reflected on the effects that all of these had on the actors’ perceived notion of their relative position in society. In the words of Bourdieu (1986), these could act as different “forms of capital” that they could attempt to embody and/or invest in themselves. In his book *The Forms of Capital* (1986), Pierre Bourdieu defines *capital* not only as economic capital that is “convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the forms of property rights” (1986:243). , but “what makes the games of society- not least the economic game- something other than simple games of chance” (1986:241). He defines two other forms of capital playing out in society: *social capital*, which has to do with the possession and access to networks of “relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition”; and *cultural capital*, which can take the form of an *embodied state* (dispositions of the mind and body), an *objectified state* (the possession of cultural goods such as books, art, etc.) and an *institutionalized state*, such as educational qualifications. These constructs are relevant to my study of household cleaning practices, not only because they repeatedly came up in my conversations with all participants, but also because cleaning and personal cleansing has been associated with various forms of capital all throughout American history. In the words of Richard L. Bushman and Claudia L. Bushman (1988): “So conceived as a moral, medical

and historical value, cleanliness acquired great cultural strength (...) Cleanliness had social power because it was a moral ideal and thus a *standard of judgment* (...) complex judgments about the social position of the dirty person and actually about his or *her moral worth*” (1988:1225-1228; emphasis added).

In summary, the three elements that I considered in explaining cleaning performances are: (1) the actor’s *habitus* as their “embodied history” or “inherited conceptions” that can also produce a “likeness of consciences”; (2) the *role* that the actor sees herself playing in society, which influences others and is a constituent of “organic solidarity” in our complex society; and (3) the nature and frequency of *spectators* or observers of the cleaning performance act. Overlaying all of these, I also consider the implications of the concept of “social capital” that these and other factors may have on my actors. Figure 7 below synthesizes these theoretical relationships:

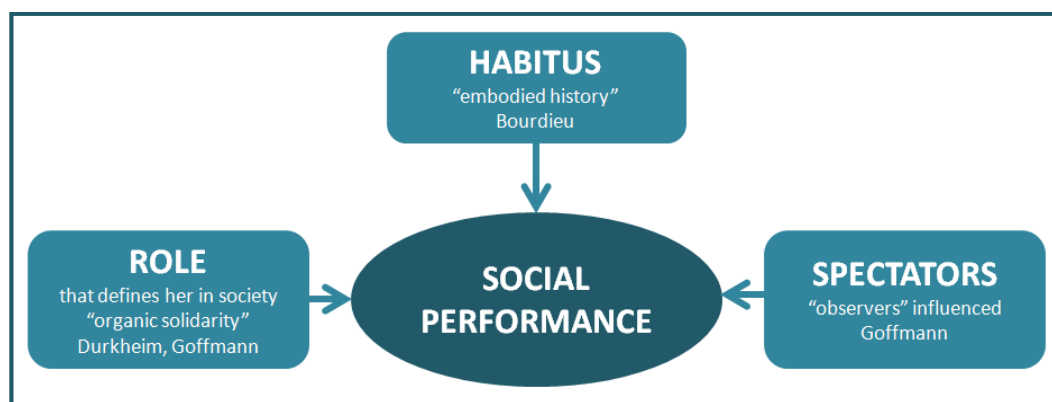


Figure 7 Factors that Influence Performance

4.02.3 The Actors: Research Findings and Discussion

Household cleaning had a powerful effect on participants’ view of themselves, either by agreement or by contrast. Their ability to clean or maintain their homes in a state of cleanliness would produce feelings of self-worth (pride/shame) or relevance (significance/indifference). In the following section I will show that these emotional dichotomies seem to be explained by the theoretical elements of social performances that I described above, including the presence of “spectators”, the influence of a “habitus”, and the “role” they saw themselves playing in society.

4.02.3.1 Cleaning as Performance

Ervin Goffman's description of *performance*, as "the activity of an individual... which has some influence on the observers" (1973:22), played out strongly for participants in this study. All participants described cleaning as a form of "performance" to be presented to and appreciated by others. This factor was the one that played the biggest role in determining their actual cleaning practices. Irrespective of their "life stage", participants would feel more or less compelled to clean depending on their audience.

For participants living alone and without children, regardless of their age, their main "spectators" were all outsiders, most importantly their immediate family and/or their significant other. The importance of this was revealed both during our interviews and in our taxonomy exercises for the different "kinds of clean", where one of them even created a unique domain called "Having-Company Clean". Now, since these "spectators" were not part of their everyday lives, any cleaning beyond the "basics" would simply not take place often. They both admitted to procrastinate on cleaning, as it was simply not a top priority for them: "That's generally how I feel about cleaning. It's not my favorite thing in the world to do. I usually feel like it's just one more thing to check off my to-do list and usually the thing that gets moved to the end of the to-do list". Their "presentation of self" through their cleaning practices would take place in accordance with the kind and frequency of the presence of key "spectators"; their more thorough cleaning practices organized around these visits. As one of the participants stated, "Cleanest clean would be family coming over (...) my family doesn't come over for the holidays here, so it doesn't need to be that clean". The other participant spoke similarly when describing the visits of her significant other: "Only occasionally does my significant other live with me... So it's very important that when he's with me, that everything, my cooking and all of that goes really well. It's all focused on him (...) So I have little groups of times, a week here, and a week there, when I'm really flying off the handle". Cleaning was a somewhat dreadful thing for these participants, to the point that they would even avoid certain activities, even desirable ones, just to not have to clean: "I wanted to get to the point where I could cook and not have to clean up so much... I love food... to feed my creativity... But I'm to the point where I will not cook

something, even though I'm craving it. Because cleaning up is such a mess". In all, the distinction in cleaning performances between them and women with family was clearly articulated by one of the participants:

People that have those kinds of challenges clean a whole lot different than someone like me, who doesn't have to worry about babies crawling around and making sure that it's totally disinfected and things like that. I want things to smell good and be as germ-free as possible, but I'm not going to lose a whole lot of sleep on it.

On the other hand for participants with children, even for the participant whose adult son no longer lives with her, cleaning seemed an integral part of their every day routines. For these individuals, their children are or have been their main "spectators" and motivation to clean. One of the participants remembered the days when her son, her main "spectator", used to live with her. These stories were full with all sorts of household chores: "Raising him was my ultimate. I was a crazy mother. I ironed everything from the underwear to the sheets (...) my life was based around him. So once I had my son, it was just him". The younger mother would also speak of her children as "spectators" in the present day, hoping they appreciate her "constant battles" and efforts to clean the house and clean after them: "My family, I feel, appreciates all that I do, and my kids look to me to be taken care of". For these mothers, "performing cleaning" for their children was of special significance. While kids were admittedly associated with messes and disorder, they also reiterated the importance of their children's cleanliness and their appearance to others: "I would hate for my kid to be that dirty kid at school, the smelly one that you don't want to sit next to (...) it's very important to keep yourself clean, as well as the environment you are in". Their descriptions of cleaning performances for their children reminded me of some aspects of the "rites of passage" described in Victor Turner's *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969). Children, not yet considered active members of society, were consistently described as belonging to a somewhat ambiguous or "liminal" space. To their mothers, they were nemeses to cleanliness as much as they were embodiments of cleanliness and of their hard work. In this respect, the mothers acted like "contemporary shamans" who, through their continuous teaching on how to be clean and be organized, the maintenance of their bodies and appearance, and their daily household cleaning routines, would take

them through a “rite of passage” to becoming respectful and respected adults of the future. In spite of the challenges that having kids posed to their efforts, participants described these “rituals” as a worthy endeavor and a legacy: “that’s the kind of life I wanted for him”. In fact, the more challenging their experiences, the more masterful they seem to have become in their daily cleaning routines and “systems”. The difference that I observed between the older and the younger mother was a difference in experience: the former having mastered the efficiencies of cleaning, the latter still figuring them out. To both of them, a certain level of cleaning thoroughness seemed to be an active, integral part of their everyday lives. Even to the one whose son no longer lived in the house, it had become second nature, an expression of control, experience and mastery.

4.02.3.2 Cleaning as Habitus

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu coined the word *habitus* as “an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences” (1992:133). He suggests that this is attained initially by the young child in the home from the conscious or unconscious customs of his family, concluding that “habitus” is “*embodied history*, internalized as second nature” (1990: 56, emphasis added). Therefore, in order to begin to understand the kinds of values and feelings expressed by the participants in this study, I have to consider their historic past. In fact, all participants seemed to share a common *habitus* or ingrained beliefs about how cleaning “should be” done; the “embodied history” in the words of Bourdieu or “collective consciousness” in those of Durkheim. What was peculiar between those born in the 1950s and those born in the 1980s was how some of their discussions and actions seemed to correspond with particular points in time.

4.02.3.2a Born in the 1950s

Born in 1954 and 1959, after the World Wars and the Great Depression, and raised in the midst of the “women’s liberation” and the Civil Rights Movement, our participants grew up between the austere expectations of their “hero” parents as well as those of a protesting society. Their generations marked a transition for women in the United States, one that slowly attempted

to move them from stern domesticity to students and outside workers, or both. As we saw this transition, however, was not as clear cut for them. They were expected to do it all. And their ability to do so, as women, would be a great source of pride. These family-ingrained values were clearly reflected in my conversations with both of them about cleaning and housekeeping and also in the way they spoke about their parents.

For instance, during our first interview, both of them referred to their parents as role models for their hard work and sacrifice and for the way they had achieved balance and independence. Clearly resembling Bourdieu's definition of *habitus* in 1992 as "acquired initially by the young child in the home", this is how the 55 year old spoke of her parents: "Even when I had my son, I cleaned the home. My mom had four kids-- my mom and dad-- *they both worked*. The home was *always clean*, and we were always fed. It was *a home cooked meal-- not a bought*, you know? So that's something that was inherited probably. Because if I had parents that weren't concerned with a clean home, I probably would be that way, because I'd think, oh, that's the norm" (emphases added). The other participant also continuously referred to and praised both of her parents: "as my dad used to say, *even the salmon swims downstream* sometimes (...)
memories of the happiest times of my life. When I think about it, the time I spent with my dad" and, referring to her mother, "She's *a great role model* for me...She's 84 years old and she still rocks jeans, and dangly earrings, and gets out. And she drives a little red Mini Cooper" (emphases added).

Their expectations for how cleaning "should" be done were also rather high in comparison with the younger participants. They both described cleaning the floors on their "hands and knees" as the proper way to do it, albeit in a mix of pride and shame: "I use that Murphy's stuff that and I still get on my hands and knees and scoot around the floor, *so don't tell anybody that*. I still scoot on the floor with the Murphy's for the wood" (emphasis added). There was also a "no excuses" attitude towards cleaning: "We used to stomp ours in a tub. So you don't have to tell me about having no money. No, no, no. We don't have any money. You got soap. You

get in the tub, and you stomp it, and you scrub it. And that's what you do.” What is important to note is that these “values” or “habitus” had a powerful presence in both participant’s view of cleaning, *regardless of whether they actually performed according to them or not*, as in the case of the participant without children. In one of our interviews, she “admitted” with some embarrassment: “my cleaning habits are not the world's greatest. I'll admit that right now. I try.” Moreover, she also questioned her tendency to do mostly “obvious cleans”: “Things that are eye level, and obvious spills, and things like that... I don't think anybody *should get points* for doing obvious cleans” (emphasis added). Lastly, as they both considered cleaning aspects of their “habitus”, a common tension emerged: the strength and health of their bodies were not the same as when they were younger. This came to life in their descriptions of cleaning the floors. While the 55 year old complained about arthritis and how it made it so much more difficult to scrub the floors with Murphy’s, the 60 year old would describe her use of a “Swiffer Sweeper” for the floors in a somewhat apologetic way: “...it’s probably because I’m in such terrible shape, and I don’t spend a lot of time on my knees. If I were a different-shaped person, *I probably would not have chosen this* (...) I’m basically inept at cleaning the floors” (emphasis added). When prompted if this cleaning implement was saving her time, she replied “It’s saving me personally”.

Finally, they also highly valued their ability to work outside of the home, which they both described in detail, unaided, within three minutes of our very first interview. One of the participants described with pride how she had held multiple jobs throughout her life until the position she currently holds: “I've been with [place of work] for 25 years. So I've been waterworks. I've washed toilets. I've mowed lawns. So I'm currently doing payroll. I work for the...management director”. The other participant, now retired, also described her previous jobs at length: “for 10 years, the past 10 years, before I lost my job at Nestle, I worked three jobs. I had my full time job at [company], I taught at the non-profits during the week. And on the weekends, I worked as a night auditor at a hotel”.

In all, both participants who were born in the 1950s seem to share very similar principles and values towards both household cleaning and working outside of the home. Moreover, these were so important that they even seemed to establish their own worth in terms of how hard they work and how good were their ability to maintain a clean house. But while they shared similar views, the resulting perception of self-worth was opposite. While the 55 year old still worked and seemed to have mastered the arts of housekeeping, a practice that began with her son as main “spectator”, the 60 year old had retired and would procrastinate her cleaning. These in turn resulted in opposite emotional states: While the one would thrive in pride, describing herself as the “ultimate parent” that did it all, the other would feel somewhat lost and “unhappy” about herself: “unfortunately, when I lost my job, it was a weird thing...I lost it last June. So it's been just a year. So I'm having a difficult time right now” and “a lot of times, that's what makes me unhappy...I'm not saying that I'm dirty. I'm just saying that I'm kind of messy. Although, borderline dirty. It doesn't make you feel good about yourself”.

4.02.3.2b *Born in the 1980s*

The historical heritage of domesticity in the United States was also a clear part of the cleaning language of my younger participants. However, more than a matter of self-worth, cleaning seemed more of a declaration of identity through the performance of their “roles” in society as they viewed them at the present time. Their overall *presentation of self* and their cleaning attitudes resembled Turner (1986) where he says, “Self is presented through the performance of roles... and through declaring to a given public that one has undergone a transformation of state and status, been saved or damned, elevated or released” (1986:81).

I clearly saw the influence of “habitus” as well as the “presentation of self” at play with the younger mother of four, for whom being a mother was one of the most important “roles” she was to perform at this stage in her life. Cleaning was a part of it and therefore important too. In our conversations, she described her “transformation” of roles, from the time she was recently

married, to today, to even how it will be in the future, when her kids are older and she finishes up the higher education studies. It seemed that in assuming her “role” as wife and mother, the figure of her “hero” grandmother became an important reference to her present identity, reflecting a “domestic heritage” that had become part of her “habitus”. She described her grandmother as a “wonderful woman” and “the rock of my life”, remembering with nostalgia the things that she learned from her: “I can remember being really little, coming to her house, and smelling food cooking. She taught me a lot of things about cooking. She never had a dishwasher in her life, so she always was doing dishes. She was always in the kitchen. She was singing in the kitchen. She would always have the radio on”. Just as so many women of the early 20th century had their radios on while doing their household chores (Gdula 2008). This element of her “habitus”, as well as what it meant to her “presentation of self” was even more clearly articulated later in the interview, where she said “I just feel like, especially being a woman, your kitchen is kind of your domain. I don't want to sound sexist or anything, but it's kind of true, so I feel like *it's a reflection of me*” (emphasis added).

On the other hand, the young woman without kids was also very articulate in describing “cleanest clean” the way it’s “supposed to be”. However, cleaning was just not an integral part of the “role” she saw herself currently playing. Although she did aspire to become a wife and mother one day, fully aware of the implications that this would have on her cleaning habits, today she was a teacher, a friend, a proud big sister, not a cleaning lady. There was no shame in this, as evidenced by her response when prompted about it: “I mean, ideally, I want it to be *church lady like glove clean* but knowing that means that I have to clean it, I'm completely OK with every day clean” (emphasis added). It is interesting to note how this expression, as I’ve explained before, still combines the elements of religion, sanitation and femininity into the discourse of cleaning, much like in the early 20th century. The difference is that the participant did not necessarily use this idiom as “the” standard to pursue, but as an expression for a somewhat exaggerated, ideal but unattainable state of clean. Her emotional response to her cleaning habits was also in sharp

contrast to the older woman who also procrastinated cleaning. Two things seem at play here. First of all, while a cleaning “habitus” was evident with both younger participants, it seemed to have less of an impact on their self esteem versus their older counterparts. Second of all, the younger “cleaning procrastinator” still had her “role” in society clearly defined and in her view outside of the realm of cleaning, while the older one was at odds with her new retired status.

Finally, the other aspect that seemed unique with the younger participants was an overall stronger desire for cleaning simplicity and wanting “time back” to do other things. This was shown in their picture collages as well as in their descriptions of cleaning products. Whereas older participants seemed to take for granted the need for various kinds of products, the younger ones appreciated those that enabled them to achieve easier, faster results. Generational differences also seem to play out in the things they value with cleaning: while older participants still saw value in the effort it takes to achieve the *right results*, the younger ones dreamed of simpler, easier ways to clean that yield *immediate results*. As we learned previously, these values resemble a cleaning “habitus” characteristic of different points in the history of cleaning and housekeeping of the 20th century.

4.02.3.3 Cleaning, Social Roles and Cultural Capital

The last important element to consider in this analysis is how relevant were “cleaning performances” to the “role” the participants saw themselves playing as “actors” in society. As seen before, this seemed to be at play with all four of them.

For instance, both the older and younger mothers saw their “roles” in society clearly linked to their cleaning performances. The 55 year old saw herself as an active worker, an active member of her church and of her community and, most importantly, a mother and example to others. To her, cleaning and cleanliness played an extremely important function to all of these different facets. Her son, her parents, her neighbors and friends would visit frequently. In fact, I personally had the opportunity to meet her parents, who stopped by during the evening observation part of the research. When asked about who

or what would take priority when it comes to cleaning, her reply was: “All of it's a priority. Because it's me. So if you step into my home-- now this is my thinking, because everybody doesn't think this way-- messy home, messy mind”. These views were very similar to those of the 34 year old mother of four, who said: “If you walk into my kitchen and it's disgusting, then I would think, you're disgusting. I just feel like it's kind of a reflection of the person”. Although her house looked less pristine and decorated versus that of the 55 year old mother, she aspired to one day have a house that looked that way, when her kids get older. This was shown both in the “ideal cleaning experience” collage as well as in our interviews: “I really want to fix up my house and get new things and have it be nicer now that my kids are older. Before, I always thought, I'm just going to keep all the hand me down stuff because they're destroying it anyway”. In all, both participants saw cleaning as a critical aspect in their “role” as mothers. Moreover, just as they found inspiration in their parents and grandparents to perform their “roles” well, this was a “habitus” they wanted to continue passing on to their children: “I feel like I'm always cleaning as I go, and I want my kids to observe that, because I know they will mimic what they see. I want them to in turn do the same thing”. This view of cleaning as a form of legacy was prominent for both mothers. Moreover, other than a lesson to be taught and passed on, personal cleansing and overall cleanliness was also seen as an expression of their social standing in front of others.

On the other hand, participants without children described their “roles” more in terms of their educational credentials, their professions, the positions they've held or the jobs they've had. They pride in their ability to “provide” for themselves and by themselves. The older participant also emphasized her volunteering and mentoring work that she did while still working for [company] as a significant part of the “role” she played in society. Cleaning was something to be managed, not a statement of who they were. Again the main difference between these participants was that, while the younger “cleaning procrastinator” felt her “role” in society was clearly defined (for example, as a teacher), the older one seemed to be at a loss with her recent retirement and break with all the volunteering work she used to do. Lastly, as seen in some of their comments, all participants seemed quite aware of the role that personal hygiene, appearance and overall cleaning played or could play in achieving a certain social status.

Interestingly, all participants also mentioned, unaided, the importance that education has in this, sometimes also linked to personal and household cleanliness. All of these, in the words of Pierre Bourdieu, acted as a form of “cultural capital” to be invested in themselves and in their children. The following discusses the theme of education and of personal cleanliness in more detail.

4.0.2.3.3a *Importance of Education*

Beyond cleaning and domesticity, all four participants made references to higher education (*institutionalized cultural capital*) as a source of pride and economical independence. While both the younger and older woman without children proudly held higher education degrees, the mothers spoke of the importance of education to their children and their family.

For instance, for the women without children, the independence resulting from having higher education degrees was an important topic in our conversations. They described it as one of their biggest accomplishments: “graduating from undergrad and grad school. I’m the only one in my family to have done either. Something I always wanted”; and an important part of their identity as women: “In a perfect world, I’d like to have more time to go to school. I have three bachelor’s degrees... And I was working on a fourth in education... obviously everybody would like more money”. They were also very specific in affirming their ability to provide for themselves and by themselves. Just as the younger participant stated “*I provide for myself*. I clean my stuff. I cook for myself”, the older one said “I’m pretty happy with my life, as successful as I’ve been, because *I’ve done it all by myself*” (emphases added).

On the other hand, although participants with children did not have higher education degrees, they stressed on the importance of education and the specific roles they were playing to help their children achieve it. For example, the younger mother was actually in the midst of pursuing a higher education degree at the time of our interviews, something she had “postponed” when she begun to have children. To her, getting an education was a great source of pride and of economic capital, as well as a lifelong example to give to her children:

When I went back to school, I just felt really accomplished once I received my certificate and was doing so well and getting such good grades. I thought, wow, my brain still works after all this time (...) It just made me feel really proud and it made me feel like I really had something under my belt that I could look back and my kids could be proud of me and say, look what Mom did... I just wanted to show them that there's nothing that they can't do.

As for the older participant, while she recalled with some regret her decision not to get a higher education degree, she was very specific about the “cultural capital” investments she made throughout her son’s to enable him to achieve a college degree, an achievement that she mentioned, unaided, within the first eight minutes of our first interview: “Raising him was my ultimate... I made him play the piano for five or six years... I made him take drama classes at the University. I made him go up to do engineering classes”. She would describe the many places they had travelled to and the sacrifices she has made to make them possible. Art from a past trip to Africa would be out on display, along with its story, showcasing her sense of culture and knowledge (*objectified cultural capital*). Altogether, all of these were clear examples of “cultural capital” investments these mothers were making on their kids. As we’ve seen in their verbatims throughout this text, cleaning played an important role: “I would hate for my kid to be that dirty kid at school, the smelly one that you don’t want to sit next to (...) it’s very important to keep yourself clean, as well as the environment you are in”.

4.02.3.3b *Cleanliness and Social Acceptance*

As stated before, all participants also expressed the social importance that cleaning and personal cleansing had; as the younger participant without children literally said: “I like to be clean... Because I would like to be accepted in society”. But particularly with the 55 year old mother, an African American woman who spent the majority of her life “working her way up” for herself and her son, she seemed to place the greatest emphasis on bodily and home aesthetics, which included both strict cleanliness and “tasteful” décor. A small single family house at a lower middle-class neighborhood, it was indeed pristine. According to her, her house was somewhat of a neighborhood icon and the house where everybody gathered. She portrayed herself as an example and helper of others, her life so full of marginalities and differentiations being the perfect scene for the “role” she saw herself playing: the

“mother”, the “shaman” of the neighborhood and, like she said “the king of my home; not the queen, *the king*”. Cleaning and aesthetics seemed to play an extremely important role in all of this. Not only was her house pristine, but she was diligent with her personal appearance, the appearance of her son and that of others: “When I went to [his] school, I was dressed. I didn't wear jeans. So everybody's like, oh, we know that's Charles's mom”. This also showed in one of her stories from when her son used to live with her:

So we made sure if we found somebody that didn't have like my son, you bring them here-- if they don't look like you, dress them like you. I don't care what you're doing. You go upstairs. You get the best shirt. You put on the best shirt. You treat them-- because there's a reason that the neck around the collar is dirty. So we don't want you with them like that, so go get your best-- not your worst. You get your best, so for that day, *they feel like they're somebody*. And they know-- it doesn't take much to wash a shirt (emphasis added).

In all, it was evident that cleaning was an important aspect to her, as a form of “cultural capital” to be invested in her son. This was also consistent in the way the younger mother described the way she was raising her four kids.

4.02.3.4 Cleaning, Feminism and Pride in Economic Independence

Consistent with the historical background described before, all four women indeed seemed proud to be able to “do everything”: the domestic, nurturing jobs (still much better than males according to all of them) as well as working part time or full time jobs to provide for the household. Furthermore, throughout the course of our interviews, they equated males (“husbands”, “boys”, etc.) as nemeses to clean, clumsy and somewhat dumb in cleaning. This came up in the taxonomies for “kinds of clean” as well as in their descriptions of husbands and “significant others” in cleaning. They all also expressed pride in their ability to provide without the help of a male, as one of the older participants said: “I'm pretty happy with my life, as successful as I've been, because I've done it all by myself, *without a husband*” (emphases added). In fact, both of my older participants mentioned pride in paying off their houses without the help of a male. Interestingly, none of them lived with a male in their home either: the one with a son divorced when he was little, and the one that never had children, never married either. Both of them did have male “significant others” who visited them regularly and only stayed in “their” homes for limited amounts of

time: “You know, I've been dating the same guy for 25 years, you know what I mean? He's down two houses. I've got *my* house. And it works for me.” They both seem to enjoy that sense of control. Also, when it came to cleaning, they described their partners almost as children, needing their constant care. Even for the younger mother of four, married and economically dependent on her husband at the time our interviews, she was very proud of working on a higher education degree, with a clear plan to find a better job and provide for her family. Different from the older participants though, this did not seem to give her a special sense of control or superiority, her husband being “100% supportive” of her academic endeavors.

4.02.3.5 Actors Summary: The Presentation of Self in Cleaning

As we evaluate the emotional significance that cleaning performances have on individuals, one must consider the interaction between their “habitus”, the visibility of their acts of “performance”, and their perception of the main “role” they see themselves playing. *None of these elements exist solely at the individual level.* Much on the contrary, they are actively created and recreated by the influence and the presence of others. In other words, continuing with the analogy of theater, a given performance act will feel and be great when the actor’s “role” matches the given script (*habitus*) in a way that is appreciated by a touched audience (*spectators*). Tension or realization would arise for the actor depending on how all of these factors play out.

For example, for participants who had children, all three elements seem to be present. Being a mother was clearly one of the most important “roles” they had to play. Even for the one whose son no longer lived with her, being a mom was one of the first identifiers she used to describe herself during our initial conversation. Their cleaning performances were also seen as important and impacting to a very clear set of “spectators”, beginning with their children, their families and even their communities, as was the case of the empty nester. Finally, a certain “script” or *habitus* was passed onto them by important people in their lives, who they admire and looked up to perform their “roles” as mothers. Being able to perform per this script was a source of self-assurance and pride. This marked a slight difference in the

primary emotional response that the younger and the older mother had when it came to cleaning. While the empty nester seem to respond more to her ability to perform per her “habitus”, resulting in pride and *self-realization*, the younger thrived in the *significance* of the “role” she was currently playing as a mother.

For participants without children, who also procrastinated their cleaning, a different dynamic would arise. The significance of the “role” they saw themselves playing in society, combined with the ongoing absence of “spectators”, seemed to be the determining factors in their behaviors and their corresponding emotional response to cleaning. In the case of the younger “cleaning procrastinator”, her view of the everyday “role” she had to play in society as a single, full time worker and teacher justified her cleaning performances, or the lack thereof. This, combined with the fact that she didn’t have frequent “spectators” to her cleaning performances resulted in a sense of *indifference*. I hypothesize that some of this might’ve also been the case of the older “cleaning procrastinator” when she used to have three different jobs and do her volunteering work. However, in her current state of things, having “lost” her job represents a loss of the “role” or “purpose” she saw for herself in society, as she said: “I’ve lost a little bit of confidence, a little bit of purpose. But I’m trying hard to get that back.” Furthermore, the fact that they belong to different generations also seemed to have additional impact on the older participant, who had a more strict view on the way cleaning “should” be done. This is a good example of what could happen to a performance act when none of the three elements of “habitus”, “role” and “spectators” line up. No longer having a “role” in society that justifies her lack of cleaning, without the everyday presence of “spectators” to influence, and with a more strict view of what the “right” cleaning standards should be, the emotional response of this participant was *shame*.

In summary, although all three elements of “habitus”, “role” and “spectators” are at play with all participants, there seems to be different weights into how they specifically influence our participant’s experiences with cleaning. For all of them, the presence of “spectators” seems to be the main driver to their actual cleaning performance actions. However, their emotional response to those actions differs depending on the elements of “role” and “habitus”. While it seems that cleaning “habitus” has the most

impact on older participants, younger participants seem most influenced by the social “role” they see themselves playing. Figure 8 below summarizes these findings:

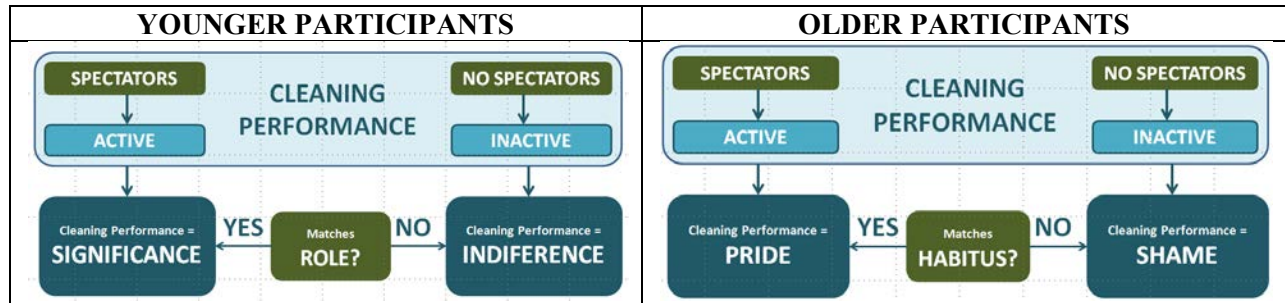


Figure 8 Habitus, Spectators, Roles and Cleaning Attitudes among Older and Younger Participants

4.03 The Action

One of the unique perspectives that anthropology offers to the social sciences is its emphasis on studying human *action in context*, out of which humans themselves, artifacts, scenarios and society are altogether revealed. Furthermore, the study of human action exercised over objects and artifacts in a given scene can yield exceptional insight into how to create products and services that are especially designed to meet the emotional, physical and functional requirements that are embedded in such actions. But before I can understand the role that certain artifacts play or could play in a given activity, it is important to first recognize the constituents of the action itself. Because much anthropological work has been done in this space, my initial aim was to consider cleaning actions as rituals, and rituals as acts that go much beyond religion. The following text reviews the literature I found in developing this idea, which not only led me to understand ritual as secular, but also as process and as a performance act. It also details my overall theoretical orientation for this portion of the project, concluding with my research findings for “the action” in the kitchen “stage”.

4.03.1 The Action: Literature Review

Rituals can be secular. In the book *Secular Ritual* (1977:3-24), Sally F. Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff begin by reflecting on the definition of *ritual*. Because anthropology has historically focused on studying societies whose religion is central to their everyday lives, rituals have been traditionally

confined to the realm of religious and magical procedures. Moore and Myerhoff argue, though, that while “religion” and the “sacred” are terms that are often times used interchangeably, a distinction must be made. While *religion* has been defined as having to do with “the spirits”, the *sacred* is much characterized by its “unquestionability”. Now, if we consider the “sacred” as the “unquestionable”, then we must also realize, for instance, that “unquestionable tenets [also] exist in secular political ideologies which are as sacred in that sense as the tenets of any religion. Secular ceremonies can present unquestionable doctrines and can *dramatize social/moral imperatives* without invoking the spirits at all (...) If sacred is understood in a sense of ‘unquestionable’ and traditionalizing, then *something may be sacred, yet not religious*” (Moore and Myerhoff 1977:3, 20, emphases added). Mary Douglas calls this out even more explicitly in her book *Purity and Danger* (1966/2002) when comparing household cleaning rituals with the practices of the Bushman wife: “If we keep the bathroom materials away from the kitchen cleaning materials and send the men to the downstairs lavatory and the women upstairs, we are essentially doing the same as the Bushman wife (...) She chooses where she will place her fire and then sticks a rod on the ground. This orientates the fire and gives it a right and left side. Thus, the home is divided between male and female quarters.” (Douglas 2002:85). Moreover, Douglas takes the whole concept of “secular ritual” even further when she says: “As a social animal, man is a ritual animal. If ritual is suppressed in one form it crops up in others more strongly the more intense the social interaction (...) *ritual is more to society than words are to thought*” (2002:77, emphases added). Therefore, it is indeed more than possible to analyze secular affairs as rituals. Not only that, but this can be particularly true for cleaning actions and practices, especially if we consider the social and moral significance that cleaning carries in American culture.

In his book *The Anthropology of Performance* (1986:72-98), Victor Turner further clarifies the definition of *ritual* by calling it “the *performance* of a complex sequence of symbolic acts”, also agreeing with Ronald Grimes’s definition as a “transformative *performance* revealing major classifications, categories, and contradictions of *cultural processes*” (1986:75, emphases added). This definition reveals three important aspects of ritual. First, rituals are symbolic action. In fact, in his collection of essays, *The*

Forest of Symbols, Turner also suggests that “symbol is the smallest unit of ritual” (1967:19). Second, rituals can be looked as performances. And third, rituals reveal process.

Mary Douglas (2002) is particularly revealing of the *symbolic nature of rituals*, even secular ones. She goes as far as stating that it is “impossible” to have any social relationship without the use of symbolic acts. Once again, she demystifies the use of “symbols” this with a simple example: “Without the letters of condolence, telegrams of congratulations and even occasional postcards, the friendship of a separated friend is not a social reality. It has no existence without the rites of friendship” (2002:77). If we think about “secular rituals” as Moore and Myerhoff (1977) explain we can indeed see this applying to a number of secular ritual such as graduations, marriages, legal proceedings and the like. Without ritual, they would simply not constitute “social realities”. Furthermore, as I showcased in the literature review on the history of American women domesticity, we know that cleaning practices are not mere attempts to attain a certain level of health, but also a certain level of social status and a moral standing *that we want to communicate to others*. Beyond health, this “communication” would simply not be possible if our cleaning actions weren’t full of meaningful “rituals” and “symbolic acts”. Douglas (2002) also specifically looks at cleaning in this way: “If we honestly reflect on our busy scrubbing and cleanings in this light we know that we are not mainly trying to avoid disease. We are separating, placing boundaries, making visible statements about the home that we are intending to create out of the material house.” (2002:77).

As we see in Victor Turner (1986), we can also look at *ritual as a dramatic performance*. Mary Douglas (2002) describes ritual similarly: “It is also creative at the level of performance” (2002:79). I like this construct a lot since, in my view, it allows for an interpretation of ritual that is both structured and creative. Their discourse does not engage in the endless debate of whether it is “structure” or “indeterminacy” what defines social action. Rather, they acknowledge the indeterminate, creative, ever-changing nature of the *contents* of performances while recognizing that they are also never amorphous. If we again consider the analogy of theatrical performances, it is fairly easy to see that they are “structured” in a broader sense: they have a beginning, a climax and an end. Turner further expands this idea in his

book *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (1974:23-59), where he proposes a structure to “social dramas” composed by four main phases: (1) “Breach”; (2) “Crisis”; (3) “Redressive action”; and (4) “Reintegration”. He further explains these phases in 1986, characterizing them in terms of individual states of consciousness. While previous, “modern” approaches to the understanding of individuals focused on cognition and rationality, he follows the “post-modern” turn in social sciences, placing it in equal footing with volition and affect. In his framework, he describes the dominant modes of individual consciousness in each phase. For example, while he sees the “breach” phase dominated by individual affect, she sees all three playing (or having the same potential to play) during “crisis”. He further explains:

The social drama is an eruption from the level surface of ongoing social life, with its interactions, transactions, reciprocities, its customs for making regular, orderly sequences of behavior. It is propelled by passions, compelled by volitions, overmastering at times any rational considerations. Yet reason plays a major role in the settlement of disputes which take the sociodramatic form. Particularly during the redressive phase-though here again nonrational factors may come into play if rituals are performed (performance here being in terms of regularizing process) to redress the disputes. (1986:90)

I believe this is a particularly useful framework to the analysis household cleaning rituals as “social dramas” where there are breaches, crises and endless attempts to restoration. Within this structure I am most interested in the “crisis” and “redressive” phases, for I agree that it is the indeterminate, disordered, uncertain, marginal, “liminal” nature of “crisis” what makes it fertile ground for creative processes. As Mary Douglas would put it: “disorder spoils pattern, it also provides the material of pattern (...) disorder by implication is unlimited, no pattern has been realized in it, but its potential for pattern is indefinite (...) It symbolizes both danger and power. *Ritual recognizes the potency of disorder.*” (Douglas 2002:117, emphasis added). As such, it is a mistake to view rituals as static or even cyclic. Much on the contrary, rituals and ceremonies should be seen as playing a critical role both as regularizing and creative agents in social action.

Sally F. Moore also looks at the regularizing effects of *ritual as process*. In her book *Law as Process* (1978:32-53), she notes that “there seems to be a continuous struggle between the pressure toward establishing and/or maintaining order and regularity, and the underlying circumstance that

counteractivities, discontinuities, variety, and complexity make social life inherently unsuited to total ordering” (1978:39). Furthermore, she challenges the social researcher to consider “the underlying quality of social life... to be one of *theoretically absolute indeterminacy*...presumed to be indeterminate except in so far as culture and organized or patterned social relationships make it determinate” (1978:49, emphasis added). This perspective is important as we consider the motives for social action. If indeed we assume that social life is at least theoretically indeterminate and chaotic, then it is fair to conclude that one of the basic aims of human action is to be able to determine it, to control it, to manipulate it, create from it, give it shape and meaning, find himself in it. As Moore explains, “whether rituals, laws, rules, customs, symbols, ideological models, and so on, are old and legitimated by tradition, or newly forged and legitimated by a revolutionary social source, they constitute the explicit cultural framework through which the attempt is made to fix social life, to keep it from slipping into the sea of indeterminacy” (1978:41). In other words, rituals are also *human declarations against indeterminacy* and this is precisely why they are so central to social life, as Douglas (2002) suggests. They are also a source of comfort in an otherwise unpredictable social world. Here is what one of my older participants said on this particular aspect of ritual: “a lot of how a person *finds their way in the world* is in their *rituals* and in the things that make them *comfortable*. I may be wasting, probably, a lot of toilet paper, but it's what makes me comfortable so it's what moves on” (emphases added).

With these assumptions in mind, Moore (1978) also proposes another interesting analytical framework. She divides the analysis of social action in terms of three main components: (1) “processes of regularization”; (2) “processes of situational adjustment”; and (3) the factor of “indeterminacy”. With the latter already clarified, her definition of the first two components deserves to be cited at length:

It is possible to interpret behavior in terms of two kinds of processes: the first are the kind in which people try to control their situations by struggling against indeterminacy, by trying to fix social reality, to harden it, to give it form and order and predictability. These are the kinds of processes that produce ‘conscious models’ that produce rules and organizations and customs and symbols and rituals and categories and seek to make them durable. This is done so that the individuals involved can hold constant some of the factors with which they must deal. A framework of rules or understandings has certain significant advantages. It means that every instance and every interaction does not have to be completely renegotiated in a totally open field of possibilities (...) We have called these attempts to crystallize and concretize social reality, to

make it determinate and firm, “processes of regularization”. The second, the countervailing processes, are those by means of which people arrange their immediate situations (and/or express their feelings and conceptions) by exploiting the indeterminacies in the situation, or by generating such indeterminacies, or by reinterpreting or redefining the rules or relationships. (1978:50)

But the definition of these terms is not nearly as interesting as the possibilities within them, their interaction. For instance, strategies of “situational adjustment”, if repeated enough, can become regularizing and regularized. On the other hand, regularizing rules, if altered enough and new rules are formed for every situation, become elements of “situational adjustment”. Moreover, in his book *The Ritual Process* (1969), Victor Turner makes reference to yet another interesting dynamic between the two. As he examines the rituals and society of the Ndembu in Zambia, he concludes that there are structured societies as well as “communitas”, “structure and anti-structure” in continuous dialectical relationship. He explains that even if structured societies are considered as more committed or prone to “processes of regularization”, as situations and unforeseen events emerge, these societies may eventually become less structured in terms of their original regulations, principles, etc. Conversely, societies that are more committed to indeterminacy may tend to become more structured, if they are to endure over time. Whichever the case, as humans attempt to subdue their rather chaotic affairs, they engage in both kinds of strategies. Therefore, if we indeed assume that social reality is fluid and indeterminate, then “regularizing processes can be analyzed as they are tempered by processes of situational adjustment and both may be shown to be operating in a partially indeterminate social medium” (Moore 1978:52). Rituals are a great example of such regularizing processes, an “*especially dramatic* attempt to bring some particular part of life firmly and definitively into orderly control (...) [that] frequently interrupts or manages or accompanies various forms of *disorder*, ranging from the ordinary rough and tumble confusion of *everyday life*” (Moore and Myerhoff 1977:3, 17, emphases added). In my view, this is precisely what everyday cleaning rituals attempt to do, making Moore’s analytical framework especially useful in the analysis of everyday cleaning actions.

Finally, one of the most fascinating aspects of ritual action is, in my opinion, the unique effect it can have on its actors. As we will see below, the symbolic, regularizing and creative nature of ritual can

have the power to produce a concentration so extreme in the actors that there can be a loss of self-consciousness, in the words of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1975), a state of “flow” that results in flawless and fulfilling performances. In his article *Play and Intrinsic Rewards* (1975), Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes this state of “flow” in detail using the testimonials of individuals involved in various “play-forms” such as basketball, rock-climbing, chess, dance, music, etc. He defines *flow* as “the wholistic sensation present when we act with *total involvement*...the state in which action follows upon action according to an internal logic which seems to need *no conscious intervention* on our part...a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which we *feel in control* of our actions, and in which there is *little distinction between self and environment*; between *stimulus and response*; or between *past, present, and future*” (1975:43, emphases added). Furthermore, Csikszentmihalyi does call out ritual (in its religious sense) as one of the forms of structured experience within which “flow” can occur.

More specifically, Csikszentmihalyi describes six elements that characterize the “flow” experience. Interestingly, Mary Douglas (2002) also seems to have found most of these elements in the ritual experience. Next I will cite each of these six elements of “flow”, following some of them with related citation from Douglas (2002). I am doing this to demonstrate that much of what Csikszentmihalyi found in “play-forms”, Douglas had indentified in ritual nearly a decade earlier. The six elements of *flow* are: (1) a feeling of *merging action with awareness*; in this, Douglas also found that ritual “can mysteriously help the co-ordination of brain and body” (2002: 78); (2) a *centering of attention*, by focusing on a limited stimulus field; Douglas explains that “ritual aid us in selecting experiences for concentrated attention (...) ritual focuses attention by framing; it enlivens the memory and links the present with the relevant past” (2002:78-79); (3) a *loss of ego* or “fusion with the world”; (4) a sense of *control of action and environment*; which we already know is one of the main objectives of ritual; (5) coherent *demands for action and clear feedback*; and (6) is *autotelic* in nature, appearing to need no goals or rewards outside of itself; in this, Douglas explains that “instrumental efficacy is not the only kind of efficacy to be derived from... symbolic action. The other kind is achieved in the action itself, in the assertions it makes and the experience which bears its imprinting” (2002:84).

Additionally, Csikszentmihalyi proposes an empirical model to help describe experiences of “flow” versus non-flow (see Figure 9 below).

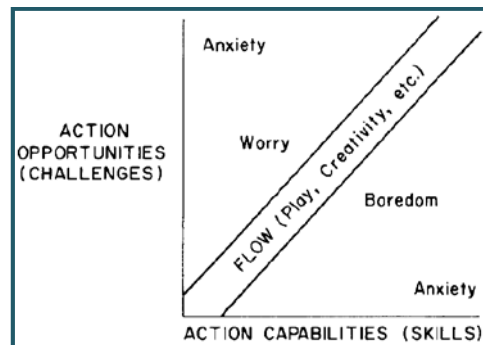


Figure 9 Model of the Flow State (Csikszentmihalyi 1975:56)

In this model, he characterizes these experiences in terms of the “action opportunities” or challenges versus the “action capabilities” or skills of the actor. For instance, when the actor “perceives” his action capabilities to be significantly below the challenges in front of him, anxiety develops. The same feeling of anxiety arises when the actor perceives that his action capabilities are underutilized or significantly above the demands of the task at hand. These extremes, when taken to a lesser degree, produce feelings of worry or boredom respectively. Finally, the state of “flow” is achieved when the action opportunities seem to perfectly match the action capabilities of the actor.

An important limitation of this model is the fact that one cannot necessarily define flow objectively; it depends entirely on the actor’s *perception* of what the challenges and capabilities are. Nevertheless, the model is useful in explaining and hypothesizing strategies to make a given experience more enjoyable, falling closer to such state of “flow”. For example, in a given situation, one can think of adjusting a feeling of anxiety or worry by lowering the perceived challenges of the given task or situation. This model also helps us visualize the immense potential that can be found in “flow” activities, like art, which seem to have “infinite ceilings”, allowing for “an indefinite increase in the development of skills or in the ability to organize experience” (Csikszentmihalyi 1975:59). In this sense, Mary Douglas (2002) again realizes the potential that rituals can have in creating and recreating experience: “In all this it aids perception... Or rather, it changes perception because it changes the selective principles...It can permit

knowledge of what would otherwise not be known at all. It does not merely externalize experience, bringing it into the light of day, but it modifies experience in so expressing it.” (Douglas 2002:79)

With all of this in mind, I think it is important to realize the potential that can be found in understanding household cleaning actions as ritual, especially if we focus them in a particular stimulus field such as the kitchen. As we have seen, cleaning rituals are also inherently symbolic. They can facilitate creative processes of regularization and of situational adjustment; and these, in turn, have the potential to enhance concentration to the point of total involvement and even enjoyment. Lastly, if the experience of cleaning is made such that actors can respond to greater challenges with increasing skills, receiving clear and unambiguous feedback along the way, not only we can make such experiences more enjoyable, but we can also take the “value” of the experience beyond extrinsic rewards such as money and status, and into more intrinsic motivations and rewards.

4.03.2 The Action: Theoretical Orientation

As seen in the literature review, it is reasonable to analyze cleaning actions in the kitchen as rituals. Furthermore, cleaning rituals can be understood as dramatic performances, which can be divided in the phases of: (1) “Breach”; (2) “Crisis”; (3) “Redressive action”; and (4) “Reintegration” (Turner 1974). These cleaning performances can also be viewed as processes that attempt to counteract the inherent “indeterminacy” of everyday life. These are “processes of regularization” and “processes of situational adjustment”, both of which are in dialectical relationship (Moore 1978). Finally, the structure and creativity that can result from rituals have the potential to elicit a state of full enjoyment and engagement in the participating actors, a feeling of “flow” and intrinsic reward (Csikszentmihalyi 1975). Altogether, these constitute the theoretical framework and the lenses through which I analyzed my observations of morning and evening “scenes” in my participant’s kitchens.

In looking at the “crisis”, “redressive action” and “reintegration” phases of the cleaning actions I observed, I referred to Moore’s analytical framework of action against “indeterminacy”. As Turner (1986) suggests, I placed higher attention to processes of “situational adjustment” and of “regularization”

occurring during the performance phases of “crisis” and “redressive action”, respectively. While evaluating the “reintegration” phase, I particularly observed and asked questions around the results achieved: Was the task a success or a failure? How did they know? Also, although Turner (1986) speaks of this more in terms of social conflict, I was particularly interested in those instances, objects, surfaces or cleaning situations that resulted in “schism” versus “reintegration”. Finally, because “crisis” is characterized by its chaotic, disordered and ambiguous nature, I also considered its potential for eliciting ritualistic action, “non-rational” activity or even a state of “flow” that resembles the experiences that Csikszentmihalyi describes in 1975. I am particularly interested in understanding this aspect, since most of the models currently used in other social sciences only emphasize the rational components of human behavior. While I saw and elicited rationality in my participants, I also saw non-rationality at play. Like Turner (1974), I am also inspired by Phillip Gulliver (1971) when he warns us against views that assume

a rationality in men that we know by experience is *often absent*. Men can misconceive a situation and its possibilities, they can be stimulated by high emotion or by depression to make moves and decisions that otherwise they might not, they can be stupid, obstinate, short-sighted, or they may be calculating, alert, intelligent, or something in between. Yet social scientists often ignore these critical factors which affect decision-makers (1971:356-357, emphasis added)

Finally, I considered the states of “flow” described by Csikszentmihalyi (1975) as particularly induced by ritual. Specifically, I looked for the following experience traits: (1) the “merging of action and awareness”; (2) the “centering of attention”; (3) the “loss of ego”; (4) the perceived “control of action and environment”; and (5) clarity of the “demands for action and feedback”. Although Csikszentmihalyi (1975) suggests that it is hard to objectively characterize these traits, and I agree, I still reflected on participants’ experiences in light of a couple of key cues.

First, I considered moments when the participant seemed to be in an “*autopilot*” state, not asking themselves too many questions about what they were doing or why they were doing it. I tried to ask after-the-fact questions about such instances, which they might have or might have not recognized. I also attempted to gauge their *perceived ability* to perform the tasks at hand and the level of structure found in their cleaning actions and choices.

Second, based on Csikszentmihalyi's insight that "there are play activities which rely on physical danger to produce centering of attention, and hence flow" (1975:48), I also inquired about the *level of "danger"* that participants associated with the tasks and messes they were dealing with.

Third, I considered the level of *negotiation needed* while going about their cooking and cleaning tasks. As Csikszentmihalyi suggests, "activities which allow flow to occur...usually *don't require any negotiation*...The participants need no self to bargain with about what should or should not be done" (1975:49, emphasis added). Thus, I attempted to delineate what were these areas of "negotiation" in the kitchen cleaning field. Some of this I was able to discuss with participants directly, but most of it came from physical cues and my review of the video recordings I produced. This is because in a state of "loss of ego" I expected that participants would in fact be unable to articulate or remember certain instances of the action. As Csikszentmihalyi explains: "What is usually lost in flow is not the awareness of one's body or of one's functions, but only the *self-construct*, the intermediary which one learns to interpose between *stimulus and response*" (1975:49, second emphasis added).

Forth and last, I also inquired about *moments of worry* and moments of confidence and certainty. I tried to learn as much as possible about what was the *expected results* of every cleaning action and how did they know whether those were achieved or not. In this, I'm following Csikszentmihalyi's suggestion that flow experiences also tend to provide "clear, unambiguous feedback to a person's actions...In the artificially reduced reality of a flow episode it is clear what is "good" and what is "bad"."(1975:52).

In all of this I am agreeing with Turner (1974) when he says that "social dramas and social enterprises – as well as other processual units- represent sequences of social events, which, seen retrospectively by an observer, can be shown to have structure" (1974:35), even if temporal. Figure 10 below summarizes the principles and theories I am considering in my attempt to analyze the structure of observed cleaning behaviors:

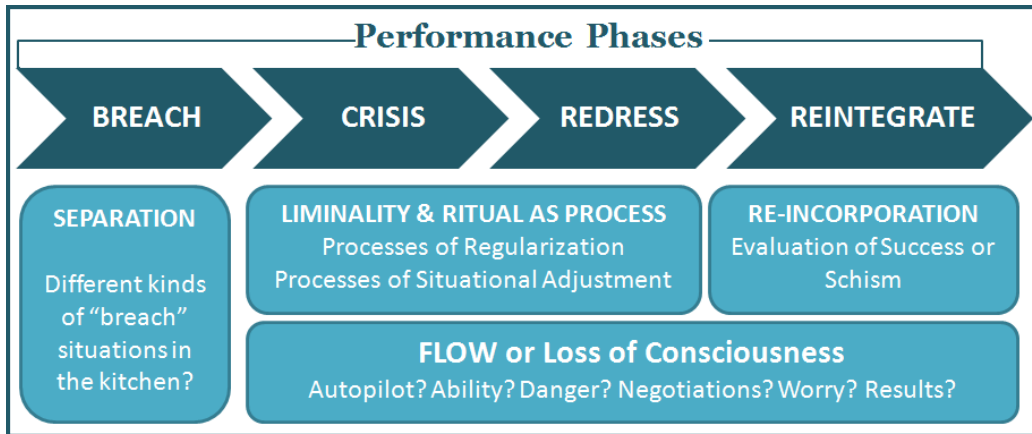


Figure 10 Performance Phases and Theory

4.03.3 The Action: Research Findings and Discussion

The following discusses research findings from observations of all four panelists during their morning and evening kitchen routines. I will organize these using Victor Turner's performance phases of Breach, Crisis, Redressive Action and Reintegration.

4.03.3.1 Breach

In his book *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (1974:23-59), Victor Turner defines *breach* as a "deliberate nonfulfillment of some crucial norm regulating the intercourse of the parties" (1974:38). In the general structure of rituals, this would entail a *separation* or withdrawal from the previous status. Although with these definitions Victor Turner is primarily referring to *social dramas* as "public episodes of tensional irruption" (1974:33), I am adopting this concept to tension situations that I observed in my participants' kitchens. As suggested in the literature review on the history of American kitchens and women domesticity, household kitchens have evolved to become a room central to daily family activities and the forming of relationships. If I look at my participants' kitchens as places that are somewhat "sacred" to them, a especial room in the home, a place of ritual with its own "unquestionable" rules, then "breach" situations were not only possible, they were constant. This is because, I would argue, all of the "messes" produced by the sheer traffic and use of their kitchens were, most fundamentally, endangering and defiling a "sacred" place; and, as Mary Douglas would say, "For us

sacred things and places are to be protected from defilement” (2002:9). This is not just part of my theoretical discourse. Most participants employ an equally strong language while referring to *their* kitchens: “It never stays clean enough for me. I will clean, and then someone will come in and *terrorize my kitchen*, and then I have to come back in and clean it again. That’s probably the biggest thing. That’s *my biggest arch nemesis* of the kitchen” (emphases added). Participants also referred to the kitchen as a place that *must* be cleaned, “purified”, before they felt they could even engage in their daily cooking rituals. Here is how the older mother explains it: “When I walk in *my kitchen*...I don’t want it to be pots and pans all over the place. Because I can’t go in there, pull food out, and cook in a dirty kitchen. It just doesn’t-- it just psychologically doesn’t-- *I can’t wrap my mind around it*” (emphases added). The younger mother also expressed similar feelings: “my thing is *I can’t cook unless it’s clean*, unless *things are where they need to be*. That’s why I clean as I go” (emphases added) and “the kitchen to me is the number one priority. I feel like if the kitchen is clean, I can relax on the other stuff. It doesn’t bother me as much”. As such, messes produced in the kitchen and anything that came in contact with them required constant “purification” and “separation” from the rest as they withdrew from their previous, more “pure” condition. In light of these things and if I make the assumptions suggested above, then most if not all activities conducted in the kitchen constitute some kind of “breach” activity, invariably followed by crisis, which has to be restituted.

As I observed patterns of action occurring in the kitchen, I identified three basic kinds of “breach situations”: (1) “unexpected breach”; (2) “purposeful breach”; and (3) what I am calling “cumulative breach”. In the following paragraphs I will explain what I mean by each of these based on my observations during week day mornings and afternoons in my participants’ homes as well as their own descriptions.

To start with, I am defining *unexpected breaches* in the kitchen as those that occur by accident, mainly spills and messes caused by pets, kids or unanticipated human error, like cleaning a mess with “the wrong thing”, accidental staining or streaking of a surface, etc. These are “unexpected” in the sense that they can occur at any given point in time and participants are not physically and/or mentally prepared

for them in advance. They might have not experienced it before altogether. “Unexpected breach” situations seemed to be most prominent in the homes of younger participants. This seemed driven not only by a relatively lower level of cleaning experience versus their older counterparts, but was also proportional to the number of people involved in a given situation. Therefore, the younger participant with four children would be the one that experienced most of these “breaches” on a daily basis. Both my observations of cleaning scenes in her kitchen as well as her two-week diary homework recording different kinds of messes confirmed this. Not only a great majority of her messes were described as “accidents”, but her lists were at least twice as long as any other participant in this study. Also, regardless of age, the level of concern caused by “unexpected breaches” seemed higher among participants who had children versus those who didn’t. As explained before, both participants with children saw this as a normal part of their “role” as mothers. In general, unexpected breaches seemed to be considered a “normal”, though not necessarily pleasant, part of the role they saw themselves playing. But while the older mother would recall these with some amusement and a sense of accomplishment, the younger mother would still be somewhat overwhelmed by the fact. Here is an example of an “unexpected breach” as described by the younger mother of four: “...kids have decided to make their own meal in the kitchen, and we've got peanut butter smeared on everything, and it's on the floor, there's a gob on the paper towels. It's just everywhere (...) It is so quick to watch four kids make a mess. It's amazing how quick they can mess things up”. On the other hand, participants living alone seemed to have a higher level of tolerance for these, except when “spectators” entered the scene, the older participant being a little more conscious of the “danger” that some of these breaches could pose to health. Also, regardless of age, the amount and magnitude of unexpected breaches will increase with the presence of pets. Lastly, I want to clarify what I mean by “unexpected”. I do not mean that, in the general sense, they don’t expect a cat or a kid to make a mess. It is unexpected because of the specific point in time it happens and/or the specific situation at hand. Again, this is best explained by another example provided by the young mother of four: “My daughter took a Magic Marker the other day because she had watched a movie where they were measuring themselves on the wall. So right in my front hall, she took a Magic Marker and measured

everyone. I said, thank you for using the Sharpie, which we usually keep those put up, but somehow she found it”.

Purposeful breaches are the most common, the result of premeditated activity in the kitchen. These kinds of breaches are expected either because of their frequency of occurrence or by experience. I had the opportunity to witness several of these instances, for which “redressive action” seemed immediate and nearly automatic. Participants were also most descriptive of these situations, in a somewhat matter-of-factly way. Those were the examples that seemed to be most top of mind. Here is for instance how the young participant without children described her morning coffee messes: “Yeah. I spill my coffee every single morning. You can see there's coffee-- there are coffee grounds [there]”. The older participant with a son also described “everyday” instances where spills and splatters would certainly occur: “if I'm doing soups, and it boils over... or just sometimes just cooking or making tuna salad, if it spills out of the bowl”. Lastly, here is another example provided by the older participant without children which, although not an everyday “purposeful breach”, is an activity she is most familiar with: “obviously, if you've ever made macaroons or Christmas cookies, you know what that's like. It's just a huge, tremendous [mess]”. Similar to “unexpected breaches”, the amount and complexity of “purposeful breaches” would depend on the number of people involved, but also to the given occasion and to the time of the day. For example, participants living alone and without children would engage in more complex “purposeful breaches” if they were, for instance, cooking for someone other than just themselves. I witnessed this with the younger participant, when a friend came to visit one afternoon, as well as with the older one, when she decided to make a bigger meal to share with me as a “surprise”. Also, invariably, all participants seem to avoid any complex “breaches” during morning routines. While observing their everyday actions in the kitchen, I noticed that they all avoided any “purposeful” complexities at this time of the day and had developed compensating behaviors accordingly. Especially during weekdays, breakfasts would be very simple, if at all. For example, the older mother would have a yogurt and a piece of cheese, both pre-packed, which she ate from their original package. The older participant without children would also serve herself a plate of yogurt with some fruit on top, which she pre-washed and drained with a paper towel. In general, they both

spoke of a time in life where everyday instances would be more complex but, “at their age”, this didn’t make sense anymore. They also seemed concerned with eating simple but healthier foods. As for the younger participants, it was interesting to see how the “normal” morning routines significantly changed with the end of the school year. The mother of four had all kids at the house and made a big breakfast for them during my visit: scrambled eggs, sausage, toasts, sugared strawberries and juice. Interestingly, she would only speak of breakfast in the context of her children. In fact, in the time I was there, she carried around a mug with diet coke and only ate three pieces of sausage at different points in time while cleaning up and talking with her kids, which were all sitting in the smaller table inside of the kitchen space. She was also very specific in clarifying that what I was witnessing would be more of a “Sunday breakfast” and that during a normal school year morning she would send off the kids to school with much simpler meals:

Usually we do a quick breakfast and then out the door. Usually, it's a Pop Tart on a paper towel, send them down with it, or sometimes they'll do cereal in a bag, but we usually don't do a whole bread. That's for the weekends. Usually Sunday, I always make a big breakfast (...) I figured today [would make a bigger breakfast], so it would be a little more interesting. Because otherwise it's pretty boring, just like cereal and pop tarts and nothing really-- no big mess or anything. But generally it doesn't get too messy. Because usually we're so quick in the morning... So it's usually pretty crazy. And food is like, sometimes, they'll just have a drink because they can eat at school if they want to. And sometimes they don't even do breakfast, depending on how crazy the day is.

While visiting the younger participant without kids, she also had what to her was a “bigger breakfast”: a bowl of “Lucky Charms” cereal and a cup of coffee. Similar to the younger mom, she described bigger breakfasts happening primarily on the weekends, when she would sometimes make “pancakes and things like that” and eat it while watching TV. Once again, her school year morning routines would be much simpler and quicker:

I have to be at work-- I have to leave around 7:00 a.m. which, despite having worked where I do for five years, I am not used to it. So I usually get up after my alarm goes off, like, 15 times. I get dressed, I brush my teeth. *If it's a good day*, I will make coffee or grab a granola bar out of my cabinet and then I will leave and that's it. Maybe from the time I get up to the time I leave, like 15 minutes. I try to make it as quick as possible (emphasis added).

In short, all participants aimed to make their *everyday* “purposeful breaches” in the morning as simple as possible, whereas the afternoons would be relatively more complex, especially for the mother of four. She made hamburgers from ground beef and gave them to her husband, who cooked them in the backyard grill. She pulled corn out of the cob with her daughter and boiled it. She poured baked beans from two large cans in a bowl and cooked them in the oven. She prepared the buns with mayonnaise, put the hamburgers on top with cheese and ketchup and complemented the meal with pre-made potato salad she had on the fridge. Unlike breakfast, they all ate at the dinner table, engaging in dynamic conversation, paper towels flying everywhere. During this time it truly felt like they had forgotten my presence altogether. On the other hand, the older mother had a very different system for herself. She would pre-cook several entrees on Fridays and freeze them for the following week, so she was able to quickly prepare them and eat right after work. These included green beans, sausages, cabbage, squash, chicken and others. During my visit, she boiled four eggs, picked one to eat and complemented it with sausage and green beans, both of which she pulled off the fridge, pre-cooked. She ate at her family room on a tray, while watching TV. She recalled making bigger meals when her son used to live with her, like fried chicken, which would be much messier than what she does now. Finally, both women without children also had bigger dinners in the afternoon which resulted in relatively more complex “purposeful breaches” versus the mornings but, as mentioned before, these occasions seemed to be “special”: dinner for the visiting friend (strawberry salad, baked bread) and “surprise” dinner to share with me (chicken and broccoli penne pasta).

Last of all, *cumulative breaches* are those that take time to form and show up as a “danger” to the kitchen space. Dust accumulations, sink or toilet “rings”, dirt from the outside accumulating on carpets or the floor, buildup on baseboards and crevices, buildup around the faucet or in the stove, the inside of refrigerators, of trashcans and of cabinets were all examples that participants gave of breaches that are “cumulative” or require more time to develop. A peculiarity I found with “cumulative breaches” and their resulting crises is that cues to action seemed highly sensorial or normative. More specifically, they would feel prompted to clean based on how these surfaces or objects *looked and smelled* or by “conventional

knowledge” that they posed some kind of danger. Although this kind of “breach” is the result of everyday activity, “redressive action” to the resulting crises did not occur every day. In many cases, participants would not clean until it was clearly revealed sensorially: “I mean, you can see-- this toilet gets rings in it, so you can see that it's not all white porcelain anymore”. Another example of “cumulative breach” would occur by know of the continuous use of some surface in a particular way, even if not sensorially perceivable, it would be considered “dangerous”. The older participant with a son was very descriptive of this in our taxonomy for kinds of clean. For instance, she separated different kinds of clean in the bathroom based on contact with different body parts. Although a sensorial cue might not be present, these surfaces needed to be cleaned in a certain way and with certain frequency because of their continued use and “defilement” by some part of the body.

As I discussed “cumulative breaches” with participants, I also learned that most of these belonged to cleaning that was planned, like “spring cleaning”, “weekend cleaning” or “having-company” cleaning. Finally, regardless of age and of the number of people involved, mothers seem to care a lot more about “cumulative breaches” versus participants without children. They would address these with higher frequency relative to other participants and/or would have developed strategies to limit their imminent development. Participants without children, on the other hand, admitted to engage in practices that “masked” these cumulative breaches, such as the use of scents or spraying product so that it “smelled like clean”; bleach, Lysol and the like. These participants would mostly respond to cumulative breaches when they were inevitably exposed sensorially, while the mothers would be more triggered by time and frequency of use. That said, because the objective of this research was to understand “everyday”, week day morning and evening scenes in the kitchen, I only had the opportunity to observe “redressive actions” following “unexpected breaches” and “purposeful breaches”, which I will develop more in the following sections.

4.03.3.2 Crisis

After “breach, Victor Turner (1974) describes “a phase of mounting *crisis*” which has “liminal characteristics, since it is a threshold between more or less stable phases of the social process” (1974:38-39). Once again, I am applying this concept to the kitchen as a “sacred” social field that has suffered “breach” and defilement. In fact, all of the messes produced and all of the surfaces affected by the activities in the kitchen also have “liminal characteristics”: they are all ambiguous, out of place, in-between, and composite. The tomato sauce, once dripped in the kitchen countertop, is no longer considered “food”, no longer nutritious, no longer appealing. It becomes something that belongs to the outside versus inside of the house; to nature, not to culture. It violates “crucial norms” of hygiene and of “good manners”. It represents danger and therefore must be “separated” from the rest; and the surfaces and objects it affects must be purified and restored by ritual. The gravity of these “crises” can be then understood by the nature of the messes involved and the kind of purification processes that are prescribed to them.

To understand “crisis”, one of the exercises that I did with my participants at their homes was to build a taxonomy or “map” for the different kinds of “dirty” and the different kinds of “clean”. I also had them fill out “mess diaries” for two weeks, where they recorded some of the daily messes they had experienced in the kitchen. Altogether, these painted a picture of the way participants viewed their “crises” in the kitchen, which I will describe in detail in the following paragraphs.

In her book *Purity and Danger* (1966/2002), Mary Douglas provides a thorough description of Western ideas about what we call “dirt”. While it is clear that these have been greatly influenced by Louis Pasteur’s development of the Germ Theory of Disease in the nineteenth century, the idea of “dirt” is a much older concept. Douglas challenges us to think about dirt beyond our “sanitation-based” paradigms for it, as she explains:

Our idea of dirt is dominated by the knowledge of pathogenic organisms. The bacterial transmission of disease was a great nineteenth-century discovery. It produced the most radical revolution in the history of medicine. So much has it transformed our lives that it is difficult to think of dirt except in the context of pathogenicity. Yet obviously our ideas of dirt are not so

recent. We must be able to make the effort to think back beyond the last 150 years and to analyse the bases of dirt-avoidance, before it was transformed by bacteriology...If we can *abstract pathogenicity and hygiene* from our notion of dirt, we are left with the old definition of dirt as *matter out of place*...Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements (2002:45)

So, as I took on the challenge to analyze the different classifications my participants came up with for “kinds of clean” and “kinds of dirt”, I made sure to consider both their ideas about hygiene as well as their “respect for conventions” (Douglas 2002:9).

First of all, I looked for any higher level patterns present in their taxonomies. Interestingly, younger participants organized the “kinds of clean” by gradients or “levels” of clean. Their descriptions included the extremes of “filthy” or “hoarders” and “super clean” or “church lady glove clean”. In between was a “kids did the cleaning”, or “speed clean”, which was a “game” that the younger mother created for her kids to clean. They also both had a “having-company” kind of clean and an “everyday” kind of clean. The difference between them was in their level of involvement associated with all of these kinds of clean. While the younger participant without kids described these in general, “hypothetical” terms or in terms of “other people”, the younger mother of four described them all in terms of the chores and things that *she* had to do. She also emphasized *her doing* during our interview: “I would say it's more of just a feeling. It's just a knowing. I know that I did it, so I know that it's clean, so I feel better. I feel like I can relax. Otherwise, I feel like I can't relax. I need to do that. I need to fix that”. This particular aspect was also consistent with the older mother, except for the fact that she did not do “levels” or “gradients”, but her classifications and descriptions of “clean” and “dirty” were *all* written in terms of places in the house, objects and surfaces *she* has to clean. To her, there was no such thing as a clean “gradient”; she would maintain her home clean to its best every day. Lastly, the older participant without children seemed to have developed her classifications considering a little bit of both: they reflected her practices and, to an extent, “gradients” as well. She had “hidden germs” or “peripheral clean” in one extreme, a kind of clean she felt she didn't attend to often enough; “obvious clean”, which resembled the “everyday clean” described by the younger participants; and “fake clean” which was at the other extreme and she admitted to sometimes do as well. This last one refers to the “masking” of messes with scents, etc. In fact,

something that seemed uniquely consistent with both participants without children was their explanations of clean in terms of visual, olfactory and tactile sensorial cues. Lastly, in general, participants were eloquent in describing the gravity and distinction of these “crises”, with the worst situations being “hoarders” (extreme clutter and carelessness), as described by the younger participant without kids; “filthy” (peanut butter on the floor, or pet messes), as described by the younger participant with kids; and “germs/bacteria” as described by all. All of these required increased thoroughness and added steps or tools in their cleaning routines. Consistent with Douglas (2002), not all classifications fell into the hygiene/sanitation paradigm, which is mostly concerned with the transmission of disease via germs and bacteria.

These more general “clean” classifications became even clearer as they related to classifications of dirt and messes. Across all participants, I identified five different categories of “dirt” and “messes”. These were: (1) matter out of place; (2) things that belong outside/inside of the home perimeter; (3) messes associated with the body; (4) formless, ambiguous or composite substances or materials; and (5) “invisible” dirt/germs/bacteria, which required sanitation.

As for *matter out of place*, this did not only mean “clutter”. One of the best examples was water. Although water was considered a cleansing agent by all participants, “standing water” would be dirty: standing water around the sink, standing water in the bathroom. Water was also considered to be sometimes contaminated by agents of the body, by food and by “chemicals”. As Douglas would say, “What is clean in relation to one thing may be unclean in relation to another, and vice versa” (Douglas 2002:10). Another example was cat hair which, as much as the pet owners loved their cats, was considered “dirty” the second it hit the floors and surfaces. These kinds of classifications were very popular across participants and also well explained by Douglas (2002):

It is a relative idea. Shoes are not dirty in themselves, but it is dirty to place them on a dining table; food is not dirty in itself, but it is dirty to leave cooking utensils in the bedroom, or food bespattered on clothing; similarly, bathroom equipment in the drawing room; clothing lying on chairs; outdoor things indoors; upstairs things downstairs; under-clothing appearing where the over-clothing should be, and so on. In short, *our pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications* (2002:45, emphasis added)

Douglas' explanation came to life in the descriptions of the "kinds of dirty" the young mother had to manage. She said: "Putting toys up, putting clothes away, *making sure everything is in its proper place*. I think that's our biggest issue here is people will take their shoes off, throw them in the middle of the room, throw their book bag down, get their toys out, leave some toys there, so it's always getting things *back to where they belong*" (emphases added). Similarly, "out of place matter" was also portrayed in the response of my younger participant without children. When prompted what "counted" as dirt, she said: "Food scraps that fall on the floor, crumbs. I'd just say stuff tracked in from outside...Salt in the winter (...) hair on the floor". In fact, to my surprise, there was also a lot of discussion across all participants in terms of things that belonged inside versus outside of the house as a special kind of "matter out of place" that deserved its own classification. Below are a couple of examples where this was described by the three other participants:

Yeah. I mean, even you walking in here, you don't know that it's particles-- like me-- but you're bringing something in from outside, and it's on the floor, as well. Someone could have grabbed, you know, dust from your car. If you're a smoker, that's dirty...Outside-- I guess, elements is really the best word for it-- elements coming inside.

A lot of times, I'll use house shoes because people just drag things in from outside constantly, and there's always someone coming in and out, in and out. And with the dogs, too, I feel like they bring stuff in. So that's a big one...

When you walk outside, who knows what-- if you just walk from here to the sidewalk, I left the back door open, so when my friends, the deer, come by, you can take a lot at them. They're out there all the time.

Messes relating to the body were also mentioned by several participants. For instance, when I asked the younger participant without children how she knew a certain surface in the bathroom was clean, she replied: "There are no *bodily functions* that occur right there, so that probably makes it cleaner" (emphasis added). The older participant without children also described this: "Like a toilet being dirty. That you know what's happening but because you it doesn't smell, and you can't see it, and things like that, you just know that things like that are bad. I hate to say this, but probably your hands too. I know a lot of people, they don't realize the back of your hands-- obviously, if your hands smell, you'll wash them. But most the time, I think your hands don't". Further, this particular kind of dirt was best explained by the

older mother: “Body dirty, like in your tub. Toilets, same-- you know, urine or whatever from there...I mean, like if you're in the toilet, that's a different dirty than the tub dirty. I don't know how you want to classify it, but that's a different dirty for me (...) Bathroom dirty, which will change depending on the body parts-- so, like, a toilet is not the same as the shower, for example”. In addition to these, she also referred to dirt associated with removing makeup and to washing your hands, for which she had disposable hand towels in the bathroom: “I think people just have gotten away from using towels in the bathroom-- other than drying my body. Nobody wants to use somebody else's towel”. In fact, different body parts in contact with different surfaces would also involve separate tools, cleaners and routines: “And I've got to come over here and spray it, let it sit. You can't use the same thing you use in there on that. You have to use that toilet bowl-- you've got to use a different rag for this. So you can't-- they're not interchanging. You're not using that toilet bowl cleaner to clean out your tub. So you've got two different things to clean with”. In fact, all participants did have different cleaning tools for the bathroom, which they kept separate from other parts of the house as well as within the different surfaces of the bathroom. References to fingerprints, marks and splatter involving human secretions and human interaction with objects and surfaces were also common among participants. These all seemed consistent to the “body” explanations provided by the older mother. Once again, Mary Douglas also has insight on this: “All margins are dangerous...We would expect the orifices of the body to symbolize its specially vulnerable points. Matter issuing from them is marginal stuff of the most obvious kind. Spittle, blood, milk, urine, faeces or tears by simply issuing forth have traversed the boundary of the body. So also have bodily parings, skin, nail, hair clippings and sweat” (Douglas 2002:150)

But the majority of the kitchen messes fell in the category of *ambiguous and composite substances*. These were, for the most part, the result of cooking different things in the kitchen. Food to be ingested was to be carefully separated from food that fell on counters, utensils, etc. As I mentioned before, any food that fell on a surface was no longer food and its definition would eventually become ambiguous: “dirt”, “filth”, “buildup”, etc. Some of these “filthy” substances and materials were also described as “sticky”. One of the participants even created a whole kind of “dirty” called “sticky dirty”.

This is what she said: “Yep. Things, the first thing you notice is that it's sticky; things that have melted, tops that have come off, and things that have made things sticky-- spilled juice, and milk, and things like that. They might not necessarily smell, but *you could tell that it's dirty, because it's sticky*” (emphasis added). The younger mother also made reference to this: “Anytime if you're walking and something is sticky on your foot or if you feel something, it needs to be cleaned. If there's anything sticky on a surface, it needs to be cleaned”. Mary Douglas also makes reference to the ambiguous nature of stickiness: “a state half-way between solid and liquid...like a cross-section in a process of change...a trap, it clings like a leech; it attacks the boundary between myself and it (...) an aberrant fluid or a melting solid” (Douglas 2002: 47-8). In all of this, stickiness is fundamentally ambiguous and therefore “dangerous”; analogous to how she would later describe the “liminal” status of persons requiring ritual: “Danger lies in transitional states, simply because transition is neither one state nor the next, it is undefinable...The *danger is controlled by ritual* which precisely separates him from his old status, segregates him for a time.” (Douglas 2002:119-120, emphasis added). I will explain how participants applied ritual to this and other “dangerous” substances and messes in the “Redressive Actions” subsection that follows.

Lastly, all participants made reference to “*hiding*” germs/bacteria. This was a very interesting kind of “dirt” because, although there could be a smell or a stain associated with them, for the most part, “germs” were odorless, invisible, and intangible. Participants just “knew” it was there based on what was previously in contact with the surface or object: a body part or bodily excretion, pets and animals, debris from the outside, meat juices, food juices sitting for a while, etc. Moist things were also thought to be “germier” than dry things, unless they were warm or hot. These all seem a somewhat arbitrary collection of items and ideas coming from some kind of “conventional knowledge” or source. It seemed that anything could be added to the list if new knowledge around hygiene became available. According to participants, there was a kind of “faith” involved, as much as “unquestionable” cleaning ritual: “We put a lot of emphasis on these products, and we *hope* and *pray* that they do what they say. But, of course, if somebody came in here with a magnifying glass, he'll be like oh, something's moving-- you know. So you can only get it as clean as you can get it” (emphases added). When prompted, most participants admitted

they weren't sure of how or when or if it was exactly killing the germs, but "trusted" that the product would do what it said it did: "You just trust it. You just trust the brand that you bought". Moore and Myerhoff (1977) eloquently explain why rituals are especially important in making these "ineffable and invisible" kinds of situations more controllable:

For rituals frequently portray unknown and unknowable conditions- ideals or imaginings- and make them tangible and present, despite the fact that they are ineffable and invisible (...) That is, of course the essence of obsessive compulsive rituals since the very thing which they explicitly banish is by implication their central concern (Freud 1907). Thus compulsive washing legitimates a covert preoccupation with dirt through its exaggerated concentration on cleanliness. Similarly the preoccupation of ritual with order and organization is an explicit turning away from an acknowledgement of the possibility of non-culture or open choice, or even chaos and disorder. Any such "indeterminacy" is excluded by ritual order often because its very *form*, let alone its message, inherently closes choice (1977:18)

As such, the rituals associated with the "germ/bacteria" kind of dirt were the most "regularized", diverse and, in my opinion, interesting. All participants had some kind of surface and/or air disinfectant they used in their cleaning rituals. However, using these specifically in the kitchen carried a unique set of rules and constraints. On one hand, there was disgust and fear in the possibility of ingesting dirt and bacteria: "I feel like if the counter was filthy and I was preparing food on it, that some of that dirt would get into the food, and then you're eating that. I just feel like, ugh, you wouldn't do that. And also, it's a smell thing, too. If it was dirty and smelly in here, you wouldn't have an appetite. I don't think you'd want to eat after smelling yuck. That's probably a big one, too". On the other hand, most antibacterial products were also forbidden from coming into contact with food: "I would just use water, paper towel and water in there, just because all of the food is in there. I don't want to spray any chemicals in there (...) I just don't want chemicals on my food. I don't want to eat that...I would imagine you would get sick". Consequently, there were all kinds of tensions and compensating behaviors associated with rituals against germs specific to the kitchen space. Most germ-killing products had to be strictly separated from food and from any utensil that came into contact with food. They would use hot water and warmed-up towels, which they thought was sanitizing, as well as dish soap, which was an "ok" product to use since it was intended for dishes, which were surfaces that came into contact with food anyway. One of the participants explained this very well

while referring to a commercial she saw for the dish soap she currently uses: “you see them out there cleaning these birds off from this gigantic oil spill, and they come out healthy. That makes you feel really great. So you say OK if you can do that to a bird or an animal, and it didn't hurt it. It must be OK for the home as well. Because just say if I left some...on the plate, maybe it didn't rinse all the way off, I'm not worried about getting sick from it or anything”. Here is how another participant also explained it:

“Definitely a dish soap is the major. This one [spray cleaner] I use sometimes to shine up that counter *after* it's already been cleaned with a rag with *just [dish] soap*. This [bleach] I will use sometimes if people have spilled something really, really gross, but since you don't want to get bleach on your hands or on your mouth or anything, it's usually only very rarely... I won't use this on the counters”. I will provide more detail on the use of some of these products in “The Props” section of this report but, in short, anything that came in contact with a “germy” substance, be it a surface or even a cleaning tool, had to be separated from the rest, meticulously purified or thrown away, outside of the house. As one of the participants explained: “I felt so much better when I would take a bag of garbage to a dumpster, because even if I had to drive to get it, I was so much happier, because it was far enough away that it didn't cause me any problems...in my mind, I've set these rules that if it's this far away, it's OK, and I can't be infected by it, so on and so forth”.

All of these different kinds of dirt had the same potential to be a part of an “unexpected breach”, a “purposeful breach” or a “cumulative breach”. However, in general, dirt associated with the body, with the outside and with “hidden germs” was more consistently related to cumulative kinds of breach; most needed some time to develop into “crises”. “Ambiguous substances” and “matter out of place” were most commonly described with “unexpected” and “purposeful” everyday breaches”. To be clear, these kinds of messes could also be considered “germ harboring”; they were just not “hidden” anymore and would most likely be taken care of sooner. But in general, any mess seemed to have the potential to be or to become germy, whether that was actually the case or not.

Finally, as suggested before, the cleaning rituals prescribed for each of these “crises” would vary with the level of danger associated with them and the corresponding level of “purification” needed. Based

on my conversations with all participants, I would organize these kinds of dirt crises from the most dangerous and difficult to manage to the least dangerous and easier to manage as follows: (1) germs/bacteria; (2) surfaces in contact with body parts and bodily secretions; (3) formless, ambiguous, composite substances; (4) separating outside things from the inside; and (5) matter out of place. In all, my data demonstrated Douglas suggestion that: “in chasing dirt, in papering, decorating, tidying, we are not governed by anxiety to escape disease, but are positively re-ordering our environment, *making it conform to an idea*” (Douglas 2002:3, emphasis added).

4.03.3.3 Redressive Actions

Although all participants clearly had experienced all three kinds of “breach situations” and all five kinds of “dirt crises”, the way they addressed them was different. As depicted in Figure 7 of my analysis of “The Actors”, I defined three main forces or elements that seemed to drive their main attitude towards their cleaning performances: (1) their cleaning “habitus”; (2) the presence of “spectators”; and (3) their perceived “role” in society. The factors of “having children” and their “years of experience” also seemed to play a role. The following text will detail the kinds of processes that participants engaged in and how these seemed to differ by “life stage” and past experience.

To begin with, having children definitively seemed to act as a “training ground”. Trial and error situations and the creation of “systems” would be typical with both mothers: “I’m always having a system going. During the afternoon, usually when it’s just me and [toddler], I don’t, but once the kids are home...” These “systems” had the primary objective of becoming “regularizing processes” that would help keep the many “breaches” and “crises” under control. However, there were still differences between the young and old mother, which seemed primarily driven by a difference in years of experience as well as the number of people presently living in their home. As explained before, the mother of four kids, also owner of two dogs, experienced the most “unexpected breaches”. The more “unexpected breaches” she experienced, the more “systems” or *processes* she attempted to create. For example, when her dishwasher suddenly broke, she created one of those systems: “I’ve been leaving a side of the sink with soapy bubbles

so when anyone uses a dish I can right away clean it”. But in spite of her attempts to create “processes of regularization”, the reality was that most of her “systems” ended up being temporary or working only temporarily. As I compared her practices with those of the older mother, none of her “regularizing” attempts seem stable. Because she was continuously looking for ways to win her “constant battles”, her rituals mostly resembled those of “situational adjustment”; even she knew they wouldn’t last long. As for the older mother, not only the “unexpected breaches” were significantly fewer since her son left, but she seemed experienced enough to know how to correct or prevent most “crises”. She had many “processes of regularization” in place, which were more stable and “proven” over her years of experience. These included the use of certain untraditional artifacts, like using an oil bottle for her dish soap to prevent soap spills and accumulations. She also had a much more stable schedule where she would cook on Fridays, clean on certain days of the week, not clean on weekends, etc. In short, although the “cleaning habitus” of both mothers was similar, their “role” as mothers was different in the practical sense. The difference in the amount of “spectators” present drove the sheer amount of “unexpected breaches” they both experienced. The difference in years of experience also resulted in two different ritual processes: while the younger mother would, for the most part, engage in “processes of situational adjustment”, the older mother would showcase more “processes of regularization” that actually worked. In fact, “years of experience” seem a strong factor to consider. Even for the older participant without children, most of her ritual processes were also regularizing and regularized. As we know, similar to her contemporary counterpart, she was driven by a certain “cleaning habitus” on how cleaning “should be” done and how important it should be. The only difference with the older participant without children was that her “processes of regularization” had been developed throughout the years in a way that adjusted only to her needs and practices. Since she did not have children and the overall amount of “spectators” has always been minimal, so was the complexity and amount of regularizing processes she had developed. For both older participants, maintaining a life that was simpler and more straightforward was important. While the older mother made reference to how she kept many of her daily routines much simpler versus when her son was still around, here is how the other older participant explained it:

Actually, it's because-- this is funny. But I have-- and I think everybody does, they just don't realize this. You have a limit as to how much you can accomplish, how much you can have around your life. And I think as you get older, you get less and less. But when you're young, you have lots and lots of friends. And you have lots of pets, and you want a big house, and you want a new car all the time, and things like that...And I think as you get older, you start to get things that are a little bit-- *you just want everything to not collapse on itself*. But *you just want to get smaller and smaller*. I would probably be very happy in a house half this size.

As for the younger participant without kids, most of her “unexpected breach” situations seemed to derive from her lack of experience. She didn't seem to have developed a lot of “processes of regularization” in the kitchen either. Most of her actions seemed reactive and according to the situation at hand, “processes of situational adjustment”, like cleaning after cat accidents. As we learned, she did not deem cleaning as a crucial component of the “role” she saw herself playing in society either. Therefore, all of her cleaning rituals and processes essentially had the mark of her indifference on the matter. She did recognize, however, that this would change if she got married and had kids one day. Cleaning was just not a top priority at the present moment; it was still “at the bottom of her to-do list”.

Finally, as I discussed, “purposeful breaches” were the most common among all participants and therefore they all expected certain kinds of dirt and cleaning rituals to be performed on a daily basis. When it came to “everyday”, weekday cleaning, participants also had adopted solutions to streamline the ritual work associated with these “purposeful breaches” and their corresponding daily “crises”. “Purposeful breach” activities that required a lengthy cleaning process would be performed only occasionally or would be cleaned at a later point in time. Most importantly, the “crises” and rituals associated with this specific kind of “breach” were familiar and expected. Except for the young participant without children, all others had already developed “processes of regularization” that worked in those situations, ranging from the extreme use of paper towels throughout the entire process (older participant without children), to having a dishtowel hanging on the shoulders at all times (younger participant with children), to maintaining a solution of hot water and dish soap to use throughout (both older and younger mothers). Because of the frequency and familiarity associated with these kinds of “breach” and “crises”, rituals were also more structured and consistent. This was more so the case when dealing with dirt that was “sticky”, ambiguous or that they thought was “germ” or “bacteria” harboring.

As explained before, the *danger* associated with these “sticky” or “invisible” kinds of dirt required special attention, increased focus, structured and precise ritual. For example, sticky messes in kitchen countertops required the addition of a liquid, water or cleaner, and let it sit for a moment to help it become more manageable or “less sticky”. In fact, during one of the exercises in our last interview, all participants felt somewhat uncomfortable when asked to clean a sticky mess with a dry implement. The implement used to clean it also had to have enough area to pick up the mess in a way that it didn’t touch their hands. Even when prompted to clean a sticky mess freshly poured from its container (i.e. pancake syrup), participants made facial expressions of disgust (consciously or unconsciously) when the implement used was not large enough and their hands came into contact or seemed like they could come into contact with the substance. Finally, implements that were used with “sticky” substances had to be carefully separated from the rest and purified or thrown away. Purification and separation processes included the use of hot water, separating the implement from others to be laundered later, or throwing it away. Messes that were thought as germ-harboring and/or “invisible” undergone a similar kind of process, but the use of bleach or an antibacterial cleaner on the mess and/or after picking it up became a somewhat mandatory part of the process; to take care of the “invisible”. Again, because these kinds of “antibacterial” cleaners were deemed too potent to come into contact with food and skin, the participants that I observed tended to leave these rituals for the end, once eating took place and the food, plates and utensils used were put away. In all of these, there were clear instances where participants did appear to be in “in control” and with extreme focus, in the midst of a special “co-ordination of brain and body”, not even thinking too much about their many movements and “micro-choices”. They “knew” what had to be done, without questioning. These kinds of situations were the ones that produced the most masterful acts of cleaning, some of which even resembled Csikszentmihalyi’s “flow”.

4.03.3.3a *Flow*

In their book *Secular Ritual* (1977), Moore and Myerhoff also allude to this special kind of experience, explaining it in the context of the role that rituals play in enabling these “flow”

states. Referring to Victor Turner's paper in the same book, they speak of "the ways in which ritual may be a framework that engenders creativity in individuals both through *mandatory improvisation* (liminal periods, trance, visions) and through *highly structured, rule-bounded activities*, both of which produce a concentration so extreme that there is a *loss of self-consciousness*, and a feeling of 'flow'" (1977:8 emphases added). To my surprise, although their everyday cleaning rituals, especially those associated with "purposeful breaches", were indeed highly structured, they were neither cyclic nor followed a precise sequence, as I had originally thought. In fact, in preparation for this research, I had created a "cyclic" note-taking template to collect data from my observations which ended up very difficult to use. Much on the contrary, not only the participants seemed "in flow", but their cleaning redressive actions also happened in the flow and midst of everything else, simultaneously, "without thinking". Interestingly, the "not thinking" aspect was of particular importance to all of them. During our first interview, and outside of the context of my observations, all participants alluded to their desire to "not have to think", one way or the other. Here's how one participant was able to describe one of such experiences, when dealing with germs: "Pretty darn good, because I'm *not doing it twice*. If I spray that Lysol in the bathroom-- now maybe it doesn't work, but it works for me. I spray it, I clean it, *I don't think about it*" (emphases added).

However, as I've stated before, characterizing "flow" is not as easy as one might wish, mainly because it is governed by non-cognitive processes and driven by people's "perception" of the situation versus an objective assessment of it. However, I did observe certain "flow-like" traits occurring during cooking and cleaning instances with all participants. These were (1) their perceived ability; (2) the level of "danger" associated with the task; (3) points of worry and/or negotiation; and (4) clarity of results/feedback

When it came to cleaning rituals in the kitchen, their *perceived ability* and the expected "results/feedback" were traits that were relatively easier to observe and for which participants seemed the most eloquent. First of all, in general, and in the context of their respective "worlds"

they all seemed pretty confident about their ability to go about their daily kitchen endeavors. However, there were instances where “flow” was clearly disrupted, where the task at hand was too complex to make it part of their everyday morning or evening “flows”. Consistent with Csikszentmihalyi’s flow model shown in Figure 8, these were instances that, for those who cared about cleaning, caused either worry or anxiety. An example was dirt accumulation on the stove after cooking. Not only the stove itself seemed hard or too long of a process to clean, but the cleaning implements available to clean it made it even harder and more complicated: cleaners that “worked” were too potent to come into contact with food; removing stains and burnt food also required extra physical effort which, as seen before, was a particular problem for the older participants; and cleaning tools, most of which were intended for multiple use, would end up extremely dirty (i.e. crusted “things” inside of a sponge or “scrubby”) and be hard to clean afterwards. In other words, too many “negotiations” “conscious effort” and “thought” were required for this.

As for the level of *danger* associated with certain tasks in the kitchen, as stated before, these were related to “sticky” or “ambiguous” substances or surfaces or objects that were thought to carry or cause germs or bacteria. As described before, these resulted in cleaning rituals, choices and “rules” that were highly structured and performed nearly automatically. There wasn’t much variation to their overall action and their choices seemed continuously “present” and overtly clear when it came to these more “dangerous” situations.

Other than those related to “danger”, everyday kitchen *cleaning negotiations* also happened continuously. An example of this was feelings of “wastefulness”. There were two variants of this. First, there were feelings of *wastefulness* due to participants feeling that the product was “*too good for the job*” (i.e. too engineered, too concentrated or the like) and therefore a “waste” of good product that, in most cases, was also relatively expensive. The second variant were feelings of *wastefulness* because the product was “*not enough for the job*” and therefore required a higher usage amount and/or additional steps and tools. When in “flow”, these two

kinds of “wastefulness” were always in balance; no negotiation or additional “thought” needed. But when this balance was lost, no matter how “structured” the ritual or how “dangerous” the situation, flow would also be disrupted. Participants seemed to move from a state of “loss of ego” to a *self-conscious state of tension*: “Is this too wasteful? Am I being wasteful? What should I use instead? I am on a budget... I shouldn’t...I should have”. Csikszentmihalyi (1975) describes this kind of “interruption” very well:

The moment awareness is split so as to perceive the activity from “outside”, the flow is interrupted (...) Typically, a person can maintain a merged awareness with his or her actions for only short periods interspersed with interludes (from the Latin *inter ludes*, “between plays”) in which the flow is broken by the actor’s adoption of an outside perspective.

These interruptions occur when questions flash though the actor’s mind such as “am I doing well?” or “what am I doing here?” or “should I be doing this?” When one is in a flow episode (*in ludus* as opposed to *inter ludes*) these questions simply do not come to mind (1975:45)

Lastly, participants were also very eloquent in terms of the “expected results” or “expected feedback” from their work. I will describe these in more detail in the following section, since most if not all them constituted “criteria” for “reintegration” within the ritual process.

Based on my observations and interviews, I delineated a zone of “danger”, “tension” or “negotiation” within which a state of “flow” or “not having to think” seemed possible. The resulting model was built based on *everyday* cleaning activities, defined by my observations of *weekday* mornings and evenings *in the kitchen*. It did not consider cleaning actions outside of the kitchen space or that are planned for a specific point in time like “spring cleaning” or “weekend cleaning”, which can have their own “flow” models. Lastly, as with Csikszentmihalyi’s model presented in Figure 8, my model also assumed that, “at any given moment, people are aware of a finite number of opportunities which challenge them to act...they are aware also of their skills, that is, of their capacity to cope with the demands imposed by the environment (Csikszentmihalyi 1975:56). I think this is a fair assumption to make when considering everyday cleaning actions limited to the kitchen field. Figure 11 below shows some of the broader components used in the

model. Its final version was adopted by the client and should remain confidential to the purposes of this thesis.

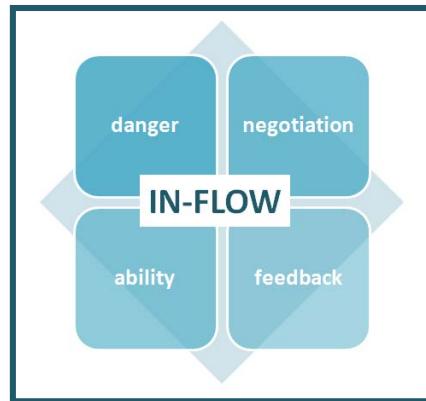


Figure 11 Components of Kitchen Cleaning Flow Model

To summarize my discussion on “Redressive Action”, one of the strongest factors that I observed was the years of experience that participants had with cleaning. The older the participant, the more “committed” and adjusted she seemed to her “processes of regularization”. These seemed to derive from their many years of “situational adjustment” processes, which became more proven, stable and structured over time. Conversely, the younger the participant, the more “committed” (or subjected, as in the case of the mother of four) she was to “indeterminacy” in cleaning. In this case, while the younger participant without children seemed comfortable with her “indeterminacy” in cleaning (not a priority), the young mother was continuously attempting to create “processes of regularization” which, because of the seemingly transient nature of everything that happened in her home, looked more like “processes of situational adjustment”. It is also important to note that, while the amount and relative success of “processes of regularization” seemed mostly driven by the years of cleaning experience that the participant had, the level of “indeterminacy” in cleaning seemed to increase with the presence of others in the household, having the effect of increased “processes of situational adjustment” and/or failure of “processes of regularization” which would otherwise work. In other words, the “indeterminacy” in cleaning of a person with many years of experience will still *increase* with an increased number of people involved; for instance, during the “traditional Christmas breakfast” the older mother held at her house. Similarly, the “indeterminacy” of the young mother of four will *decrease* with a reduction in the number

of people involved, as was the case when her oldest three children were at school. Finally, “flow” would be most prominent in “processes of regularization” that were highly “ritualized”, frequent and/or familiar, which also mostly occurred as a response to “purposeful breaches” in the kitchen field.

4.03.3.4 Reintegration

The reintegration criteria that I observed and that participants expressed matches closely the description from McHugh (2006): “...surfaces must be kept clean, free from the material that characterizes the outdoors (‘dirt’), from all residue that indicate the work done in the kitchen (‘food particles’), and from the signs of human presence itself (‘finger-’ or ‘footprints’)” (2006:20) There were also consistent cues to cleaning and the “reintegration” of places, surfaces and objects, including: (1) an “uncluttered” look; (2) a “shine” (or absence of a “haze” or streak); (3) surface feeling “smooth”; (4) surface not feeling “sticky or grungy”; (5) “fresh” scents (i.e. lemon); (6) “pleasant” scents (i.e. lavender); (7) “cleaner” scents (i.e. bleach, Lysol); (7) not being “smelly” (malodor); and (8) the absence of visible particles (i.e. “crumbs”, “hair”) and stains of all sorts (i.e. “rings” around sink, on the toilet).

I also identified two particular instances of “schism” that seemed common to all participants as well. As briefly referenced before, one of them was the cleaning of the stove. This was one of those surfaces that would not pass “everyday” reintegration criteria and therefore be left to clean later. The other “schism” situation had to do with some of the reusable tools used, such as dishrags, sponges and scrubbing tools. First of all, they all had a special functionality that uniquely aided with the cleaning of particular kinds of “tougher” messes, which were also those described as “filthy”, “sticky”, and dangerous. These messes would in turn make the reusable tools dirty, if not more, than the surfaces they cleaned. Analogous to religious ritual, these tools became liminal and dangerous objects, which had to be separated and dealt with carefully; a cause for great tension. On one hand, these were the only tools she felt worked on certain messes. On the other, they all required additional, and particularly exhaustive, cleaning. Moreover, because of them, things from the outdoors, such as “defiled” food accumulations, bodily fluids and all sorts of ambiguous substances would remain indoors, as long as they remained

within these tools. Another set of rituals was required, in addition to their kitchen cleaning rituals, to “purify” these tools that came into contact with the “dangerous” and “impure”: they had to be cleaned, separated and organized by room, by surface, by kind of mess and kind of cleaner used, etc. Fear of cross-contamination and germs would arise. In short, there was never a real sense of “reintegration” back into the kitchen field. Although there were different levels of tolerance and belief in the cleaning rituals for these tools, complete purification was seldom believed to be possible, especially for those tools designed to scrub.

Finally, and as suggested in my analysis of “The Actors”, the level of scrutiny and tolerance would vary across actors, with young and old “cleaning procrastinators” having more tolerance and the young and old “mothers” having less tolerance in terms of what constituted “good enough” for the “reintegration” of the “defiled” places, surfaces and tools in the kitchen. “Reintegration” or “schism” would mark the end of the particular *everyday* cleaning ritual. Specific to “schisms”, they would be left to deal with later, becoming part of their planned cleaning rituals that do not happen every day.

4.04 The Props and the Stage

After examining “the actors” and “the action” in the kitchen, and to complete the holistic analysis of their “cleaning performances”, I must also dive into the “props” that she uses in the particular “stage” she is performing in. As I sought to understand the role that these physical artifacts and architecture had in their actions, I became inspired by Julian H. Steward’s theory of “cultural ecology” (Steward 1955/1973). This theoretical perspective considers both the technology and the physical environment as the “material culture” that people use to survive, which helps perpetuate, evolve and shape human action and culture. Although Steward uses this model to describe cultural phenomena at the level of society in general, I also see it fruitful in the understanding of human performances in the kitchen. If I reflect on “the family” as an observable social unit operating in the kitchen “field”, then it is reasonable that I also study the architecture and cooking technology of kitchens as the “effective environment” within which particular cleaning technologies are used. Most importantly, his theory considers this “material culture” as

it *evolves in history*, just as much of the landscape of U.S. household kitchens has also evolved, especially in the last 150 years. For this reason, aside from what I learned from my participants, and as part of my research findings for “the props” and “the stage”, I am also including a brief summary of the background history that shaped their present circumstances.

As such, the following text will have a slightly different order versus others, consisting of the following: (1) a brief on Julian Steward’s “cultural ecology” theory, which is the basis over which I developed the rest of the contents of this section; (2) literature review on the evolution of the American kitchen architecture and technology; (3) research findings on participant’s use of cleaning technologies or “props” in their particular kitchen environment or “stage”.

4.04.1 The Props and the Stage: Theoretical Orientation

The following describes the theoretical lenses through which I researched the history of U.S. kitchen architectures and technology, from which I drew on to analyze the use of “props” in the kitchen “stage”.

Cultural Ecology Theory

In his book *Theory of Culture Change: the Methodology of Multilinear Evolution* (1955/1973), Julian H. Steward reminds us that “the principal meaning of *ecology* is ‘adaptation to environment’. Since the time of Darwin, environment has been conceived as *the total web of life* wherein all plant and animal species *interact with one another* and with *physical features* in a *particular unit of territory* (1973:30, emphases added). This “total web of life” is also an observable human phenomenon. But whereas humans do “interact with one another” with “physical features” in “particular environments”, there is a marked difference between the ways in which humans do this versus animals. As humans, we do not enter the ecological scene relating to others solely on the base of our physical or biological features. As Steward says, we introduce the “*super-organic factor of culture*, which also affects and is affected by the total web of life” (1973:31, emphasis added). It is this “super-organic factor”, full of meaning and symbolism what makes us human, as Clifford Geertz explains: “The concept of culture I espouse ... is essentially a

semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that *man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun*, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of *meaning*” (Geertz 1973:5, emphases added). This is yet another reason why using the analogy of theater is particularly useful in describing human action. When it comes to human “performances”, they are not only about “interacting” with others, not even “acting” *for* others; they are not only about performing in a “particular territory” or “stage”. Like theater, human performances carry in themselves intention, creativity, form, care, meaning, culture. This is why Steward’s theory on “cultural ecology” resonated so well with me. Analogous to the ways in which an ecologist studies an ecosystem, he saw societies integrated in their ecological surroundings while also acknowledging the so uniquely human factor of culture.

Julian H. Steward coins the term *cultural ecology* to represent the ways in which culture change is induced by human adaptation; an adaptation that includes the use and development of technologies to survive in a particular field with unique characteristics. He also describes it as an anthropological approach that seeks “to explain the origin of particular cultural features and patterns which characterize different areas (...) [paying] primary attention to those features which empirical analysis shows to be most closely involved in the *utilization of environment in culturally prescribed ways*” (1973:36-37, emphasis added). He then defines the term *culture core* as consisting of “the constellation of features which are most closely related to *subsistence activities* and economic arrangements” (1973:37, emphasis added). As such, his approach includes the documentation of methods and technologies used by humans to exploit their environments to survive. In other words, he saw this “culture core” mostly in connection to the material world and the division of labor in a group. Over time, the “culture core” would also evolve in response to its “effective environment”, shaping culture and social organization itself.

In his theory, Steward also argues against normative models that seem to imply that all human behavior is culturally determined and that adaptations to the environment have no effect. He explains that “cultures in different environments have changed tremendously, and these changes are basically traceable to new adaptations required by new technology and productive arrangements” (1973:37). In fact, societies

can have the exact same set of technologies and still have very distinct social patterns, just because their environments are different.

With this, he proposes an analytical framework that incorporates three fundamental procedures of cultural ecology. These are: (1) the interrelationship of exploitative or productive technology and the environment; (2) the behavior patterns involved in the exploitation of a particular area by means of a particular technology; and (3) the extent to which the behavior patterns entailed in exploiting the environment affect other aspects of culture (1973:40-41). From this framework, I developed the first two procedures of cultural ecology, which are those that I deemed are within the scope of this project. As Steward suggests, I researched the historical interrelationship between “productive technologies” and the kitchen “environment” of U. S. households. To this end, I began this analysis by delineating the use of technological developments, the knowledge and the practices that have been diffused in the kitchen environment over time. This provided the background context within which new and old cleaning technologies are being used today. Second, I analyzed the use of these particular cleaning technologies given the patterns of action and belief that I described in “The Action” and “The Actors” sections of this chapter.

4.04.2 The Props and the Stage: Literature Review

As we see in the literature review on the history of American women domesticity, kitchens have been an important historical place in the home; the “stage” within which socio-political action has unfolded at the family level. Further, the kitchen has always been, in its most fundamental sense, a place designed and managed for the family’s “survival”. Technological advances, “the props” used in cooking and cleaning, have marked the structure and nature of this place, which has evolved through the necessities of world wars and economic downturns and by changes in the very structure of American families. Because of this, the history of U.S. kitchens, its architecture and the use of technology has been reviewed extensively by multiple authors (Cromley 2011, Snodgrass 2004, Harrison 1972, Gdula 2008, Strasser 1982).

The review of this literature indeed suggests that the evolution of the architecture, technology and artifacts used in the kitchen does tell a significant part of the story of how the family kitchen culture and its corresponding “cleaning performances” have also evolved. Moreover, a review of the past can not only inform what we see today, but also what is possible in the future, what is next. The following text summarizes some of the history that I learned behind the major kitchen inventions and architectures that led to the cleaning performances that I observed, again primarily citing from Gdula (2008) and Strasser (1982).

A Brief History of the American Kitchen Landscape and Technology

Right before the turn of the twentieth century, colonial homes were the center of many important functions that today belong to the public sphere. They “served the functions of home, factory, school and welfare institution...Before industrialization, most housework produced goods and services used within the household” (Strasser 1982:4). This included household cleaning supplies. For instances, in the beginning of the century, soap was made at home from leftover grease and lye from ashes. Also sold in markets in bar form (which meant it had to be scraped for other uses, like dishwashing), the use of commercial soap prevailed later in the century. This is how Strasser (1982) describes the landscape of cleaning agents of the late nineteenth century:

Other than regular soaps, only two commercial cleaning agents were advertised before 1880: ammonia and Sapolio, a gritty scouring soap. Magazines and manuals offered hints for cleaning with sand, milk, salt, soda, borax, camphor, lye, vinegar, turpentine, lamp oil, clay, various acids and oils, and mixtures of these things (1982:89)

In those days, many houses had only one heated room or “hall”, which also served many purposes: kitchen, dining room, living room, workshop and even bedroom. And, in this room, was the central architectural feature of the home and one of the most important items to the family’s survival: the kitchen fireplace; around which the domestic role was clearly delineated. On the other hand, large houses of the nineteenth century had separate rooms that served as kitchens, often operated by servants. Southern plantation houses even had separate “outbuildings”, which ensured that the family and guests would remain separate from slaves and servitude and from the heat and the arduous task of cooking. This

resembles Michael Foucault's reflection on the effect that architecture has not only as a mechanism of survival, as Steward suggests, but also as an instrument of discipline and control. In his book *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault argues that "a whole problematic then develops: that of *an architecture that is no longer built simply to be seen* (as with the ostentation of palaces), of to observe the external space (cf. the geometry of fortresses), but to permit an internal, *articulated and detailed control*...an architecture that would operate to transform individuals: to cat on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, *to carry the effects of power right to them*, to make it possible to know them, to alter them. *Stones can make people docile and knowable*" (1977:172, my emphases added). Therefore, while nineteenth century kitchen architectures seen in rural areas and villages served a primary purpose of survival (Steward), the kitchen architectures of the larger houses of the city also served a purpose of control (Foucault).

But the industrial era that took even more strength in the beginning of the twentieth century radically changed this landscape. Families began to consume the products of the American industry as it began its dramatic expansion between 1890 and 1920. Thanks to technological advances in transportation, communication and manufacturing, "mass production and mass distribution brought new products and services—gas, electricity, running water, prepared foods, ready-made clothes, and factory-made furniture and utensils—to a large number of American families...standardized, uniform goods that cost money replaced the various makeshifts that had constituted most people's subsistence" (Strasser 1982:6). It also changed the diets of Americans, once dominated by seasonal changes and the success of individual household harvests, to healthier and more varied. Interestingly, this variety of foods to be cooked in household kitchens would only become greater throughout the rest of the twentieth century; the influence of international immigrants as well as of U.S. soldiers returning back to the United States from multiple countries in the world. But in all, perhaps the most dramatic change was the fact that "food, shelter and clothing became matters of social production, not private, created by profitable industrial manufacture" (1982:7). As industrialization gradually removed consumers from their sources of food, and with the introduction of technological advances such as the stove and the refrigerator, the most intimate rituals of everyday life in the kitchen were also changed. To get a picture of this, tasks such as killing chickens,

plucking birds, blanching hams, roasting coffee, grinding and sifting whole spices, soaking oatmeal overnight, seeding raisins, cutting and pounding lump sugar and making yeast began to disappear. Smaller inventions such as the enameled steel were also significant in the twentieth century if one considers how every pot and every knife of the nineteenth century used to inevitably rust. With the introduction of commercially available stoves, the task of cooking and of cleaning afterwards, once an arduous, hot and dangerous endeavor, also dramatically changed. Before then, the smoke from wood and coal fires, especially during the winter, would stain and damage every single surface in the home. As Strasser tells, “the accumulated grime was so staggering, and keeping up with it on a daily basis so impossible” (1982:62) that spring cleaning, a much of a dreaded chore, was also a necessity. To make matters more complex, nineteenth century technology did not advanced the creation of any intermediate devices for water. Without indoor plumbing, water had to be brought to the house, an especially difficult task during the winter. Water was essential to perform the cooking and cleaning duties of the house and specific procedures were in place to use, conserve, bring in the clean and throw out the dirty water. For example, dishwashing required hauling massive amounts of water; “cold water to the stove, hot water to the dishpans, dirty water outside” (1982:89). Lastly, according to a 1919 government report, “minimal equipment” of the average kitchen of the early twentieth century would include “enamelware soap dish, hand basin, coffeepot, teapot, preserving kettle, three stew pans or kettles, double boiler, colander, and funnel; aluminum salt and pepper shakers and measuring cups; a nickel teakettle with copper bottom; a meat grinder, a flour sifter, and an eggbeater” (Strasser 1982:46), most of which were barely part of the cooking landscape of the previous century. All of these and many other inventions changed the most fundamental character of cooking and cleaning in the kitchen.

The “kitchen of the future” showcased in the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893, all equipped with gas stoves, refrigerators, water heaters and dishwasher, started to become an everyday reality in the households of the mid-twentieth century. Although plumbing continued to be a matter of social class well into the twentieth century, the installation of public plumbing later in the century made the practical use of many of such devices possible. Interestingly, as Strasser explains, more water induced

more washing as well, both personal and of the home. Scientific advances augmented this trend. Thanks to the work of scientists like Dr. Harvey W. Wiley, the potential for bacterial growth in foods became public knowledge, leading to the passing of the Pure Food Act by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906. Stories like that of Mary Mallon, the infamous immigrant cook who later became known as “Typhoid Mary” for infecting several families with the deadly typhoid disease, increased the public’s awareness of the bacterial transmission of disease through food even more. Next, the scientific craze of the early twentieth century and its corresponding advances in medicine and bacteriology transformed the way kitchen cleaning was viewed, as Gdula (2008) explains, “cleanliness was one of the main tenets preached by the domestic scientists in their reformation of the American Kitchen, and every effort was made to keep the kitchen as free of dirt and germs *as the most sanitary laboratory*” (2008:11, emphasis added). So kitchens slowly evolved from the taken-for-granted dirtiest, hardest place to clean—in fact, the source of much of the household dirt—to becoming the dreamed, pristine “laboratory” within which the measured “science” of cooking and cleaning had to be performed. With all of this, both the physical and social landscape of kitchens would also change.

Because of the relative ease of tasks to be performed, by 1917 the hiring of servants began to disappear from the social setting of kitchens, with household women becoming its indisputable central figure. Strasser (1982) tells that

After World War I, pictures of servants virtually disappeared from advertising for women; most ads depicted housewives doing their own housework. Many new ads treated household tasks as expressions of emotion: a new bride showed her love by ‘washing tell-tale gray out of her husband’s shirts’; a mother cleaning the bathroom sink protected her family from disease (1982:78).

Also, with women’s ability to now stay in their homes, the social life associated with domestic tasks like the hauling of water, the cleaning and drying of clothes, the collecting of wood, the making of fires and sharing of crafts also disappeared. In spite of this, the kitchen remained a central social and political space within the home. Even in a time where so many young men were deployed to fight in the world wars, making the kitchen a somewhat “colder” place for the family, women were still “expected to

treat the kitchen as her base of command, and every domestic duty was to be done with a single aim- the winning of the war” (Gdula 2008:22). Her domestic duties were viewed as “patriotic acts” of support to the troops, also of attending to the future leaders of America.

The physical architecture of homes and kitchens evolved accordingly. Since the introduction of the Hossier kitchen cabinet in 1903, kitchens were subsequently designed with an emphasis on fluidity and the seamless execution of kitchen tasks. Initially, this made kitchens smaller. As Gdula (2008) explains, the bungalow became the “popular style for homes, and kitchens, which were separated and practically detached from the floor plan of the main house, were becoming integrated into the ‘block’ of the house” (Gdula 1008:16). The crash of the stock market in 1929—the Great Depression—leveled the economic field, and most people lived under similar conditions. In the aftermath of this, families and friends began to again gather in the kitchen for home-cooked meals, seeking comfort in the traditions of the past. By the 1940s, the kitchen’s appearance begun to look like the kitchens we see today. More cabinets and cupboards replaced freestanding workstations, and “an army of appliances could be found for sale in department stores now that the military no longer required that every scrap of metal be used for defense purposes” (Gdula 2008:79). This continued into the 1950’s, when kitchen architectures began accommodating for the new and now color-coordinated appliances, as well for the renewed family gatherings. The doors and barriers between the kitchen and the rest of the house that characterized the Victorian era began to disappear. With the population explosion that came after World War II and the Korean War, families became larger, and so did their houses and kitchens. In Steward’s words, the means for the family’s “survival” changed and so did the house and kitchen environments, as well as their cultural expectations. Gdula (2008) explains that:

The jobs that allowed the heads of households to keep the family fed were located outside of the cities now, and urban neighborhoods emptied while suburban neighborhoods swelled (...) This new type of neighborhood needed a new kind of home, and the flat, single-story ranch house became a popular design...[which] changed how the American Kitchen would be used and designed in future decades (...) Pass-through space began to grow wider, and as it did, it provided a picture window into the workings of the kitchen. With this kind of visibility, maintaining appearances became very important (2008:89-90).

As kitchens became cleaner, safer, more efficient, more open and a much more enjoyable place in the house, the ways of food production and preparation also became a “lightning-quick” science. For instance, “TV dinners” also became popular in the 1950s, and many more food options were also available in the country’s supermarkets. Through the decades, the food industry had learned to adapt to the precarious circumstances of the war, using chemicals to prevent crop-damaging insects. As Gdula explains, a time had arrived where “anything that made for a less stressful evening was acceptable” (2008:91).

On the other hand, the 1960s marked a time of environmental caution. Early environmentalists like J.I. Rodale, Fairfield Osborne and Rachel Carson began to alert the public on the dangers of using chemicals and pesticides. By 1969, the FDA determined that almost 90 percent of edible fish in the United States had traces of DDT pesticide. All of this had a strong impact on the public, as Gdula (2008) explains:

White bread was usually one of the first foods to go as the new health-conscious generation tossed-out items that were bleached or processed. Most “white” foods were eschewed in favor of “brown” foods...In addition to choosing natural foods over foods that had been *adulterated by chemicals*, these neo-earth mothers and fathers were also symbolically making a statement about the bleaching of society (2008:115, emphasis added)

This increased value for the “organic” continued well into the 1970s, even impacting the appearance of kitchens. There was a desire for a more “natural” look and with it, the environment inside the kitchen began take its cues from by the environment outside, a look that better reflected the sensitivities of this generation. Most importantly, there was a growing awareness of all the unhealthy things that should be taken out of their diets. For instance, in 1972, the Environmental Protection Agency banned the use of pesticides like DDT, adding several other lethal insecticides to the list two years later (Gdula 2008).

Lastly, the availability of better kitchen technology and a healthier economy versus the decade before changed the way Americans cooked in the 1980s. It had evolved from an arduous task, to one done out of necessity, to a leisure activity. Americans were using their kitchens not

because they had to, but because they wanted to. As such, kitchen architecture and décor also changed. Gdula explains that “the state-of-the-art, high-design kitchens of the 1980s were on display, like a work of art” (2008:178). Black was the color of the eighties; everything went black, from car interiors, to stereos to kitchen appliances; and, now with a much more open architecture, people were more conscious of the way it looked versus when it was behind a door.

In my view, this history of the American kitchen landscape and technology confirms much of Steward’s cultural ecology theory. Throughout the years, we see the influence that technologies such as the stove, electricity and indoor plumbing have had on the physical environment of the kitchen. We also see how changes in the socio-political dynamics of the United States also made technologies such as food preservation possible, and created an architectural need to allow space for the family in the kitchen. Furthermore, as suggested in the introduction of this thesis, the kinds and amount of technologies used in the kitchen are also one of the byproducts of industrialization, consumerism and mass advertising from consumer goods companies. In its most fundamental sense, it is a phenomenon of the capitalist economic structure of the United States which has so greatly influenced the “cleaning habitus”, claimed “needs”, the tensions and attitudes of U.S. consumers. After all, capitalism is indeed a part of the current economic and cultural ecology that U.S. consumers are situated in. And as with any “ecological” structure, I believe there is a dialectic relationship between the consumers of such products and the companies that produce them. As exemplified in the introduction of this thesis, this interaction can sometimes be full of contradiction. But I believe it doesn’t have to be that way. In fact, in my years of experience in this field, it seems that consumers and companies are increasingly eager to collaborate more and more with each other. This is the dialogue that I aimed to enter with this project, to arrive at a compromise where product innovation strategies are both useful to the client and also truly beneficial to consumers and communities; to inspire products that are designed to improve the currently confusing landscape of “safe” cleaning products, eliminate the unnecessary complexity and sheer amount of products used and the costs associated with it.

In all, we see how the evolution of technology, changes in the architecture, and the economic and socio-political landscape of the U.S. affected and have been affected by the culture of the American family in the kitchen. As Steward explains, “in advanced societies, the nature of the culture core will be determined by a *complex technology* and by *productive arrangements* which themselves have a *long cultural history*” (1973:39, emphasis added). I agree with Steward on this and believe that the study of the history of American household kitchen and of American women domesticity both provide a great example of how the “culture core” of the kitchen has evolved over time; reason why it is such an important aspect in my study of the technological, cleaning “props” and architectural features of the kitchen “stage” of my informants’ homes.

4.04.3 The Props: Research Findings and Discussion

I would like to begin my discussion of findings by defining a few key terms that I will use throughout the next sections. First, I would like to refer to the cleaning agent to be used to clean a surface and/or object as the *cleaner*. These can come in different forms like liquid, spray, aerosol, cream/gel, powder or solid form. Second, I would like define *implement* as the device that may be used to apply the “cleaner”, such as sponges, brushes, paper towels, fabrics of many sorts, etc. Finally, I would define *tools* as any of the above.

During my first visit to the participant’s houses, we had a conversation about all the different kinds of tools they used for cleaning. These were not prescribed to any particular room in the house. We later narrowed these into their top three essential tools they could “not survive without”. Table 7 below summarizes this data.

Table 7 Data on Essential Cleaning Tools

Participant	Essential Cleaning Tools	Primary Reason Given
Younger, no children	1. Mop with reusable pad	Easy and thus can do more often; cost effective; better for environment
	2. Green works all purpose	Kills germs and is environmentally friendly
	3. Sponge	Absorbent; multifunctional; makes job easier, so more willing to do it
Older, no children	1. Paper Towel	First line of defense; disposable; out of sight, out of mind
	2. Lysol spray	Kills cold and flu viruses; smells like clean

	3. Swiffer Sweeper	Less effort; easier, doesn't have to bend over
Younger mother	1. Paper towel	Easy; simple; convenient; disposable; absorbent; accessible
	2. Dish soap	Goes a long way; use with hot water; protects family from sickness
	3. Mr. Clean multipurpose	Use for everything; don't have to use that much, "stretches", good value
Older mother	1. Lysol multipurpose	Can use anywhere for anything; sanitizing; no need to think
	2. Dawn dish soap	Safe to use in the kitchen and with food
	3. Paper towel	Can use it for everything; throw away, don't have to do another chore

There are a few patterns that I found from these interviews as well as from my observations of “everyday mornings” and “everyday evenings”. In fact, one of the things that I specifically wanted to learn was which of these general “essentials”, if any, actually came to form part of their “everyday” cleaning rituals in the kitchen and why.

To begin with, the young and the old mother had a similar use of cleaners in the kitchen. During our initial interview, they both picked a multipurpose cleaner and dish soap as part of their “essential” cleaning tools. Because they both “cleaned as they go” (meaning they cleaned while cooking, serving, etc.) it was important that they could do this without harmful chemicals getting into contact with the food they were handling nor the surfaces that they and their families were continuously touching in the midst of action. As seen in “The Action” section of this Chapter, and unlike multipurpose sprays, dish soap was seen as a detergent that could be safely used in the midst of food handling and preparation: “Definitely a dish soap is the major. This one [spray cleaner] I use sometimes to shine up that counter *after* it's already been cleaned with a rag with *just [dish] soap*. This [bleach] I will use sometimes if people have spilled something really, really gross, but since you don't want to get bleach on your hands or on your mouth or anything, it's usually only very rarely... I won't use this on the counters”. As such, dish soap was the only cleaner that became part of the “everyday” morning and evening cleaning performances of the mothers. They both used hot water and dish soap, which they prepared by filling up the sink. The warm dishtowel with soap that was already in the sink could be used to safely “sanitize” the surrounding surfaces. Neither one of them used their “essential” multipurpose cleaner in their “everyday” action inside the kitchen. For the younger mother of four, the multipurpose cleaner would not arrive to the scene until all dishes were washed and stored and the family had finished eating. In fact, it was her husband that pulled the

multipurpose cleaner out of the pantry and, with two paper towels, wiped down the dining table only (outside of the kitchen space). It never made it to the kitchen, at least not while I was there. The older mother didn't even bring it to the everyday scenes that I observed; not once. Also, the primary reasons for them to call these multipurpose cleaners "essential" were different. While the younger mother spoke of how long her multipurpose cleaner lasted, which was a good value, the older spoke of its ability to sanitize surfaces, specifically kill germs. Although she had no way of knowing "for sure" that it was indeed killing germs, she trusted the brand and spoke of it as one of those cleaning tools that she felt particularly good in using since she felt she could "carry on without wondering". Once again, she didn't "have to think" while cleaning. Altogether, and as seen in "The Actors" section of this report, both of these participants, as mothers, carried a relatively stronger "tradition" or "habitus" in cleaning. Their habits and choices between the dish soap and the multipurpose cleaner reveal some of the history discussed. While they felt a strong need to "sanitize" the kitchen space, the potential for food contamination was a concern, whether conscious or unconscious. This specific concern was also shared by all participants. As we see in history, food contamination coming from bacterial growth—as was the case with "Typhoid Mary" —or from chemicals—as it happened with pesticides—played an important role in the way they felt about using dish soap instead of a multipurpose cleaner during food preparation. Finally, their use of warm towels, hot water and soap in the kitchen sink to "purify" or "sanitize" also goes way back to the nineteenth century where hot water was also used to clean certain surfaces and objects and to whiten clothing.

The older participant without children shared some practices with those of the mothers and some with the younger "cleaning procrastinator". She mentioned a Lysol cleaner and "Swiffer Sweeper" mop as part of her "essentials". Similar to the mothers, and consistent with their "habitus" regarding cleaning and germs, she considered her Lysol spray an important sanitizing tool. However, this Lysol was not a multipurpose cleaning spray as was the case of the mothers, but an aerosol. Other than killing airborne germs, it also "freshened" the air and left a "clean" scent that she appreciated, since it sometimes helped her "mask" the lack of cleaning and the presence of her cats. Although the bottle of Lysol was always

present, right on top of the kitchen countertop, it was never used during my “everyday” observations. On the other hand, similar to the younger woman without children, most of the everyday cleaning action that I observed was done with an implement and plain water only. She also had the “Swiffer Sweeper” mop as one of her essential tools. Again like the younger “cleaning procrastinator”, she was especially concerned with her floors; perhaps also because they both had cats. But although she also described it as an easier alternative to use, her primary reason was that it required less physical effort; she didn’t have to bend over. While the younger “cleaning procrastinator” spoke of how the ease of use of her mop saved her time, the older participant spoke of how it saved *her* personally.

There were other peculiarities among participants, especially in their use of reusable and disposable implements. An interesting finding was that the younger participant without children was the most environmentally conscious of all. Although she did not seem too over-enthusiastic when we talked about it, this did show consistently in some of her daily actions and choices. For example, during my observations of morning and evening kitchen action, I noticed that she only used reusable implements: a sponge to clean her surfaces and a towel to dry the tip of her fingers every now and then. To her, these were the “obvious” choices to use in the midst of the kitchen action and also the least wasteful. The “Green Works” and the mop with *reusable* pads were also examples of tools that “did the job”, and were also environmentally friendly, which she saw as a great added “bonus”. Specific to the mop, which was the tool she seemed the most excited about, the fact that she could reuse the pads was also seen as saving her money, which was tight. As a “cleaning procrastinator”, she did not like having to clean the pads and wished they would “magically” clean themselves, but the money savings and environmental advantages seemed to significantly offset this difficulty. Her overall practices in the kitchen resembled the “back-to-the-good-old-ways”, eco-friendly, natural, and organic bias that began in the 1970s. She used water and vinegar to clean the floors with the mop and drank organic milk, which was also a better value because, according to her, it lasted fresh longer. On the other hand, all other participants seemed more diverse in their implement choices and barely mentioned anything related to eco-friendly products during our interviews. Only the older woman without children made reference to “green” products as something she

had knowledge about, but did not use often. They also used disposable tools more freely versus the younger participant. The main advantage they all saw with using these kinds of tools was an ability to dispose of the mess within them. But there were also unique perspectives and circumstances within which each participant used disposable or reusable tools.

The older woman without children was the participant that used disposable implements the most. During our first interview, she was the only one to mention to sometimes use disposable Clorox wet wipes and, opposite to the younger “cleaning procrastinator”, she preferred to use the “Swiffer Sweeper” mop with *disposable* pads on her floors. This was consistent with my observations of her actions in the kitchen. Also completely opposite to the younger “cleaning procrastinator”, she did not use towels, dishrags or sponges at all. Instead, she used paper towels all throughout her cooking process: she would wipe pots and pans with a wet paper towel before using them, she would continuously wipe her hands and her countertops, drain fruit, wipe utensils, etc. The paper towel had a short life cycle too. It would be reused if the first task was to dry her hands or wipe a clean pot. It would be immediately trashed after the second use or after used on a countertop or a dirty surface or object. When prompted about her use of paper towels during the observation exercise, she called them her “first line of defense” and was adamant on the fact that they helped her keep the mess “out of sight, out of mind”. According to her, for “cleaning-cleaning” she also liked to use paper towels with Windex, which came in a special “push-down” bottle. As she showed me, one puts the paper towel on top, pushes and the Windex liquid will get into the paper towel which will now be ready to be used to clean. In short, she deemed these disposable alternatives easier and cleaner than keeping dirty cleaning implements, mops and rags around, which she explained was a continuous “fight” she had with her significant other. Most importantly, these disposable tools were already part of her “processes of regularization” in the kitchen; they helped her streamline her cleaning activity and to “not have to think” or worry.

The older mother seemed more balanced in her use of reusable and disposable implements. On one hand, and although not selected as an “essential tool”, she did use dishcloths during her every day routines. These were used nearly exclusively on the sink to clean her dishes as she cooked. The specific

kind she had been trying recently also had a small squared area close to a corner of the dishtowel with a scrubbing texture. She liked this dual function of the new dishtowels she was trying; it meant more value for her. In the action, she would throw dishes and utensils on the sink, which was already filled with hot water and dish soap. She would clean the dishes with these “special” dishtowels as she went about preparing her meals. She had one dishtowel in use and another clean one she kept in a nearby kitchen drawer. They would all be laundered periodically, depending on what was cleaned and how the dishtowel looked. This was a kind of “process of regularization” she had developed over the years; it was the way she had always done it, since her son lived with her. She would go about it nearly automatically, while chatting with me and telling me stories. On the other hand, the two disposable implements that she mentioned were a stack of disposable napkins in her bathroom and a roll of paper towels in the kitchen. Her use of the napkins in the bathroom was primarily because she thought these were more sanitary than sharing a drying towel with other people. It was a matter of *personal* hygiene. As for the use of paper towels, it seemed to be more a matter of convenience and fit for the job. She had developed “processes of regularization” so that her house was kept clean on a daily basis and there was not as much cleaning to do anyway. For instance, her cooking and cleaning routines were not as messy because she had already developed a “process of regularization” of pre-cooked, ready to eat meals that she prepared on Fridays and kept on the freezer to use throughout the following week. Similar to the other older participant, this “process” helped her streamline her cooking (and therefore cleaning) activities in the kitchen. In this environment, paper towels seem to satisfy most of her “everyday” food preparation and cleaning needs in the kitchen, which was not much. Moreover, in her balance of things, it was interesting to see how this participant kept the more traditional values of preparing “home-made” meals (versus “bought”), while also enabling “lightning-quick” efficiency in the kitchen, for which paper towels seem to play a role. During my evening observation, the same damp “ball” of paper towels was always near to her. This bunched up paper towel ball begun with her drying her hands and followed the food preparation process, mostly to wipe down very small drips on the countertop, water or liquid from the refrigerated stuff. Interestingly, by the time she was done and we begun our interview, the same paper towel “bunch” was

still lying on the counter, seemingly not ready to be disposed of yet. Even at that point, there were not a lot of messes that were cleaned with it anyway. What was interesting was that, although she did laundered dishcloths, the main reason that she gave for sometimes using disposable cleaning tools was not having to do another chore; meaning that she did not have to clean them afterwards, as is the case of dishrags, towels and cloths.

The *accessibility* of implements for the younger mother was clearly paramount to her everyday kitchen routines, regardless of whether these were disposable or reusable. Her kitchen rituals were very interesting to watch. Of all participants, she was the most dynamic: turning, bending, reaching, storing, preparing the food, cleaning the dishes, serving food, talking to the children, etc. She was also fast, to the point of seeming “flow”. These dynamics seemed to be the result of a more spacious kitchen architecture and a larger amount of people involved in the action versus all other participants. In all of these movements there was a system of implements with different degrees of accessibility: a towel hanging on her shoulder where she would continuously dry her hands from whatever made them wet during the cooking process; at least two dishrags on the sink, which were used to do the dishes throughout her cooking process in the exact same way the older mother participant did it (hot water and dish soap, etc.); another bigger hand towel to dry the dishes before storing; a kitchen towel hanging from one of the lower cabinets right below the sink area; paper towels by the sink. While she did not mention any of her reusable implements as an “essential” cleaning tool, she didn’t seem to be conscious of how much she would actually use them during her every day routines. Everything happened at the same time; her cooking and cleaning performance and the use of disposable or reusable implements did not seem to follow any particular order. There were no obvious regularities, but many “micro situational adjustments”, one after the other. She would dry her wet fingers in a split second by touching the towel on the shoulder, use the same towel to dry the last couple of dishes and the counter area where they were; she would use the towel hanging just below the sink right after doing some dishes, but she would use a paper towel as well for any of these. Like the older mother, she also had a bunched up ball of paper towels that followed her everywhere, but she would dispose of it sooner and begin a new one shortly after. Beginning

to end of her evening routine, she disposed about three of these “bunched-up” balls of damp paper towels. This seemed to be because she would clean many more messes with a given “ball” of paper towels versus the older mother. While she specifically referred to the “accessibility” of paper towels during our interview, in reality they seemed to be in equal standing versus all of these other reusable towels in the action. In the midst of her “everyday” motions, it truly seemed that her use of all these implements had less to do with hygiene or functionality, reusability or disposability, and more to do with how accessible they were in a fraction of a second; how close to a given surface, object or situation out of the many she was juggling. If she had left the bunched up paper towel in the kitchen peninsula and was closer to the towel hanging by the sink, she would use the towel by the sink. If she was away from the countertops, she would use the towel hanging on her shoulder, etc. Other than certain dishrags, which she primarily used to do the dishes, these other reusable towels seemed to be used interchangeably to dry hands, dry dishes, wipe up water from the sink, crumbs from the table, etc. But in all the seeming chaos, beginning to end, her cooking and cleaning performance was flawless. The fact that there was no apparent pattern or cycle in her performance did not make it less masterful. Much on the contrary, she managed the chaos by joining in its randomness, becoming one with it in a way that had her cook homemade hamburgers, peel corn, bake beans, serve the food, eat with her family, and all the while clean the surfaces and have the dishes cleaned, dried and stored in a little less than an hour.

In looking at the use of disposable and reusable cleaning implements holistically, and other than the specific messes or situations they may face, I also evaluated an additional dynamic that may be at play. My interpretation for these choices draws from many of the theoretical sources I have discussed so far. To begin with, we have seen the power of “habitus” in determining participant’s choices and feelings towards cleaning. In particular, there is an aspect of their cleaning “habitus” that relates to the management of germs as a way to prevent disease. Although all participants recognized this as “common knowledge”, the strength of this habitus was different among participants. In other words, although they all consistently expressed a strong and genuine concern for germs, in reality, not all of them acted on this concern nor felt it the same way. This would in turn also vary the level of perceived “danger” among

them. Also, we saw that the presence of children in the household seems to increase participant’s sensitivities towards many “dangers” in the kitchen space even more. Mary Douglas (2007) reminds us that rituals are one of the ways in which humans manage their “dangers”. Further, the indeterminacy that results from the presence of children also serves as “training ground” for these mothers who, throughout the many processes of “situational adjustment”, also become masterful in “processes of regularization”. As explained by Sally F. Moore (1978), rituals are also a human solution against such indeterminacy. In the end, I believe that all of these theoretical elements have a role to play in participant’s overall choice of having reusable versus disposable implements in their kitchens. In this, I am assuming that their level of perceived “danger” will also determine the level and strength of their cleaning rituals. Then, specific life circumstances, values and priorities would dictate the nature and content of such rituals. This includes the predilection for the use of a reusable or disposable implement as a “prop” to clean. Table 8 summarizes this logic, beginning with my overall observation of participant’s primary use of reusable and/or disposable implements in their everyday routines. I am then detailing the rationale behind each of these choices based on the key principles discussed above.

Table 8 Componential Definition on the “Everyday” Use of Reusable versus Disposable Implements

	Younger no kids	Younger mother	Older mother	Older no kids
Implement Choices	REUSABLE	REUSABLE/DISPOSABLE	DISPOSABLE/REUSABLE	DISPOSABLE
Had Children?	No	Yes	Yes	No
Habitus around germs?	Mild	Moderate	High	High
Perceived "danger"?	Mild or None	High	Highest	Moderate
State of "rituals"	Underdeveloped	Developed	Highly developed	Developed
Key values and considerations	Ecologically conscious & tight budget drives use of reusable implements	Tight budget & strong passed-on rituals specific to motherhood drive use of certain reusable implements; focus on children getting sick drive use disposable	Strong passed-on rituals specific to motherhood drive use of certain reusable implements; need/want simpler life drives use of disposable	Rituals developed to meet her own needs for personal comfort and need/want simpler life drives use of disposable

Finally, in using all of these tools, participants also experienced several tensions. As it happened with cleaning after the kitchen fires of the nineteenth century, cleaning the stove was one of those dreaded, complex chores that none of the participants had made part of their “everyday” routines. Some stoves, such as that of the participants with children, were gas stoves that had to be taken apart in order to clean. The older mother would experience less messes in hers versus the younger mother, even though she did remember the days where she used to fry chicken for her son, making her stove an even messier endeavor. Regardless, they would both postpone this chore for later. The young and old participants without children had glass top stoves but still these were stained. Removing those would also happen later or not at all. As discussed in “The Action” section of this Chapter, these were “everyday schisms” that had to be dealt with later, separately, and by means of a different ritual. On top, most of the cleaning products that “worked” on these and other “tougher messes” were, by design, meant to be reused. However, the kinds of messes involved in this task were also particularly disgusting, which placed participants in a tough situation: while they wished they could dispose of the implements and their mess, they couldn’t. When prompted about what else they could use that was not reusable, their general response was that paper towels were not meant to handle these. Even if a paper towel was “super strong” or “super thick”, it would become “too much” for other “everyday” purposes like using as a napkin, covering food in the microwave, draining produce, etc.

4.04.4 The Stage: Research Findings and Discussion

As I studied the history of kitchens in America, I became inspired by Foucault’s idea of architecture as a way to “make people docile” as well as that of Steward as a way to “survive”. Kitchens were built not only around the need for cooking, but also as a space designed for a specific social flow and movement of bodies: servants separate from nobles, women separate from men, family together, family apart. As I will elaborate in section 4.04.4.2, the kitchen layouts of my participants, which corresponded to the architectural trends of the time their houses were built, indeed influenced social

dynamics with their families and visitors. Changes in technological advances also dramatically changed the physical layout and the dynamics in the kitchens, with technologies that enabled the preservation of pre-cooked foods, the stove, the refrigerator and accessible water, electricity and gas. All of these elements continued to evolve until today, along with a more elevated cultural perception of cooking as a social, creative and even leisure act versus of another “chore” to do. Kitchens have become a space to showcase to others, to share with others, and indeed the heart of household family dynamics (Gdula 2007).

All of these led me to think about my participant’s kitchens in a different way, the “stage” were their performances took place for others to see, the “social field” were habitus would unfold. My analysis of cleaning kitchen dynamics would be incomplete without a basic understanding of these settings.

4.04.4.1 Their Homes

According to housing records I found in the Hamilton County Auditor archives, there was a range of years in which my participants’ houses were built. Table 9 below summarizes my findings, which I confirmed during my visits:

Table 9 Architectural Detail of Participant’s Houses

Participant	Year Built	Description
Younger without kids	1890	Large house converted into apartments; 5,740 sq ft; 4.5 baths; rented
Older mother	1929	Single family; 1,239 sq ft.; 3 beds, 1 bath; owned
Younger mother	1953	Single family; 1,368 sq ft.; 3 beds, 1 bath; owned
Older without kids	1984	Condo; 930 sq ft.; 2 beds, 1.5 baths; owned

Just with the information above, one can see that the size and type of home seems to vary with the size of the household at a given point in time. While both participants with children lived in a mid-sized, single family home, participants without children lived in a smaller apartment or condo.

4.04.4.2 Their Kitchens

Although some of these houses have been remodeled over time, kitchen layouts seem to correspond to trends over the years. For instance, the 1890 large house, now converted into apartments,

had a rather small kitchen, located away from the main living area and the rest of the rooms. It had just enough space to accommodate basic appliances and a small two-chair table, which was also loaded with things on top. This kitchen had no visibility to other areas in the house and had no space to accommodate more than two people comfortably. In fact, during one of our evening visits, a friend of the participant came to join for dinner, which was served in the kitchen but then walked over to the dining area where, according to the participant, most of her gatherings with friends took place. Interestingly, and following today's culture in kitchens, a "gathering" did occur while *making* dinner. It was the lack of space that pushed it to the dining area. Normally however, she would take her dinner to yet another closed room she used as a family room and eat while watching TV. As for the single family house built in 1929, it still had the kitchen located in the back of the house. This was also a rather small kitchen but, although separated by walls, it was immediately connected to the dining and family rooms via open passages. It very much resembled the "bungalow" house style described in Gdula 2008. Again, although the participant described the kitchen as a place where people would tend to automatically gather, most of the "everyday" living and eating action happened in the contiguous family room, where there was more space. In an average day, this "empty nester" participant would take whatever she prepared in the kitchen on a tray to the family room and eat it while watching TV. The single family house built in 1953 also had the kitchen in the back of the house. However, consistent with the architectural trends of the 1950s, it was a ranch, single story home with a much larger kitchen area – about twice as big as that of the bungalow house—that accommodated cabinets, appliances, and a small dining table. Different from the other two, this kitchen was completely open to the dining area, with only a peninsula counter separating the two. A small table inside the kitchen area was spacious enough to accommodate three of her kids for breakfast time. This was the only house where the kitchen seemed to be a truly multipurpose spot. Household dynamics were also quite different from the other homes, with children and husband continuously coming in and out of the kitchen. Children would sit at the peninsula to eat, to do homework or simply watch and talk with the participant as she went over her kitchen "flows". Lastly, the condo built in 1984 was the only home that had the kitchen nearly at its entrance. While still delimited by walls, it had a large opening by the sink

area that faced the dining and living areas. Although this was the only kitchen that had full visibility to the rest of the living areas, it was not conducive to any kind of gatherings in the kitchen. It was uncomfortable even for two people to move in it, as was my experience during kitchen observation exercises. The opening by the sink seemed to be exclusively intended to enhance visibility to the rest of the house and perhaps enable conversation for the person doing dishes. Interestingly, being the kitchen of a condo built in the 1980s, it seem to combine the space efficiency of the early twentieth century with the exposing of the kitchen right in front of the home as a “work of art”. Like other participants living alone, the kitchen would be used exclusively to prepare her meals, which she would typically take with her and eat while watching TV in the living area.

Table 10 below summarizes these and other overall observations of kitchens.

Table 10 *Componential Definition of Kitchen Architectures in Everyday Dynamics*

	Small kitchen, detached	Large kitchen, attached
Movement?	Less traffic	Highest traffic
Kitchen messes?	Mostly associated with cooking (indoor, “culture”)	Associated with cooking and also the outside (outdoor, “nature”)
Where eats?	Eat elsewhere	Eat in the kitchen
Cleaning concerns?	Less concern with ingestion of “chemicals” outside of kitchen	Higher concern for ingestion of “chemicals” in the kitchen
Cleaning agents?	Use of cleaning agents more freely outside of kitchen	Careful use of cleaning agents in the kitchen
Compensating behaviors and habits?	No compensating behaviors to “ingestion fear” in areas other than kitchen; hot water & dish soap not available there, but paper towels would “travel” with them as napkins and cleaning implements	Compensating behavior to “ingestion fear” of hot water and dish soap, mostly used with a dishrag

4.04.5 Props and Stage Summary

The study of the “cultural ecology” surrounding the actors is not only a fascinating layer of understanding but also a vital one. Observing the kitchen “cultural ecology” both as it is today and as evolved in history provides the context within which actions unfold and actors are revealed. It is a dynamic relationship: actors can conform to their stages and props as much as they can give shape to them. In this study, we see how there are some trends in the cleaning tools participants used as “props”

depending on their life circumstances. For example, antibacterial or “multipurpose” cleaners were prominent with mothers, even for the older one whose son no longer lived with her. When these were not appropriate to use (i.e. using near food), they had developed other, “safer” strategies for sanitation, like the use of hot water and dish soap. In this case, my hypothesis is that the concern with germs and need for sanitation is accentuated with the presence of children. The tools or “props” used in these kinds of performances eventually become part of their “processes of regularization”, a standard “ritual” to perform even after children are gone. This is also an example of altering levels of perceived “danger” associated with messes and cleaning in the kitchen in general. The level of “ritual” prescribed to them will vary accordingly, as well as the cleaning tools they choose. As we look at the particular actors, their attitudes, stories and beliefs, we also see interactions with other variables such as their cleaning habitus or passed-on traditions, their budget constraints or certain beliefs and values such as the ecologically conscious participant. Lastly, the houses of our participants seem to match their needs according to a particular “life stage” they are in or were in. The corresponding kitchen architecture of these houses influences the activities performed in them, particularly where eating takes place and how much cleaning is needed due to the amount of traffic that the given physical layout allows. With all of this it is evident that just knowing about the actors or the action itself is not enough: all these factors indeed weigh in any acting performance in the kitchen, sometimes independent from actors age, family structure or ideals.

Chapter 5

Summary of Results, Conclusions and Recommendations

The anthropological study of “everyday” cleaning practices in U.S. households led me to the worlds of “ritual” and “dramatic performances”, a path that yielded new perspectives to the design of products for the kitchen space. Beyond trying to understand what individuals think, feel or say they need, I had an opportunity to learn about what they *do*, how they do it and why they might be doing it. In the weeks that I visited my participants, I looked at the total cultural scene playing in their kitchens, the “stage” within which “cleaning performances” were occurring every day, with its actors, props, spectators and script. Many of these considerations were outside of traditional “market research” previously performed by the client; they added an additional layer of learnings they had little data on. The following text summarizes key results and recommendations for the “cleaning performances” that I observed. I will again divide the summaries in the domains of “The Actors”, “The Action”, “The Props” and “The Stage”, followed by a holistic overview or results and recommendations.

5.01 The Actors

Looking at participants as “actors” playing in the kitchen space has implications beyond what one can elicit via one-time interviews and observations. Victor Turner (1986) calls humans a “homo-performance” animal because, as Ervin Goffman (1973) suggests, he sees individuals as continuously “performing” for others. There is also a certain “script” that they follow, in the words of Pierre Bourdieu, an “embodied history” that has been taking shape within them since childhood. These considerations led me to three key factors to consider as we evaluate people performing in their kitchens: (1) their habitus or “embodied history”; (2) the spectators present in their lives; and (3) the role they perceive themselves playing in society.

Different circumstances with these three factors yielded different emotional responses to their current cleaning performances. First of all, the presence of important “spectators” seemed to drive a lot of their actual cleaning practices. For those who either had or currently have children as their main

“spectators”, cleaning performances were an intrinsic and important part of their lives. They tended to clean more frequently and more thoroughly versus those that did not have frequent “spectators” to “perform” for and whose practical tolerance for things unclean was much higher. This was the case regardless of age. Second, the “embedded history” or “habitus” that participants carried and, most importantly, the effect that it had on them was different. The last 150 years of American domestic history reveal a dramatic change in the expectations or “script” for “performing” in the kitchen, particularly due to breakthrough technological advances and remarkable socio-political changes, including the world wars, the civil rights movement and the women’s liberation movement, among others. This enables the possibility of marked generational differences in “cleaning habitus”, which I saw in the overall attitudes, beliefs, triumphs and frustrations of older versus younger participants. Although all participants had developed strategies to ease and simplify their overall household chores, younger participants valued and believed in *immediate results* more so than older participants. This seemed to correspond to the era of “quick results” in household cleaning and the relative prosperity their generation grew up in. On the other hand, older participants seem to value the *right results* more, often times equating this with physical effort, or to particular methods against the imminent “danger” of germs and bacteria. Again, these seem to correspond to the era of science, “danger”, endurance and sacrifice that they, their parents and grandparents experienced. In particular, their belief in physical effort to achieve the “right results” was at odds with the gradual physical and health challenges that they are starting to experience at this point in their lives, like back aches, arthritis, etc. Their specific concern with the “danger” of germs and bacteria was also shared by mothers. Regardless of age, motherhood was another important conduit to the strength of a “cleaning habitus” that might come “inherited” from older generations. When participants became mothers for the first time, their tendency was to adopt some of the traditional practices and beliefs from important women in their lives. This effect seemed to be the case regardless of whether their children still lived in the house or not. Third and last, the “role” that these four women saw themselves playing in society also determined their perception of “self” in cleaning. For younger participants, this factor seemed to be playing a bigger role than “habitus”.

The results from the factors of “habitus”, “social role” and the presence of “spectators” yielded interesting emotional dichotomies between both older and younger participants. To begin with, for all participants, the presence of “spectators” determined their actual cleaning practices, beyond the “cleaning habitus” they might have. This basically divided the participants into those that clean often and those that procrastinate cleaning. The next line of influence had to do with their “habitus” and their “role”. Older participants seemed most influenced by their “habitus”, which resulted in feelings of “pride” for the participant that cleaned and feelings of “shame” for the participant that didn’t. On the other hand, younger participants seemed most driven by the “role” they saw themselves playing in society. This resulted in feelings of “significance” for the younger mother and feelings “indifference” for the younger “cleaning procrastinator”, who did not see cleaning as an important aspect of the role she currently played in society. I am repeating the conceptual diagram that summarizes these findings in Figure 12 below.

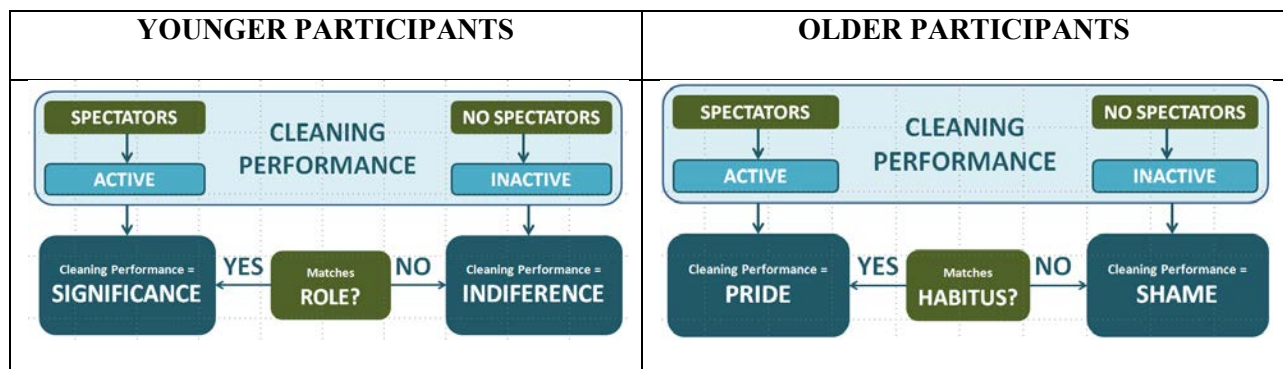


Figure 12 *Habitus, Spectators, Roles and Cleaning Attitudes of Older and Younger Participants (duplicate)*

5.01 The Action

As explained by Turner (1986), Moore and Myerhoff (1977) and Douglas (1966/2002), rituals can be secular. Beyond understanding individual “actors”, this has implications to the way in which we approach the study of everyday human action, like the household kitchen dynamics that I examined. As Turner (1986) suggests, rituals, much like theatrical performances, have phases of liminality, freedom and creativity in their content, and also follow an overall structure of a beginning, a climax and an end. This structure can be organized in the phases of: (1) “Breach”; (2) “Crisis”; (3) “Redressive action”; and (4) “Reintegration”. Complementary to this idea, Sally Moore (1978) proposes that these human

“performances” can also be looked as “processes of regularization” and “processes of situational adjustment”. At least theoretically, these processes constitute human action against the inherently “indeterminate” nature of social life. Lastly, the creative, yet structured and rule-bounded nature of rituals can induce an experience of extreme focus, a loss of self-consciousness or “flow” that is desired and very fulfilling to actors. We can attempt to identify experience traits of “flow” by paying special attention to certain cues in action, like the experience of being in “autopilot mode”, the level of perceived “danger”, the level of “negotiation” needed, moments of tension or “worry” and the clarity of results and “feedback” along the course of the action. Everyday household cleaning practices can be analyzed through all of these theoretical lenses.

To begin with, most if not all activities in the kitchen can have the potential for “breach”, followed by “crisis”, which has to be restituted. “Breaches” in the kitchen can be of three types: (1) “unexpected breaches”; (2) “purposeful breaches”; and (3) “cumulative breaches”, which take more time to develop. “Unexpected breaches” were most common with younger participants for two reasons: their relatively lower level of experience in cleaning and the presence of younger kids. “Purposeful breaches” were the most common among participants and they varied in kind. The magnitude and complexity of these would be proportional to the number of people or “spectators” involved in the kitchen action. Invariably, all participants would develop strategies to simplify their expected, everyday “purposeful breaches” as much as they could. This is especially true for older participants, whose lives became, and they wanted them to stay, much simpler. The simplicity in “breaches” found with older participants also matches their making of simpler, and often times perceived as healthier, “everyday” meals. Regardless of age or presence of children though, all participants would make very simple breakfasts, if any, during weekdays. Lastly, “cumulative breaches” took more time to form or be perceived as “dangerous”. These perceptions would be highly driven by sensorial cues or “conventional knowledge” about hygiene.

“Crisis” can be understood by the types of kitchen messes and level of “purification” or “separation” prescribed to them. Most participants described the kinds of “clean” or kinds of “cleaning” in gradients or “levels”. Participants with children understood these in terms of the cleaning *they* do or have to do. The

younger participant without children described these in a hypothetical fashion and in terms of “other people”, significantly distancing herself from it. Across all participants, the different kinds of messes found in “crisis” belonged to the following classifications, from the most “dangerous” and difficult to manage, to the least “dangerous” and easier to manage: (1) germs/bacteria, which required special rituals of sanitation; (2) surfaces in contact with body parts and bodily secretions; (3) formless, ambiguous, composite substances; (4) separating outside things from the inside; and (5) matter out of place. Sanitation rituals in the kitchen were the most interesting and complex, with many rules and tension points. This is because the cleaning protocol assigned to each “crises” was dependent on the level of “danger” associated with the mess. In this case, messes associated with germs, bacteria and “filth” would be paramount. All participants would experience all of these kinds of “crises”, which again would increase in complexity with the number of people involved and also the kinds of meals cooked and number of activities conducted in the kitchen.

“Redressive actions” varied across participants in different “life stages” and, as described before, according to the influence of their habitus, presence of spectators and main role they saw themselves playing in society. Factors such as having children and their years of experience also seem to play a role. Having young children in the house increased the amount of “unexpected breaches”. This served as a “training ground” to their eventual developing of “processes of regularization” that worked, as in the case of the older mother. But for the time being, both younger participants seemed to either embrace or be subjected by the indeterminacy of their cleaning situations in the kitchen, engaging in, for the most part, many processes of “situational adjustment”. The older participant without children, like her contemporary, had developed more “processes of regularization”. However, these were less in amount and complexity and were clearly tailored to her individual habits along the years versus the older mother, who still carried habits from when her son still lived with her. Finally, because their everyday “purposeful breaches” were expected and familiar, all participants had developed certain “processes of regularization” that were more structured and consistent. Especially for those “crises” who were perceived as more dangerous, these were the situations were that produced the most masterful acts of cleaning, even

resembling a kind of cleaning “flow”. Figure 13 below is a duplicate of the conceptual diagram with the basic components of a model I developed based on my observations of cleaning action in the kitchen, within with “flow” seemed to be more possible. Once again, the final version of the model was adopted by the client and should remain confidential to the purposes of this thesis.



Figure 13 *Components of Kitchen Cleaning Flow Model (duplicate)*

Finally, “reintegration” of surfaces and objects coming out of the cleaning performance ritual would vary with the level of tolerance from the actors, with the mothers having less tolerance to “dirt” versus participants without children. In general, reintegration was based on multiple criteria, including: (1) an “uncluttered” look; (2) a “shine” (or absence of a “haze” or streak); (3) surface feeling “smooth”; (4) surface not feeling “sticky or grungy”; (5) “fresh” scents (i.e. lemon); (6) “pleasant” scents (i.e. lavender); (7) “cleaner” scents (i.e. bleach, Lysol); (7) not being “smelly” (malodor); and (8) the absence of visible particles (i.e. “crumbs”, “hair”) and stains of all sorts (i.e. “rings” around sink, on the toilet). There were also instances of everyday “schism” particularly with cleaning the stove and cleaning reusable cleaning implements that would become dirty in the process. Both of these would not be part of her “everyday” cleaning rituals but be left to clean by means of a different kind of “planned” ritual to be performed at a later point in time.

5.03 The Props and the Stage

As suggested in Julian Steward’s theory of cultural ecology (1955), the cultural understanding of everyday actions in the kitchen would not be complete without an understanding of the history of the

evolution of technology used as “props” and the environment and architecture of her kitchen as “stage”. Once again this history, particularly as it related to advances in cooking technologies, urban plumbing and electricity, as well as the public’s growing knowledge on the effects of the use of pesticides, the bacterial transmission of disease, and the ecological footprint due to consumerism dictated much of the evolution of cleaning practices, products and technologies used today in the kitchen.

For instance, in terms of cleaning tools, the younger “cleaning procrastinator” seemed the most ecologically conscious. An example of this her preference for “greener” cleaners such as Clorox Green Works, the frequent use of vinegar as a cleaning solution, and of reusable cleaning implements such as sponges and a mop with reusable pads. At the other side of the spectrum was the older “cleaning procrastinator”, who would nearly refuse to use any reusable implements. Instead, she preferred disposable cleaning implements such as a mop with reusable pads, wet wipes and paper towels. The older mother seemed more balanced in her use of disposable and reusable cleaning implements. She used dishtowels exclusively for doing the dishes and had a separate system of towels to clean other areas in the kitchen and the rest of the house. Her use of disposable implements was driven by their ease of use and no need to do “another chore” to clean them. The younger participant with children was the one that showed the most dynamic in the kitchen. In my observations of her “everyday” cleaning performances, the use of disposable or reusable implements was more a matter of accessibility. To both younger participants, their choice to use reusable implements was also influenced by their tight budget. In this sense, reusable cleaning implements and cleaners that lasted longer were perceived as a better value. There were also specific products and cleaning behaviors that all participants developed in response to a tension with cleaning chemicals and food and skin contact, which was shared by all participants. Both mothers trusted the use of dish soap as a “safe” detergent for the kitchen which, along with hot water, helped sanitize their surfaces. On the other hand, participants without children would use plain water with their disposable or reusable implement of choice for most everyday messes. A cleaning spray will be used occasionally and they made this determination based on criteria they had developed like the “five second rule” or the level of “danger” they had assigned to given mess. Finally, the age and architecture of their homes did seem to

play a role in the dynamics of cooking, eating and cleaning, due to differences in traffic and the specific area where they ate.

5.04 Conclusions: A Holistic Overview

The following is a holistic summary of the most important insights versus the hypotheses outlined in Table 1 of Chapter 2, which represent the client's fundamental query for this research.

Beginning with the first hypothesis (H1), generational differences did influence some of the actions, beliefs, attitudes, values and symbolic significance of household cleaning. But beyond the mere individual effects of age, such as added experience in cleaning practices or increased physical difficulties, there were other factors that explained why this was the case. One of them was the “embedded history” or “habitus” that participants carried and developed since childhood; the “script” they used or referred to in their cleaning performances. An example of this was how younger participants seemed to value “immediate results” more so than older participants, who still exalted the “right results”. Another, somewhat related one is the “role” that the participants saw themselves playing in society. Some saw themselves as mothers, some as workers, and one was at odds with what her role was after retirement. The social expectations and norms associated with all of these produce the so called “generational differences” in cleaning attitudes and values; a “likeness of consciences” as Durkheim would say. Sally F. Moore (1978) also supports this conclusion when she says that in understanding social interactions one cannot “do away with the fact that larger political and economic context exist, that *common symbols, customary behaviors, role expectations, rules, categories, ideas and ideologies, rituals and formalities shared by the actors* with a larger society are used in these interactions as *the framework of mutual communication and action*” (1978:40)

The second hypothesis had to do with the effects of having or not having children. This also did influence the actions, beliefs, attitudes, values and symbolic significance of household cleaning practices as well as their choices in selecting cleaning methods, products and tools. Becoming a mother represented a significant shift in the lives of these women, who sought the advice or simply emulated the

practices of their women predecessors, some of which included the use of reusable versus disposable cleaning implements. This is acted as an added layer to their overall “habitus”, which seem to be different from the women without children. Although all participants mentioned germs, bacteria and overall health as one of the primary reasons they clean, women with children seemed most particular about this. Already a strong part of the “habitus” of older women, and although all participants assigned a certain level of “danger” to different kinds of messes, this was further accentuated with motherhood. Their cleaning practices and cleaning tool choices reflected this, especially when it came to the kinds of cleaners they used in their everyday kitchen cleaning. It also produced highly developed cleaning rituals against these perceived more “dangerous” situations; confirming Douglas’s insight that “danger is controlled by ritual” (2002:20). The highly developed nature of these rituals also seem to produce experiences of “loss of self-consciousness” or “flow” where participants moved about their everyday cleaning in the kitchen in a sort of “autopilot” mode, not having to think much. Csikszentmihalyi (1975) confirms this observation in his examination of play activities “which rely on physical danger to produce centering of attention, and hence flow” (1975:48). Although developed ritual and “flow” can also be produced by sheer experience over the years, these effects were prominent with the mothers, especially the younger one whose children were still young and still living in the house.

But beyond having children or not, living alone or with fewer “spectators” in itself played a great role in the nature of their cleaning performances. Simply put, participants would actively clean or procrastinate cleaning according to the frequency and amount of important spectators influenced by their everyday performances. While cleaning performances were an active everyday endeavor with participants that had a more or less continuous set of important spectators to influence, participants without spectators would procrastinate cleaning more easily. When we combine the factors of “habitus”, “role” and “spectators” an interesting dynamic arises. Aside from the presence of “spectators” and the resulting cleaning practices, older participants seemed most influenced by what their “habitus” dictates. As such, their particular cleaning performances would result in feelings of *pride* for the one that actively cleaned and *shame* for the one that didn’t. In the case of younger participants, they seemed most influenced by

their perceived “role”, which resulted in feelings of significance for the mother, who actively cleaned, and of *indifference* for the woman without children, who procrastinated cleaning.

Finally certain additional life circumstances also influenced the way these “actors” performed cleaning in the kitchen. First of all, their house choices adjust to both the size of their families as well as their income. These choices carry within them a certain architecture of kitchens, which dictates much of the dynamics in the kitchen. Second of all, the coming of age also caused a shift the mindset of older participants, who both sought a simpler life and streamlined processes; after all, they were much more in control of their every day. Tight budgets would also drive some of the cleaning choices, like the use of reusable implements which were perceived as more cost-effective. Finally, other values such as the environmental concerns seen with the younger participant without children would also play an important role in their choices of cleaning tools.

Table 11 below summarizes all of these insights:

Table 11 *Componential Definition on the “Everyday” Attitudes, Values and Practices of Participants*

	Younger: Born in the 1980s		Older: Born in the 1950s	
Had Children?	No	Yes	Yes	No
Cleaning Attitude?	Indifference	Significance	Pride	Shame
Overall Cleaning Practices?	Procrastinates	Active	Active	Procrastinates
Everyday Spectators?	Not often	Constant	Moderate	Not Often
Clear Social Role?	Clear: Worker, Friend	Clear: Mother	Clear: Mother, Worker	Unclear: Retired
Habitus: Cleaning Values?	Immediate Results	Immediate Results	Right Results	Right Results
Habitus: Inherited Practices?	Mild	Strong	Strong	Mild
Habitus: Germ Concern?	Mild to None	High	Highest	Moderate
Perceived "Danger"?	Mild or None	High	Highest	Moderate
State of "Rituals"?	Underdeveloped	Developed	Highly Developed	Developed
Amount of "Rituals"?	Low	High	Highest	Low
Everyday Implements	Reusable	Reusable/Disposable	Disposable/Reusable	Disposable
First level everyday cleaner (observed)	Plain water	Hot water + dish soap	Hot water + dish soap	Plain water
Second level everyday cleaner (claimed)	Clorox Green Works	Mr. Clean Multipurpose	Lysol Multipurpose	Clorox wipes; Windex + pt

House and kitchen architecture?	Built 1890, rented apt. smallest, closed kitchen	Built 1953, owned single family; biggest, open kitchen	Built 1929, owned single family; moderate, semi-open kitchen	Built 1984, owned condo; small, semi-open kitchen
Other Comments & Considerations	Ecologically conscious & tight budget drives use of reusable implements	Tight budget & strong passed-on rituals due to motherhood drive use of reusable implements; focus on children getting sick drive use disposable	Strong passed-on rituals due to motherhood drive use of reusable implements; want simpler life drives use of disposable	Rituals to meet her own needs for comfort; want simpler life drives use of disposable

5.05 Recommendations

The insights generated with this project were very fruitful to the client, who decided to adopt many into their product design and overall research strategies. While it was flattering to learn that some of the results of this project were useful enough for the client to treat as a competitive advantage, my ability to fully disclose the details behind my recommendations to the client is somewhat limited. As such, the following provides a general overview of some of the main recommendations coming out of this project.

5.05.1 Design of Survey Instrument

As outlined in Chapter 2.04, one of my deliverables was to propose the design of a quantitative survey instrument that could help generalize and/or confirm some of the insights from this research. I delivered such design as a next step in continuing with this project and their bigger efforts, which have now been more than a year in the making. As an example, one of the sections of the survey had to do with a deeper understanding of messes in general. While the client had studied cleaning tasks before, they had little data on the specific messes generated in the kitchen space. Furthermore, the classification of messes by “type” and level of “danger” was also recommended. Another section considered some of the “habitus” elements discussed in this thesis, such as the dominating cleaning practices, beliefs and values as they diffuse over time. To complement this and aside from data on the geographic location and type of

homes, I also recommended to look at the age of houses and specific layouts of kitchens. The insight on the architectural details of the home also inspired additional product storage and packaging ideas.

5.05.2 Product Design Recommendations

The creation of several conceptual frameworks for the dynamics of cooking and cleaning in the kitchen also proved very useful to the client. An example of one of these is the model of “everyday kitchen flow” that I created, based on which a product design strategy was delineated for their team and their customers. An early execution of these models resulted in the creation of an innovation pipeline for one of the client’s newest product ideas, the first of which was recently launched to the market.

I also recommended product design alternatives that specifically address some of the tensions and “redressive” criteria outlined in this thesis. These included: (1) the design of cleaning implements that are biodegradable versus synthetic sponges and brushes; (2) the use of alternative cleaning formulations that provide equal or better sanitation efficacy and at the same time are non-hazardous with food, skin and the environment; analogous to participants descriptions of dish soap; and (3) the creation of products that reduce the amount of steps and number of products involved in certain tasks. These specifically address some of the circumstances described by my participants, such as the need to reduce complexity and wastefulness, and the reduction of cost and physical effort without compromising the “right” results. Although I am not allowed to disclose much more of the specific product and marketing strategies to be pursued by the client, it is exciting to see how one of these finally came to the market, becoming part of the “cultural scene” of household kitchens in the U.S.; a new, better, and useful “prop” for actors to use and incorporate into their daily “rituals”.

5.05.3 Community Implications

Although controlled hygienic interventions in child-care centers and schools in the United States have already proven their success in reducing the transmission of infections (Aiello and Larson 2002), the same cannot be said about common household cleaning practices. This is an important issue as stated before, since demographical and social pattern shifts in the United States are making the home environment an important source of spread of infectious diseases (Larson et al. 2004). This project has

opened kitchen sanitation possibilities that are much easier for consumers to effectively apply and incorporate into their daily rhythms. As stated before, it has inspired products designed to be easier to use, to reduce the amount of cleaning tools and steps needed, and to better fit their everyday kitchen “flows”. This reduction in the complexity typically associated with “controlled” sanitation procedures can improve compliance with practices that could actually yield better health outcomes in the home. Moreover, the specific formulations developed were proven to provide equal or even better sanitation versus most multipurpose cleaners and sprays, while also significantly reducing the environmental footprint in terms of “down the drain” waste and biodegradability versus other cleaning tools. With this, they not only promote healthier homes, but also healthier environments.

That said, it can take some time before consumers fully adopt these new ways of easier cleaning. In fact, the replacement of old practices and beliefs with these easier, safer and potentially more convenient alternatives are still a hypothesis to be confirmed. In the meantime, the introduction of these products to the market can also result in consumers adding these to their already complex systems of cleaning and an increase, versus the intended reduction in cost.

5.05.4 Reflection

Traditionally, consumer goods companies have been criticized for persuading consumers to buy an increasing amount of products through the many advertizing mechanisms at their disposal, with the objective of increasing profits and without considering the needs of consumers and communities. With the introduction of anthropology, those concerns can be tempered as anthropologists enter this dynamic to represent consumers’ point of view in a way that can yield a positive shift, making this dialectic relationship to be more consumer-centric. This is what inspired me to pursue anthropolorfgy five years ago. I believed there was a better way we could engage to inspire product innovation that would truly improve consumers’ lives and also the world we live in.

I was inspired to pursue this project to showcase how anthropology can help uncover and make visible consumer insights that represent their needs and that can actually have a positive impact. I am fascinated with the possibility to enable a positive shift not only in the lives of the participants that shared

their time and their stories with me, but also to household communities as we enabling the development of kitchen technologies that allow doing more with less, preserving both economical and natural resources. I believe that we can have an important role to play in facilitating such trends in the United States, improving the market landscape of consumable products and the use of resources, and as consumers and companies become increasingly aware and interested in each other. No change would be possible without knowledge, without acknowledgement, without open dialogue and communication. And as anthropologists, we are especially equipped to mediate and enable this relationship in a positive way. After this project, I can't wait to see what is to come; the innovation supported by the insights originated by my research and the positive impact that it can have on people.

Chapter 6 Reflection

Much has changed since 2010. I am no longer in my twenties. I've had two daughters since. And the master's degree that was so exciting back then, has multiple times gone up and down the hills of ever changing lists of priorities, the unexpected and the feeling of butterflies that comes with being a mother and wanting, so bad, to be a good one. I have reheated my coffee way too many times. I have left some things behind. I have lost and gained perspectives. And in much of it, anthropology has been, playing in the background like music.

Since the very first semester of this journey five years ago, I soon understood this was inevitable. I could not help it but to be continuously aware of “the human condition” of people around me, the situations I was facing and the things I was seeing and touching. Through books, articles and documentaries that had nothing to do with my previous engineering textbooks and gadgets it was clear to me that I was no longer going to be able to look at the world the same. My eyes were opened and all of the sudden everything that I used to take for granted began to look unfamiliar. I was detached from the rest for a moment; a somewhat scary feeling of loosing myself, but also a kind of renewal, a new way of looking at things, at life, the life of others, my own life.

In all of it I am thankful. I have not learned about “others” as much as I have learned about myself. Anthropology has taught me perspective and, with it, forgiveness and a new sense of compassion. Anthropology has taught me about different cultures, how to see things from many vantage points, and therefore how to think differently. Because of this I have sometimes found myself in the fallacy of feeling like I know it all and can understand it all, the true lesson awaiting; that I am not always right and will never have the absolute truth, that there are things I might never fully comprehend, the most profound lessons of humbleness. Anthropology has taught me to feel my surroundings, a new sense of appreciation, to keep my senses wide open, to look and to listen better, which has helped me so much in raising my toddler daughter and my baby girl. It has taught me that there are things for which words and equations

just fall short; that I should embrace my own culture and should keep some of my rituals for my own sanity; that all of this is ok.

Most importantly for me, beyond my career and professional credentials, I feel anthropology has helped me advance as a person. Since that intimidating feeling of detachment that originally gave me so much perspective about the world around me, I have been able to reattach, reaffirm, reset and renovate. It has helped me transform old goals and relationships and to create new ones. It has given a new meaning and renewed value to family and friends that have proven beyond measure what love is and can be. Through life changes that I cannot begin to explain in this thesis, living anthropology has certainly played its role. With a new motivation and hope, and as I finally close this chapter and partake in the next stage of my life, I only wish to become a better me to others, to breathe in my life deeper and, in the process, attempt to leave a meaningful mark in this familiar unfamiliar world.

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Appendix A

Field Guide: Structured Interview

WEEK 1: Week of May 19th- INTRO, 2 hours

Key variables: External/Internal states and physical artifacts

The effects of age/life stage in consumers' attitudes, values & perceptions associated with cleaning & hygiene practices

A. INTRO- "ice breaker" (10 MIN)

1. Thank consumer for inviting you to her home; present yourself and your research assistant
2. *To ease note-taking and data collection, and to be able to focus on our conversations, we prefer video recording- Are you comfortable with this?* (If yes, initiate recording)
3. **Today's date is** (day & date) **and we are here in** (participant's FIRST name only) **home. Thank you for letting us visit you. We are going to begin with a quick review of the activities we will be doing together during the next three weeks.**
4. **(READ ALL OF THESE)**
 - o Research will span 3 weeks and 3 visits of approximately 1-2 hours at the most
 - o **You are the expert and the teacher. I do not know anything. Interviews will sound like I am either a five year old or an alien from Mars 😊**
 - o As a reminder, research will be divided in 4 parts:
 - Week 1, which is today, I will be primarily discussing your opinions, thoughts and feelings and will also do a home tour of some of the areas in your house.
 - Week 2, next week, I will visit you in the evening and will be primarily observing your evening routine. I will be basically a fly in the wall. 😊 ...and we will not have dinner.
 - Week 3 will be the same as week 2, but I will be observing your morning routine.
 - o **Do you agree to participate in all of these activities? Do you have any questions for me?**
 - o Explain confidentiality agreement and have consumer sign CDA
5. **INTRO (Unstructured)**- Briefly discuss "All about Me" and "All about my dreams & accomplishments" templates. Do not spend too much time on these. They are intended to "break the ice"

B. Rapid fire free-listing: Cultural consonance (language and implicit associations) (15 MIN)

1. *Now we are going to move into our main topic for today. To start warming our engines, we are going to play a game. I am going to say a word and you have 15 seconds to say out loud as many words that come to mind as possible. Don't try to make sense out of the words you say, the important thing is how many you are able to say in the given time. Just go with the flow and say whatever comes to mind, no matter what it is. Ok?*

Let's do a practice one. Ready? PEN

REPEAT FOR:

- Absorbency
- Clean
- Dirty
- Hygiene

* **Note-taker:** Close-up video record her and/or write down all the words

2. Discuss **Ideal Household Cleaning Experience** homework (Unstructured)
 - (At the very end of discussion)- When it comes to cleaning... what does "VALUE" mean to you?
Close up video tape her statement! 😊

C. **Home Tour: “Like aliens from Mars”:** (30MIN or ~10 MIN/ROOM)

MUST: [a] Kitchen, [b] bathroom(s), [c] dining place(s)

***Note-taker:** Make sure to video record everything

1. Before home tour: *Now we are going to begin our home tour portion of the visit, but before we do:*
 - a) *What is your favorite room in the house? How come? Tell me a story of a moment you’ve experienced in that room.*
 - b) *What is your least favorite room in the house? How come? Tell me a story of a moment you’ve experienced in that room.*

2. **Interview for each room:**

- a) *What happens in this room? What is it for?*
- b) *What do you do? Who else participates?*
 - **SPECIFIC TO BATHROOM**
 - *Why do you (i.e. shower, brush teeth, use toilet, etc.)? (Remember, “aliens from Mars ☺)*
Probe until “personal cleaning” and/or “hygiene” comes up.
 - *What does (personal cleaning, hygiene, health or however she called it) or means to you?*
 - *Are there any objects or tools you use in the bathroom for (personal cleaning, hygiene, health or however she called it)?*
 - *(I not mentioned) I see that you have toilet paper in this room. Does it play any role in the context of (personal cleaning, hygiene, health or however she called it)? How come?*
 - *What does skin health or skin hygiene mean to you? (VIDEO CLOSEUP, if possible)*

- c) *Do you clean this room? How come?*
 - *How do you know when it needs cleaning?*
 - *What’s the cleanest part of this room? How do you know? (take pictures)*
 - *What’s the dirtiest part of this room? How do you know? (take pictures)*
 - *What’s the best part of cleaning this room? How come? (Probe)*
 - *What’s the worst part of cleaning this room? How come? (Probe)*
 - *What’s the most important thing/area/item you are trying to clean? How come?*

2. **Measurements:**

* **Note-taker** Ask for a few minutes to take some measurements before moving into next room. Use template provided.

- a) Rough estimate of room area in feet
- b) Take measurements of countertops, sink, island, etc.
- c) Ask & note type, texture, color of countertops, sinks, etc.
- d) Ask & note type, size, color of appliances (i.e. kitchen)

D. **“Hero” Artifacts (25 MIN)**

1. *Now we are going to collect all the household cleaning tools you “cannot live without”.*
(Limit to five; record storage/area retrieved from, collect them on and place in table where interview can continue)
2. Using “Hero tools” template, record brief explanation of experiences and rationale for each:
 - *What is it for?*
 - *What do you like the most about it? How come?*
 - *Is there anything you would improve/change? How come?*
3. *Now pick your top 3 “hero” tools*

Laddering exercise template

- UP: *How does that make you feel?* (as “UP” as you can go)
- DOWN: *How do you know?*

4. *You mentioned earlier that “VALUE” means _____ when it comes to cleaning. Looking at all these tools, can you rank order them in terms of cleaning “VALUE”?*
 - Probe on: 1) product with highest value, 2) Product with lowest value, 3) “middle of the row”
5. *Any other comments, thoughts, ideas, insights you would like to share?*

E. HOMEWORK REVIEW & exit (5 MIN):

1. *Review Evening Spills & Messes Week 1 Diary Homework*
2. *Any questions on next week? Remember, we will be basically doing 2 things:*
 - *Observe how you go about your evening activities in the kitchen*
 - *Ask you some questions afterwards*

THANK YOU.

Appendix B
Project Proposal

Cleaning Performances in American Household Kitchens: A Study on the Effects of Age and Presence of Children in Consumers' Cleaning Attitudes, Beliefs, Values, and Practices

Mireilly Ann Rosado-Bonilla
MS Candidate, Applied Anthropology
University of North Texas

Susan Squires PhD, Chair
Alicia ReCruz PhD
Andrew Manning PhD

Client: BMA Innovation Consulting, Ohio

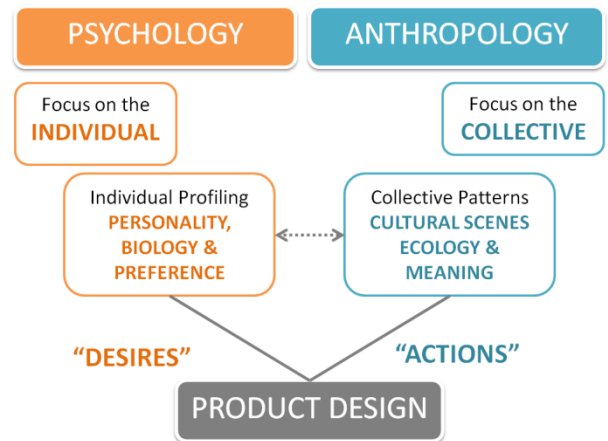
March 24, 2014

Summary of Project Issues

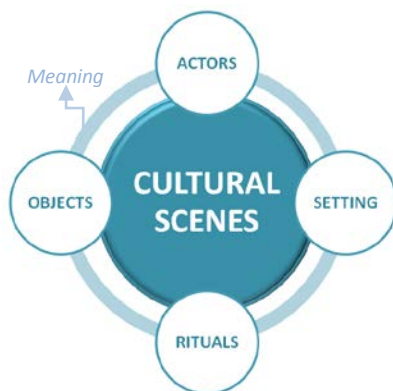
BMA Innovation Consulting is committed to serving consumers products that can play a more meaningful role in household cleaning. So far, their innovation department has used psychology-based principles and approaches that have helped them understand consumers’ preferences, attitudes and claimed needs in household cleaning. That said, little information has been collected on the active role that products play or could play as participants in the everyday dynamics of US consumers. An anthropological approach to the study of U.S. kitchens, as an important center of family interaction in U.S. households, should yield important insights to the design and development of products that can more effectively and more actively participate in those dynamics.

Deliverables

With this project I am fundamentally proposing a new approach to the identification of critical product design requirements. Figure on the right shows the key differences between the psychology-derived principles the organization is mostly using today vs. the anthropological lenses through which I will be conducting my research. Overall, I will be leveraging existing knowledge in the “individual desires” realm, connecting it to the collective situation & cultural context within which “cleaning action” emerges.



As a first step, BMA Innovation Consulting is interested in exploring innovation opportunities in the context of the household kitchen space. I will specifically do this by looking at kitchen dynamics in the morning and afternoon as everyday “cultural scenes” within which performance and action unfolds. In particular, I will be paying attention to four primary sub-units of study:



- The “social actors” involved
- The objects or “material culture” used or produced
- The setting within which the action takes place
- The “everyday” rituals that are performed

* In all of these, consumers’ systems of classification and meaning can be a great source of inspiration to guide the overall communication and product design innovation strategies of your business.

Overall, this project should answer questions such as:

- What are consumers’ general attitudes, values, beliefs and opinions around household cleaning? How do these relate to her everyday actions in the kitchen space?
- What are all the different “kinds” of cleaning actions that take place in everyday kitchen dynamics?
- What are all the different “kinds” of messes are produced? Who/what creates these?

- What are the products and tools that play a role? What kind of role are they playing?
- Is there a change in patterns found within different household structures? (i.e. different age groups and presence of kids)
- Is there a change in patterns found within different kitchen architectures? (i.e. space, layout, types of surfaces, etc.)
- What are the articulated or unarticulated tensions and compensating behaviors observed?
- What are important product characteristics and features that can help satisfy those tensions and better blend into the dynamics observed?

Research progress and results will be provided to the client in three formats:

1. Informal periodic updates to their core innovation team. Once a month, I will be included as one of the agenda topics within existing ongoing bi-weekly meetings. I will update the team on progress and key insights uncovered, mainly via short power point presentations.
2. Formal written report with detailed analysis and recommendations, tailored to both new product innovation ideas as well as potential structuring of their overall innovation strategies. This will be presented in one final core team meeting and then shared broadly with the team electronically, via their online technical report distribution system.
3. Brief share-outs with key stakeholders with main results and recommended actions. This will be a shorter version of the written report, to be delivered in the form of 1-2 page executive report, a power point presentation and/or video.

Project Design

The following presents an overview of the approach and scope of work I propose to be conducted in service of BMA Innovation Consulting programs.

- **Target Audience:** Research will begin with three weeks of in-home interaction (2 hrs / week) with four U.S. women living in the Cincinnati tri-state area as my main informants. Each woman will represent one of four strategic groups: (a) Age 18-34, no children; (b) Age 18-34; children 0-12 years old; (c) Age 50+, no children; (d) Age 50+; teenage-adult children. I will then attempt to generalize data and patterns discovered in these households via a quantitative survey instrument among a representative U.S. population sample.
- **Research Approach:**

Stage 1 Landscape assessment of existing knowledge- The client has already collected a wealth of demographic and attitudinal information around consumers claimed habits and practices in household cleaning. I will be given access to this data for analysis, with the intent of: (a) further informing details of my research design, (b) the construction of investigation instruments to be used, and (c) defining a baseline over which I can build upon, answering questions and identifying linkages and/or discrepancies between individual claims and observed household actions, whenever possible.

Stage 2 Rapid Ethnography / Participant observation- Whereas “qualitative research” is mainly defined by its “small base size” nature and typically characterized by a one-time, “one-on-one” individual interviews conducted in or outside of the home, the ethnographic approach focuses on the study of ordinary activities always in their naturally-occurring settings. As such, I’d like to begin my research with a “rapid ethnography” study spanning four weeks of observation / participation, situated during week-day “morning routines” and “afternoon/evening routines”. I will collect approximately 1-2 hours of data per week for each informant as follows:

- **Week 1: Structured and semi-structured interviews with key informants**
 - Picture collage of “ideal” vs. “current” household cleaning experience
 - General household cleaning beliefs, values and opinions
 - General discussion on current cleaning tools used
 - Taxonomy of different “kinds” of cleaning
 - Homework: 1-week diary of “evening” kitchen messes
- **Week 2: “Evening Scene” observations in the kitchen**
 - Observation
 - Short semi-structured interview on observed “scene”
 - Taxonomy of different “kinds” of evening messes
 - Homework: 1-week diary of “morning” kitchen messes and “cleanups”
- **Week 3: “Morning Scene” observations in the kitchen**
 - Observation
 - Short semi-structured interview on observed “scene”
 - Taxonomy of different “kinds” of morning messes; compare to evening
- **Week 4: Wrap-up, conclusions, product design ideas**

Stage 3 Initial Analysis of Ethnographic Data- I will use client’s recurring monthly meeting about two weeks after completion of ethnographic exercise to update the team and provide topline insights.

Stage 4 Final Analysis, Recommendations and Survey Instrument Proposal- About two months after topline presentation, formal written report and presentation brief will be delivered to the BMA Innovation Consulting core team. Based in the insights and per client’s request, I will also develop a proposal to the design of a quantitative survey instrument that can help generalize some of the patterns found amongst a representative sample of the U.S. population.

Timeline

STAGE 1	Weeks 1-4	Landscape Assessment and Ethnographic Research Preparation	
STAGE 2	Week 5	Objective	Key Variables
		Introduction to household; learn explicit & implicit notions on kitchen cleaning practices	External/Internal states & physical artifacts: The effects of age & presence of children stage in consumers’ attitudes, values & perceptions associated with cleaning & hygiene practices

	Week 6	“Evening Scene” participant/ observation	External states, observed behaviors and physical artifacts: The effects of age/life stage in observed cleaning and absorbency behaviors, habits and practices
	Week 7	“Morning Scene” participant/ observation	
	Week 8	Product Design Ideas and Wrap-Up	
STAGE 3	Weeks 9-10	Ethnographic analysis	
	Week 11	Topline Presentation of Ethnographic findings	
	Weeks 12-20	Final Presentation, Recommendations & Survey Instrument Proposal	

Student’s Background

Mireilly Ann Rosado-Bonilla received her bachelor’s degree magna cum laude in Electrical Engineering in 2003. Since then, she has developed professional experience working for a Fortune 500 company. Her competencies include mastery in technical product design, laboratory research and the setting of full scale manufacturing specifications. Since 2006, she has also developed professional experience in consumer research approaches spanning qualitative and quantitative research designs and advanced statistical analyses. More recently, and since 2010, she’s been a graduate student of the Department of Anthropology at the University of North Texas, seeking to obtain a MS degree in Applied Anthropology with a special interest in Health and Product Design applications.