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Department of Food, Nutrition & Health (Human Nutrition)
The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date Sept 19, 2000
ABSTRACT

The number of mothers entering paid employment, including shift work, has dramatically increased over the last half century. Current research suggests that working women still perform the majority of caring work at home, but does not specifically address how shift work affects women's roles and responsibilities in relation to feeding their families. The purpose of this qualitative study, thus, was to explore how evening and night-working women with young children feed their families and to describe women's perceptions and feelings about how the nutritional and socialization needs of their children are being met during their absences.

Twelve participants were recruited through notices placed in community newspapers and on bulletin boards and data were collected through conducting semi-structured interviews. Interviews were transcribed verbatim; data analysis occurred concurrently with data collection.

Various hardships and inconveniences were associated with evening shifts, including complex childcare arrangements, extra work feeding their families, and dissatisfaction with the mothers' own eating habits. Evening shifts resulted in less time for women to feed their children while the effects of extreme fatigue affected night-working women's abilities to feed and socialize their children. Women were concerned about their families not eating together frequently enough and their children's table manners and meal time conversations. Most women were embedded in feeding work associated with traditional gendered roles of "mothers;" varying levels of understanding and acceptance of this role were shown. Support networks, the age of children, and the shift and number of hours worked were all factors that affected women's abilities to combine shift work and the feeding and socializing of their families. Senior females were considered to be the preferred caregivers when mothers worked over meal times.

The findings suggest that while shift-working mothers are coping with feeding their families, some children, in particular school-aged children of evening working women, were identified as being at most risk of less desirable nutrition and socialization practices due to the absence of their mothers.
Dietitian/nutritionists and nutrition educators need to be cognizant of the challenges facing shift-working mothers and develop feeding and nutrition guidelines appropriate to the circumstances of individual families.
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1. INTRODUCTION & LITERATURE REVIEW

For various economic and social reasons, the number of women entering paid employment has increased over the last half century. At the same time, women continue to retain primary responsibility for child care and family coordination irrespective of their spouse's work schedule or their own employment status (Johnson, Duxbury & Higgins, 1996) hence facing conflicts as they attempt to combine paid work with the unpaid caring work they do at home. Working women are confronted daily with the realities of the "double day" or "second shift" (Devault, 1991; Hochschild, 1989/1997) where, upon their return from work outside the home, they face the multitude of activities involved in feeding their families, of which many tasks may be invisible to others.

With businesses wanting or being forced to become more profitable, or needing for technical reasons to keep their businesses operating for greater hours, more workers and a greater number of women are now having to work shift work as part of their work life (Kurumatani et al., 1994). In Canada, three million people (thirty per cent of the labour force) work some type of non-day schedule. This includes night workers, afternoon/evening workers and workers who rotate through various shifts over a defined period of time (Sunter, 1993). There are little data about how shift work affects women's roles and responsibilities in relation to feeding their families. To date, research on the feeding responsibilities of women who work outside the home has not focused on female shift workers. Much of the research on evening and night work has instead focused on shift-working men. In addition, research on evening and night work has focused on issues other than food and nutrition, presumably because the amount of involvement that men have with the feeding and socialization of their families tends to be lower than that of their female partners.

The purpose of this study is, thus, to explore how women who work evening or night shifts cope with feeding their families, especially young children, on the days they work an evening or night shift or are sleeping because of that work. This study also examines whether evening and night-working women perceive that the nutritional and socialization needs of their children are being met, and whether changes were made to either their children's eating habits or behaviours as a result of
the mothers' evening or night shifts. The study also explores how women understand and feel about being absent during family meal time periods, as well as who feeds their families, who socializes their children and how this is done when women are unavailable due to their work schedule.

Because an extensive literature search did not reveal any previous studies that specifically address shift-working women's practices and concerns regarding feeding their families, the literature review that comprises the remainder of this chapter looks at women's feeding work and shift work issues separately. The reasons why feeding work is considered "woman's work" as well as the gendered roles that mothers have in feeding and socializing their children will be looked at first, followed by an examination of incidence rates of women working outside the home and their entry into shift work. Lastly, a number of factors that affect shift-working women are reviewed.

1.1 Women & Feeding Work – The Gendered Role of Women

How revealing it is that caring work is simultaneously revered and devalued – promoted as central to womanhood, yet in some fundamental sense considered so demeaning that men have been unwilling to take it on (DeVault, 1991, p. 234).

It is not entirely understood why the work of running a household, including "food" work, continues to be so consistently assigned to women (DeVault, 1991), but a number of researchers (DeVault, 1991; Hochschild, 1989/1997; Lupton, 1996) have commented on some of the changes to family life that have occurred since industrialization in the U.S. They noted changes that emerged when men started to leave the agricultural "home" and enter the world of industry and commerce. These researchers also noted that at about the same time (around the 1830s), also in the U.S., some young single girls might work for a few years until they married. These New England textile "mill girls", however, represented a very small percentage of women and less than ten per cent of all those who worked for wages. Only fifteen per cent of women worked for pay, most as domestic servants. Once married, women, and particularly those women in the upper classes, were expected to preserve the sanctity of the home as a safe and supportive environment for husbands to return to after a day at their new industrial and commercial work. It was also noted that during this transition period, men might return home to then do the family's still existing agricultural work (Hochschild, 1989/1997).
When men left the farm to assume urban work, a shift in the value of home and feeding work occurred. Work appeared to change in value depending upon whether it was done for pay or not and new power and division of labour imbalances emerged.

As the twentieth century progressed, the working lives of women changed. With more service jobs available and then the ability to limit the number of children they had, women moved into the industrial economy at a rapid rate. But, despite mothers entering the labour force at ever increasing rates, a woman’s role as wife and mother doing the majority of household and feeding work barely changed. Even when a woman had a full-time job outside the home, her major role in providing food and nutrition for her family continued to symbolize her homemaker role and her husband’s role as the breadwinner (Lupton, 1996).

As the work performed in the context of the family does not attract monetary payment, it is rarely seen as “real” work. Instead, it is seen as a labour of love and commitment and is usually taken for granted by the family members for whom the work is performed (Lupton, 1996). Love, particularly maternal and wifely love, is often linked with food. Women’s magazines and advertising routinely show women demonstrating their affection and caring for their loved ones through the food they prepare for their families. In addition, many adult men continue to expect that, as part of a relationship with a woman, she will provide him with food (Lupton, 1996). Since feeding work is associated so strongly with women’s love and caring for their families, it continues to be quite difficult for many women to resist doing all of the work (DeVault, 1991). Some women continue to do virtually all the work of feeding their families, while others share the responsibility with husbands. Even when the work is shared, it is still suggested (DeVault, 1991; Lupton, 1996) that feeding continues to be considered “women’s work” and that changes in the division of the labour at home appear to be minimal and slow in coming (DeVault, 1991).

“Gender” is understood as a social process involving a life-long socialization of masculine and feminine norms, roles and entitlements appropriate for one’s sex, culture, time, place and social status (Creese, 1996). Because activities involved in feeding a family continue to be understood as “womanly” activities, they contribute to the ongoing perpetuation of gender in families. In addition, women continue to feel most responsible for feeding (DeVault, 1991). Fathers, of course, may take
the same kinds of responsibility and learn similar skills. When they do so, however, it may be considered “unnatural” conduct. Although fathers may learn caring skills from their mothers, they typically do not develop the compelling sense, strongly felt by many women, that care for others is their duty (DeVault, 1991), and that if they do not do it, no one else will.

Hochschild (1989/1997) noted that when women are part of a two-job couple, the “second shift” becomes a forum for each person’s ideas about gender and marriage and the emotional meanings behind them.

When Evan fixed dinner, Nancy thought Evan was saying he loved her. When Robert cooked dinner, Ann half the time thought she was failing to protect his career from family demands. When Frank made the pesto sauce for the pasta, it meant Carmen ‘couldn’t’. When Peter roasted the chicken, it meant he was ‘helping Nina’. When Ray barbecued the spare ribs, Anita imagined he did it because he liked to, not to help her out (Hochschild, 1989/1997).

In summary, there appear to be a number of contributing factors behind why women still do most of the feeding work in families. In addition, many of these and possibly other factors, may be either unknown or unacknowledged by many women, adding to the reasons why female gendered work continues to exist. It is clear, however, that as women continue to join the world of paid employment in increasing numbers, there has not been a corresponding change to the division of labour in the home.

1.2 Women & Their Children – The Gendered Role of “Mother”

The social organization of the Western family helps to provide a way of understanding how women are recruited into the work of feeding. The production of a family as a socially organized entity requires particular kinds of coordinative and maintenance activities. Women are not solely capable of performing these activities, but the concept of “family,” maintained over time in its various forms, incorporates a strong and relatively enduring association of caring activity with a woman’s position in the household as “wife” or “mother.” In particular households, individuals engage in their own version of the work of care, constructing their specific, idiosyncratic version of family life as they perceive it to be. As they go about this caring work within the family unit, women refer to and draw upon cultural ideologies of family life (though few households actually look like the cultural ideal).
doing the work of "wife" and "mother," women quite literally produce family life from day to day through their joint activities with others (DeVault, 1991).

Women are generally responsible for feeding themselves, their husbands and their children (Charles & Kerr, 1988; DeVault, 1991; Lupton, 1996). Women nourish their children and teach them appropriate meal time behaviour, family routines, and social skills such as how to converse at meal tables. Many parents consciously control their behaviour, including their behaviour at the table, to ensure they provide good examples for their children. Parents' attempts to shape their children's food consumption and behaviour, including table manners, may also be regarded in the wider context of the acculturation of the young into the adult world, in which the rules of "civilized" behaviour are established and maintained. Children learn what food is considered appropriate to eat, what is not, and how to eat it, as part of their entry into the social world (Lupton, 1996).

For families with children, the organization of the work of mothering strongly reinforces women's involvement in feeding work. Girls learn that feeding work is woman's work by watching their mothers and other female friends and relatives, and then by being recruited themselves into the feeding work (DeVault, 1991).

Further socialization of children occurs around the supper table. As recently as several generations ago, when more households were agricultural, most families ate meals together (DeVault, 1991). For various reasons, the number of meals that families eat together has declined, especially breakfast and lunch, which individual family members, including older children, often prepare on their own. Even supper is less regularly shared, as families struggle to coordinate varied work and school schedules, as well as extracurricular and outside activities. It is clear that arranging family meals takes time and energy, and that it is most easily accomplished when there is someone at home with time and energy to devote to the task (DeVault, 1991). With more women working outside the home this is now less often the case.

When the family does meet at the supper table, it is still predominantly the mother's role to serve food that the family will eat and ensure that it is nutritious and prepared in such a way that it is enjoyed by every family member. "The family is a place where people expect to be treated in a unique, personally specific way instead of anonymously" (DeVault, 1991, p. 85). A mother's role in
getting the meal to that point is considerable, including planning, shopping and preparation. In addition, a mother will usually be instrumental in ensuring that all family members are present, or at least invited; a "family" meal does not simply happen. At the table itself, it is the woman who is most likely to serve the food, monitor children's table manners and guide the family through appropriate topics of conversation (Charles & Kerr, 1988; DeVault, 1991).

The role of a father at the supper table seems to have more latitude. He may not be present at all. If present, he may leave before all the family members finish eating. He may "just eat" and not talk and want the others to do the same. While he may preside in a patriarchal fashion over the meal once the food has arrived and family members are seated, and may also lead the conversation and oversee table manners, these tasks are more likely to be performed by him on an optional and inconsistent basis (Charles & Kerr, 1988; DeVault, 1991; Hochschild, 1989/1997; Lupton, 1996).

What happens, then, when a mother also works outside the home? Research by DeVault (1991) suggests that instead of a husband picking up more responsibility for family work when his wife works outside the home, there is more often a decrease in the amount of housework time. She further suggests, as did Hochschild (1989/1997), that husbands seem to have considerable power to define their own contributions to housework, often framed as work they "like" or "don't mind doing." Men seem to be able to refuse to participate in family work or to limit sharply the nature and extent of their participation and do so guiltlessly. "Sharing the work," thus, does not necessarily mean sharing all the work or sharing it equally (DeVault, 1991).

Women's role as "cook" impacts on shopping for food, as it tends to be the person who cooks who knows what is needed, what is present and what is planned for future meals (Charles & Kerr, 1988); the actual work of planning is rarely shared by those who eat but not cook (DeVault, 1991). In many families, men are conspicuously absent from tasks connected to food preparation and clean up. When they are involved, they are "helping" their wives (Charles & Kerr, 1988, p. 52). One participant in Lupton's study (1996) went so far as to say that she thought of frozen meals as "male food" because it is ready-prepared and requires little care or thought.

It appears, therefore, that a mother's role is culturally defined to assume she will provide the preponderance of the feeding work in a family, even if a woman has paid employment outside the
home. With women taking the primary role for feeding and socializing, a question arises as to what happens at mealtime when the mother is absent or unable to perform some or all of these functions because she is working or sleeping due to shift work.

1.3 Prevalence of Women Working & Working Evening/Night Work

In 1996, female workers comprised about 46% of the labour force in B.C. as well as in Canada. As more women work day shifts, the need for services to be available to day workers in the evening and night hours has also increased. As the overall number of women working has increased so has the number of women working shift work. In 1991, there were 1.5 million women working shift work in Canada, compared with 1.6 million men. Over one third of full-time shift workers are parents of children under sixteen and of these, half have children under six (Sunter, 1993).

In 1996, 70% of mothers with children under eighteen years in the U.S. were part of the labour force compared to 8.6% in 1940. In 1950, it was so rare for women in the U.S. to work outside the home if they had children younger than one year that records were not even kept of the numbers who did so. By 1995 almost 60% of married women with children one-year-old or younger at home were also working outside the home (Hoffman & Youngblade, 1999).

The prevalence of women working evening/night work varies considerably from country to country, with industrialized nations having the highest prevalence. The reasons for the difference vary, often reflecting a country’s social perspective on the value and work that a woman contributes to a family unit (Beermann, Rutenfranz & Nachreiner, 1990). Some countries continue to have restrictions on women and minors working night shifts, while others have lifted all restrictions or allowed exceptions only under certain conditions (Epstein et al., 1990). For instance, restrictions on night work for women were not completely abolished in the United Kingdom until 1988 (Robson & Wedderburn, 1990). Presser (1990) found, in a study conducted in the U.S., that while unmarried women are more likely to work non-days than married women, it is women with school-aged children who are most likely to work permanent nights.

While shift work has been common for many years in workplaces such as the service and health care industries, its appearance into other workplaces is a relatively new phenomenon.
Chapter 1: Introduction & Literature Review

Hospitals still tend to be the main sector where large numbers of professional women work night shifts (Estryn-Behar et al., 1990), but increases have been noted in the manufacturing, essential services, managerial and service occupations. With the population in general increasing in age, it is anticipated that the need for more medical services will require more shift-working women to accommodate that industry's growth (Presser, 1990).

To conclude, it is evident that an ever-increasing number of women, and especially women with young children, are working in the paid labour force. There is also a greater number of women working shift work, either as an employment requirement or by choice.

1.4 Factors Affecting Shift Workers

Shift work can result in a number of problems for workers. These problems affect individuals differently and contribute to their ability to tolerate shift work. Many people find, in addition, that shift work is difficult to combine with their family and social lives. Another major difficulty of shift work is the resulting sleep disruption leading to sometimes debilitating fatigue. As well, self selection, or the ability to choose the hours that one works, leads to workers, where possible, picking shifts they tolerate and that work well for them. Self selection, thus, is another factor that affects one's suitability to work shifts.

1.4.1 Individual Differences in Tolerating Shift Work

Various personal and organizational variables contribute to an individual's ability to work shift work. As well, there are factors related to the work itself and a family's unique situation that make shift work more attractive to some people.

It has been estimated that 10% of shift workers enjoy shift work while 60% tolerate it reasonably well. The remaining 20 to 30% dislike and/or do not tolerate shift work (Folkard, Minors & Waterhouse, 1985). In contrast to these numbers, the majority of female night workers (73%) in a Polish study said they would give up night shifts if they had that choice and 85% of them did not want their children to have to work shift work (Makowiec-Dabrowska, 1990). An individual's ability to tolerate working shift work depends on many factors including, but not limited, to the type of work and the worker's family and socio-economic conditions (Kogi, 1990).
Bohle (1990) suggested that a number of personality and behavioural variables are linked to adaptation to shift work and especially night work. These include morningness, vigour, and sleeping habits. Morningness or eveningness (diurnal type) reflects such things as what time a person naturally awakens, when they feel most alert, whether they sleep well during daylight hours and the amount of time they need to fall asleep. Introversion has been linked with morningness and extroversion with eveningness. Extroverts tend to be evening-types and appear to adjust better to shift work (Singer & Levens, 1990).

Bohle (1990) further reported that morning-types were found to be more sensitive to delays in night sleep, to wake earlier after morning sleep, to show a greater decrease in indices of fitness over a night of work, and to report less satisfaction with night work. He further summarized evidence that vigour, or the ability to overcome drowsiness, predicts some indices of psychological well-being on night shift, is associated with less disruption of health, sleep and sexual activity among shift workers, and is associated with a higher mean level of alertness and a less steep drop in alertness during night shift. Rigidity of sleep has also been found to predict several indices of psychological well-being on night shift and has been associated with both a slower rise in alertness over the day among night workers and with higher self reports of anxiety and digestive problems among shift workers. Habitually short sleepers (less than six hours/night) may also adapt better in circadian terms than long sleepers (greater than nine hours/night). It was reported, however, that it is not always clear whether personality and behavioural characteristics cause differences in adaptation to shifts, or whether an inability to cope with shift work causes changes in personality scores.

Organizational and social variables may also have a major impact on whether an individual can adapt to the rigours of shift work (Bohle, 1990). Variations in the structure of shift schedules, in particular, may affect subjective health. Bohle argued that working only night shifts induces sufficient conflict between the sleep-wake cycle and physiological circadian rhythms to produce negative health effects. In addition, Bohle indicated that exposure to night work is a better predictor of symptoms than length of experience of shift work and that increases in the frequency and duration of night shifts and the number of consecutive nights on duty are associated with increased symptom levels. However, perceived conflict between work and non-work activities was also linked to attitudes to shift
work and to self reports of psychological and psychosomatic symptoms. This conflict appears to be a drawback of evening, weekend and early night shifts, which impinge heavily on highly valued time usually devoted to domestic and social activities. Bohle further argued that social support is critical for shift workers due to the social isolation they often experience and reported evidence of a link between low social support and health complaints (Bohle, 1990; Bohle & Tilley, 1989).

While many of the individual and organizational factors discussed in this section are not examined in this study, it is useful background information that helps us understand some of the phenomena described by women who work shift work.

### 1.4.2 The Effect on Family and Social Life

The disruptive effects of shift work, and especially of night shift, on family and social life—with work and non-work time being different than family members, relatives, friends and society—is another common complaint of shift workers and a reason for leaving shift work. About one third of wives in a study conducted in the U.K. had tried to persuade their husbands to leave shift work at some point, with over fifty per cent rating themselves to be fairly or very unhappy about their husband’s shift work (Smith & Folkard, 1993). However, a number of shift workers choose to work shifts for various, often unique, reasons. Some people choose shift work because it allows husbands to share child care, thus reducing the costs of child care and increasing parents’ comfort levels regarding the care of their children when they are at work (Johnson, Duxbury & Higgins, 1996). As well, shift work may facilitate activities that are time-flexible while hindering those activities that may be more inflexible such as visiting friends and family, attending movies or scheduled sports events (Kurumatani et al., 1994).

Shift work can affect even common events that many families take for granted. For instance, the timing of family meals is often complicated by meal arrangements for family members who may or may not also be working the same or a different shift. While this timing is complex enough, the possibility exists that making these arrangements may be an even greater burden when it is a woman working shift work while also holding primary responsibility for arranging meals.

### 1.4.3 Sleep Disruption and Fatigue

One topic of research that has received a large amount of attention relates to sleep disruption and fatigue resulting from working shifts. Sleep studies have shown that the average reduction in
Chapter 1: Introduction & Literature Review

Sleep length is one to four hours per day for rotating shift workers when they are on night shift compared to day shift. Permanent night workers are reported to sleep slightly longer than night workers on a rotating schedule (Akerstedt, 1990; Dekker & Tepas, 1990). Female shift workers have been shown to receive less sleep than their female day-working counterparts or their male shift-working counterparts (Akerstedt, 1990; Kogi, 1990; Kurumatani et al., 1994). Married, female, night workers exhibit the shortest sleep length of all (Dekker & Tepas, 1990; Oginska & Oginska, 1990).

It has been suggested that the greatest limiting factor barring women from achieving adequate sleep is children (Beermann, Schmidt et al., 1990; Estryn-Behar et al., 1990). Women with young children sleep less per 24-hour period than men with young children or women with no children. Women with infants receive even less sleep per night than mothers with only slightly older children (Kurumatani et al., 1994). Contributing to the sleep deprivation is the fact that more women than men have difficulties with factors such as light, noise and diurnal cycles (Akerstedt, 1990) that prevent them from sleeping or sleeping well other than during the night. In addition, mothers face strong timing cues for attending to for others, such as wake up times, meals, school and children's bedtimes (Morehouse, 1995). While most men who work night shift tend to have their major block of sleep soon after the completion of their shift (Folkard, Minors & Waterhouse, 1985), women's abilities to go to bed may be delayed because of family responsibilities (Estryn-Behar et al., 1990). This may be especially so when there are younger children to prepare for school, daycare or child care in the home. Studies have indicated that the later in the morning that sleep is postponed, the more truncated it becomes. A mother's block of sleep may be further shortened by the need or desire to retrieve her children from school/daycare and/or to get up over the lunch hour to spend time with her children (Beermann, Schmidt et al., 1990; Kogi & Thurman, 1990).

When workers do not get enough sleep, fatigue sets in. Fatigue is felt and tolerated differently by each individual. Female night workers working in a hospital were shown to be twice as likely to feel particularly tired than their male counterparts (Estryn-Behar et al., 1990).

In summary, female shift workers who are mothers—for varying reasons but usually those associated with their role of mother—often have a shorter total quantum of sleep, combined with more fractures to their blocks of sleep, than their male counterparts.
1.4.4 The Effect of Self Selection

Another factor that affects an individual’s ability to tolerate shift work is their ability to have some control over the hours they work. Women who enter occupations such as nursing are sometimes aware that shift work will be an occupational requirement. Many other women enter careers or jobs due to employment opportunity rather than occupational choice and shift work may be imposed rather than chosen. The freedom to choose particular hours of work appears to have implications regarding the degree to which subsequent problems are experienced as a result of working shifts (Barton & Folkard, 1991). While those individuals working in industries such as healthcare can recognize the need for shift work, workers in other sectors sometimes see shift work as having only a profit-generating motive for employers with little or no benefit to workers (Makowiec-Dabrowska, 1990). This is especially evident when a workplace changes its operation and introduces, in particular, night shift rotations for the first time.

Beermann, Rutenfranz and Nachreiner (1990) reported that women with children had the most favourable attitude towards shift work and suggested that this was possibly due to factors related to self-selection. Their study included over four hundred of each female and male police officers, all of whom had been working regular night shifts for at least two years. Their research supported the premise that night work is more acceptable when the knowledge that it is required is present before hiring or training occurs (Costa et al., 1990).

It is common for individuals who cannot cope with shift work, for whatever reason, to leave it. This is done by changing shifts, jobs or employers. In some workplaces, the ability to change hours of work is guided by employment contracts. Other workers are dependent on the labour market climate: if there is a decrease in the overall number of jobs available, the ability to transfer out of certain shift work positions may be restricted. Employees who continue to work shift work, therefore, often do so through an element of self-selection.

1.5 Summary

For a number of reasons, women continue to hold primary responsibility for feeding work. When women become mothers, their feeding and socializing role expands to include most of the
feeding work for their children. Meanwhile, the number of women working in paid employment outside the home has increased over the last half century. Mothers with young children, and especially those mothers with children of infant and toddler age, are working outside the home in dramatically increasing numbers. With the general increase in the labour force and for various other reasons, the number of women working shift work, whether by choice or not, has also increased.

There are a multitude of factors that influence an individual’s ability to work shift work. Some are personal characteristics, others relate to organizational structures. The effect of shift work on an individual’s social and family life may also influence their tolerance of shift work. While fatigue is an issue that is common to most shift workers, women who have younger children often suffer more significant and greater fatigue than their co-workers, which may affect a woman’s level of functioning. The ability to choose hours of work also influences an individual’s ability to tolerate shift work. Because individuals may choose to work certain shifts for reasons specific to themselves, women who are mothers may choose shifts that are conducive to what they perceive is an effective functioning of their family unit.

In conclusion, while a literature search revealed an increase in mothers working shift work along with various reasons for the increase and also outlined factors that help or hinder working shift work, no research examining the feeding practices and concerns of shift-working women was found. The objectives and purpose of this study (which will be outlined in the next chapter) were thus formulated to address the missing information.
2. DESIGN AND METHODS

The objectives of this study were to explore how women who work evening/night shifts cope with feeding their families, specifically their younger children, on the days when they are working shifts or sleeping due to the hours of their work. The study also looked at:

- whether women perceive that the nutritional and socialization needs of their children are being met,
- whether there have been changes made to either their children's eating habits or behaviours as a result of working evening/night shifts, and
- how women understand and feel about being absent from their homes during family meal time periods: who feeds their families, who socializes their children and how this is done when the women are unavailable due to their work schedules.

This project was a descriptive, exploratory study utilizing qualitative methods. I initially proposed using focus groups as the primary data collection method but after recruiting twenty-eight women amended my data collection method to one of semi-structured individual interviews. This change in method was necessary because the participants had very different work schedules and I was unable to arrange any meeting time where three or more participants could attend at the same time.

Qualitative research methods were selected because of the nature of the questions asked, the objectives of the study and the type of information sought. I wanted to look at what I believe is a new area of nutrition research and I wanted to examine it from the perspective of those living the reality that I wished to investigate. A small sample was used so the human and therefore, complex, social aspects of feeding a family could be examined in depth.

Within the qualitative paradigm in which this study is framed, assumptions are made that multiple realities of social phenomena exist in people's minds as mental constructions (Guba, 1990). Paradigm is used here as defined by Guba and Lincoln (1994) as "the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method, but in ontologically and
epistemologically fundamental ways" (p. 105). Constructivism or what was formerly coined naturalistic inquiry seeks to understand the constructions of reality created by the people being studied and by the researcher through a circle of inquiry (Morgan, 1993, p. 139). This paradigm seemed the most appropriate one to meet the purpose and objectives of this study; the focus was to uncover themes from the words spoken by study participants rather than to test prior hypotheses.

After meeting with my Thesis Advisory Committee in November, 1998, a request for ethical review was forwarded to the Behavioural Research Ethics Board. Approval was received on December 17, 1998 (Appendix A).

2.1 Study Protocol

2.1.1 Participant Recruitment

Purposeful sampling techniques were used to recruit participants. Notices (Appendix B) were placed in various community newspapers between January and March, 1999. Several newspapers also agreed to post the notice in their own workplaces. In addition, a reporter from one of the newspapers saw the notice and wrote a column about the project.

A snowball or chain sampling technique was also utilized to recruit participants (Creswell, 1998). Women who responded to the newspaper ads were asked to tell other women about the study and to have anyone interested in participating contact me if they were interested in joining the study. Women who contacted me were also asked if there were other women at their workplace who might be interested in participating in this study. If they answered affirmatively, they were asked if a notice could be sent to them for posting in their workplace. In addition, copies of the notice were faxed or given to various organizations for posting. This included B.C. Transit, Shoppers Drug Marts (ones open 24 hours a day), B.C. Tel (Nanaimo), and the B.C. Ferry Corporation.

A number of notices were posted in other locations by me or acquaintances of mine where female evening/night workers might see them. This included school bulletin boards, grocery store bulletin boards and police/fire stations. In addition, women who had previously expressed interest in
this project and had provided me with their name and telephone number were contacted to see if they 
were still interested in participating and to determine if they met the inclusion criteria.

The notices targeted women with at least one child thirteen years old or younger living with 
them. The women had to work at paid employment at least four afternoon/evening or night shifts a 
month and had to have been doing this for at least the three previous months. Potential participants 
were required to speak fluent English in order to communicate with me. Women who saw these 
notices were to contact me toll-free by telephone or fax.

The terms of evening or afternoon shifts are used interchangeably in this thesis and reflect 
the terminology used by the women who participated in this study. The term "off-shift," meaning shifts 
other than day shifts, is also a term used by the participants and seen in this thesis. Women 
interviewed for this study, as most women who have paid employment, “work” virtually all the time. If 
not at paid employment outside the home, they feed their families and do other household work. 
These two “types” of work will be differentiated in this thesis only when it may be unclear which work 
is being referred to. While these women worked predominantly evening or night shifts, the common 
usage of their work “day” refers to the day they worked their shifts.

Thirty women responded to the recruitment process between January 22 and March 5, 1999. Two women did not meet the criteria as outlined in the ad. Three women responded to ads placed in 
Vancouver Island newspapers.

Using a purposive or criterion-based sampling technique, women were selected on the basis 
that they were able to provide meaningful descriptions of their experiences and perceptions of feeding 
their families when working evening/night shifts. A recruitment letter which outlined the project 
(Appendix C) was sent to women who responded to the ads and notices. To determine whether a 
woman was able to provide the required information, a screening form was used (Appendix D). The 
information gathered by using this form also ensured women met the selection criteria.

During March to May of 1999, numerous calls were made to the respondents to determine 
focus group dates and locations. Information collected from the Screening Forms was used to 
identify possible convenient geographical locations and dates. Several groups were scheduled, some
Chapter 2: Design and Methods

with as many as six confirmed participants. Invitations to participate and confirmations (Appendix E) were sent out about three weeks prior to a scheduled focus group session with a phone call reminder several days before. A list of the possible discussion areas (Appendix F) was also sent to the participants with their confirmation.

Because all scheduled focus groups then failed to materialize, a notice was sent to all respondents outlining additional tentative dates for focus groups (Appendix G). Respondents were to return the notice to me by mail (stamped, self-addressed envelopes were included), fax or by telephone notification. In addition, the notice provided space for women to indicate if they wanted to withdraw from the study, as well as asking them if they were still interested in participating in the study if it was in the context of an individual interview rather than a focus group. Once again, none of the dates were suitable for a minimum of even three women to attend. These twenty-eight women had almost as many different work schedules along with conflicting days off and differing family, child care and employment responsibilities. They were unable to attend a focus group even, sometimes, after committing to doing so.

After meeting with my Advisor and notifying my Thesis committee members, a decision was made to change the method of data collection to individual semi-structured interviews. A Request for Amendment was sent to the Behavioural Research Ethics Board on June 8, 1999. Notice of the approval of the amendments was received in late June (Appendix H). Individual interviewing commenced July 16, 1999 and participants were interviewed between then and September 2, 1999.

2.1.2 Sample Size

The sample size of twelve was determined by the type and depth of data collected and the time constraints of a Master’s project.

2.1.3 Data Collection

The setting for each of the interviews was determined by each participant and was held at a mutually convenient time. Most women preferred to be interviewed in their own homes, while one chose her in-law’s home and another met me at a park where her child was having swimming
lessons. Two participants needed child care; one provided her own sitter while I provided the other. I paid all baby-sitting costs.

The participants in the first six interviews were selected based on being contacted directly by telephone (rather than leaving a message) and their availability to attend an interview. Factors such as marital status, shift worked, number of children or children's ages were not considered when choosing these participants, and the resulting group was relatively homogeneous, consisting predominantly of married women working evening shifts. Participants for future interviews were thus selected using a purposeful sampling approach on the basis of information collected on the Screening Form (Appendix D). Of the original twenty-eight eligible volunteers, six women had been interviewed and seven had withdrawn from the study. From the remaining fifteen women, single mothers and night workers were selected to complement the women already interviewed. In addition, women with more than one or two children were sought. Selecting these women facilitated comparison between the shifts worked and the women's marital status (Creswell, 1998).

Before each interview commenced, written informed consent (Appendix I) was obtained from every participant. All interviews were conducted by me. An interview guide (Appendix J) was used to direct the flow of the discussion. The interview guide was also used to ensure that the same general information was solicited from a number of different individuals by covering approximately the same material. This permitted a fairly conversational type of discussion to occur, knowing the focus on a particular subject had been predetermined (Patton, 1990). The interview guide was reviewed after the first three interviews and several modifications made. The modifications included asking about husbands' hours of work and who provided caregiving when the woman was working. The other addition to the Interview Guide (original Guide appears in the Appendix) included a question asking about the women's own food issues that they felt resulted from working off-shifts. Participants were asked at the end of each session about the clarity of the questions and whether anything was missed. Participants were also given the opportunity to provide additional information if they wished, however, none contacted me after the conclusion of their interview. The sessions were designed to take approximately ninety minutes, however most interviews were shorter than that. The interviews
ranged in length from fifty-five to ninety minutes and averaged about seventy minutes. All interviews were audiotaped.

Written and/or audiotaped memos also formed part of the data collected. These memos were generally written or taped after an interview had taken place and helped to develop questions or probes for subsequent interviews. In addition, the memos contained information provided by the women and obtained either prior to or after their taped interviews.

2.1.4 Data Analysis

As is standard in qualitative research, data analysis occurred concurrently with the data collection, beginning with the probes and follow-up questions asked in the interviews themselves, (Henderson, 1995) followed by analysis of interview transcripts. Audiotapes of the interviews were transcribed verbatim by a paid assistant or myself. All transcripts not typed by myself were read after being typed, edited for clarity and transcripts verified with the tapes. After editing and verification, the transcripts were coded: a process of breaking the data down into smaller, similar units, conceptualizing the data or attaching a label to segments of the data and then reconnecting it in new ways (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). An initial set of codes was developed corresponding to each item on the interview guide and additional themes and patterns were identified and coded as they emerged from the words spoken by the participants. Initially, sixteen codes were used and included items such as feeding practice concerns, eating out, fatigue and communicating to various family members and caregivers. Analysis of data collected from the first interviews helped to guide later interviews with different participants. As the questions became more refined, they also became more effective in developing and further saturating the main categories. Because of the limited scope of the project only a selection of the major themes were chosen for development such as gender issues, guilt, fatigue, and feeding practice and nutrition concerns.

Word processing features were used to group themes and codes together along with a simple classification system devised to keep track of the source of the data. Repeated listening to segments of the audiotapes along with repeated reading of the transcripts occurred to facilitate a
better understanding of the discussions. Attention was given to topics thought to be more pertinent to
the topic of the research rather than those the participants found interesting (Morgan, 1995).

2.1.5 Establishing Trustworthiness

Qualitative research, like its quantitative partner in research, struggles for ways to judge the
quality or goodness of its inquiry. While rigor is a term used in scientific, quantitative inquiry, Lincoln
and Guba (1986), coined the phrase "trustworthiness" for the qualitative counterpart. Trustworthiness
was defined by them as that quality of an investigation and its findings that make it noteworthy to
audiences. They went on to suggest four components of trustworthiness, namely, credibility or truth
value, transferability or applicability, dependability or consistency, and confirmability or neutrality.

Credibility (parallel to internal validity) is subject oriented and not defined in advance by the
researcher. With the multiple realities being explored in qualitative research, the researcher must
report the perspectives of participants as clearly as possible (Morse & Field, 1995). In this study,
checks for misinformation were done during the interviews by using probes and follow-up questions.
Participants were given the opportunity to summarize the main issues as they saw them at the
conclusion of their interviews. Decisions were made while conducting the interviews about what was
salient to the study, relevant to its purpose, and of interest for examination (Creswell, 1998).

Credibility was also realized in this study by keeping in close contact with my thesis advisor and
keeping her informed of every step of the process, along with any problems encountered. In this way,
professional peer input was received regarding interview strategies, emerging themes and possible
biases along with providing an external check of the research process. In addition, wherever
possible, the findings of this study have been supported with actual data–words of the participants.

Neutrality, another important factor, is often considered as part of the credibility component.
A qualitative study is one in which the researcher is so close and familiar with the study that her or his
judgement may be affected. Although qualitative researchers generally acknowledge that complete
objectivity or neutrality is not possible, I endeavored as much as possible to maintain a countenance
of non-judgmental behaviour. Participants were aware only through reading the written materials
(letters, consent form) that I was a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist; this was not addressed during the
interview. The one request for nutrition information from a participant was deferred until after the completion of her interview. I emphasized to participants that I was interested in hearing about their shift work and how it affected nutrition and feeding practices for their families. I also, however, emphasized to participants that there were no "right" or "wrong" answers to any of the questions asked.

Another form of credibility checking, member checks, was used by presenting developing categories gleaned from earlier interviewees to participants who were subsequently interviewed to test the credibility of the emergent categories. In addition, all participants interviewed were sent a summary of the findings (Appendix K), a covering letter (Appendix L), and a Feedback Response Form (Appendix M) and were given the opportunity to respond to the preliminary findings. As well, the women were given an opportunity to express their views on the credibility of the findings and interpretations. The summary and Feedback Response Form were also sent to the nine women who were recruited, met the inclusion criteria, but were not interviewed for their input. These women were also sent a covering, explanatory letter (Appendix N). Four of the twelve participants responded. A comment made by one woman during her interview was clarified in this document. Her suggestions for areas to be included in this study appear in the Discussion chapter in the Implications for Future Research section. Two other women's comments also appear in the Discussion chapter and one woman's comments were of a very general nature.

Transferability (parallel to external validity) deals with the issue of generalization in terms of case-to-case transfer. It concerns the researcher's responsibility to provide readers with sufficient information about the group studied such that readers can establish the degree of similarity and can make a reasonable but modest speculation between the case studied and the case to which findings might be transferred (Schwandt, 1997, p. 164).

In this study, detailed information is provided about the individual participants to help readers identify from whom the results were obtained. Rich, thick descriptions from the sample population were used. "Thick" description is not just a large amount of relevant detail. Rather, thick description includes the preliminary interpretation of the details by recording the circumstances, meanings,
intentions, strategies, or motivations that characterize a particular episode. It is this interpretive characteristic of description rather than detail per se that makes it “thick” (Schwandt, 1997, p. 161).

Dependability (parallel to reliability) focuses on the process of the research and the researcher’s responsibility to ensure the process is logical, traceable and documented. Qualitative research emphasizes the uniqueness of the human situation so variation in experience rather than identical repetition is to be expected (Morse & Field, 1995). The reconstruction of the exact experience or state of mind of another, however, is an impossible undertaking (Sandelowski, 1993; Steedman (1991) as cited in Rose & Webb, 1998).

Confirmability (parallel to objectivity) is concerned with establishing that the data and interpretations of a research project are not merely figments of the inquirer’s imagination. It calls for linking assertions, findings, interpretations and so on to the data itself in readily discernible ways (Schwandt, 1997, p. 164). In this study, reading and re-reading transcripts of the interviews occurred to ascertain that relevant and accurate data were selected to link to the findings. Along with this, confirmability was increased by regular contact with the participants. In addition to the interviews, most participants were contacted several times prior to their interview while focus groups were trying to be scheduled.

In addition, in this study, an audit trail was used to establish dependability and confirmability. An audit trail is an organized collection of materials that may include such things as the data generated in a study, a statement of the theoretical framework that shaped the study at the outset, explanations of concepts, models and the like that were developed as part of the effort to make sense of the data, a description of the procedures, personal notes and copies of tools used to generate data and analyze them, a statement of the findings or conclusions of the investigation, and notes about the process of conducting the study. An audit trail is a systematically maintained documentation system. It can be used by the researcher to encourage reflexivity about procedures and it can be used by a third-party examiner to attest to the use of dependable procedures and the generation of confirmable findings on the part of the researcher (Schwandt, 1997, p. 6). This study incorporated many of the
Chapter 2: Design and Methods

above-mentioned features and included a systematic evaluation of the research process by the thesis supervisor who reviewed the various aspects. The audit trail concludes with the final thesis report.

2.2 The Researcher as a Research Instrument

In qualitative research, the amount and quality of the data and the depth of the analysis depends largely on the ability of the researcher. For example, the information elicited from an interview depends on the ability of the interviewer to establish rapport and gain the participants’ trust. If rapport and trust are not established, participants may be less forthcoming with information. Rapport refers to a harmonious relationship between the interviewer and the participant and is based on the interviewer’s ability to express empathy and understanding without judgement (Patton, 1990). Trust building occurred with each individual starting at the time of the initial contact and rapport appeared to have been established during every interview conducted for this study. Questions from participants were answered and an effort was made to ensure that agreed upon plans, such as meeting times, occurred as planned. In addition, as I personally conducted every interview, and because each participant had already had some preliminary contact with me, interviews started and proceeded well.

The depth of analysis also depends on a researcher’s sensitivity, perceptivity and knowledge (Morse & Field, 1995). A number of personal experiences influenced my ability to develop this project. My background has similarities (as it has differences) with my participants. First, I spent many years as a dietitian in health care. Although I never worked any night shifts, I did work some evening shifts although fewer after I had children. As a single parent, I had experience as a working mother providing food and nutrition to my children. I also experienced feeding my family as both a married and single mother with children from toddlers to teens. I felt I could empathize and identify with many of the women’s issues as I listened to the various participants tell me their stories. In addition, I have worked in the area of labour relations for over eight years. This has entailed working with a number of shift-working women about issues arising from their workplace. This assisted me in being more sensitive to the issues of the shift-working women who participated in this study. My past experiences, therefore, helped me understand the perspectives and the daily challenges of my
married and single participants with children of different ages. Additionally, I have done a significant
amount of interviewing over the years as a dietitian and manager as well as interviewing many
potential witnesses for possible hearings. All of these settings require different types of interviewing
skills but contributed to those needed for this project. I also took a course as part of my graduate
work to prepare for research-directed interviewing and which also provided additional techniques for
this project.

2.3 Usefulness of Findings

The study of the particular helps train perception and increase the capacity for
practical reasoning and deliberation in those many situations in life that are full
of too many details, idiosyncrasies, and exceptional aspects to permit the
application of general knowledge. In sum, on this conception of the use of
qualitative studies, the aim is to study specific cases – not to develop or
elaborate on general theoretical knowledge, but to make it possible to develop
powers of perception and thereby enhance practical wisdom – (Schwandt,
1997, p. 60).

The findings of a qualitative study can be used by those who read it whether they are
professional researchers, practitioners or the general public as the findings may have a practice-
based or practical element to them. The findings of this study will be useful as they further knowledge
which may increase the quality of life and coping strategies in shift-working women's lives.

Researchers, including other graduate students, may find the findings from this study
interesting as it appears to be an emerging area with little previous research undertaken. They may
choose to take some themes and develop them more fully or take a different perspective and
examine these in more depth. Practitioners, possibly from the areas of nutrition practice or nutrition
education may be interested in the ways that shift-working women adapt to "manage" the shift work
plus what the women believe are their feeding responsibilities. Nutrition practitioners may adjust their
practice when counselling families who have shift-working women in them. Nutrition educators may
develop programs that respond to the realities of the ways that some shift-working women and their
families eat in order to adapt to the restrictions the families encounter with certain shifts.

In addition, lay readers, including shift workers themselves may find the information from this
study useful. The shift workers may identify ways that they can change their behaviour to help them
better cope with shift work or to at least realize that there are other women who are also working
shifts and doing their best to feed and socialize their families. Those readers who are not currently
shift workers may better prepare themselves for future shift work undertaken by either themselves or
others they know. Lastly, employers of shift workers may see more clearly some of the challenges
that their shift-working mothers face on a daily basis and put in place more effective support systems
to maximize the efficiency of their organization.
3. RESULTS

In this chapter I look first at the shift-working women who participated in this study and their perceptions of some of the similarities and differences between them and women who work either day shifts or a combination of shifts and day work. This is followed by an examination of the similarities and differences between working evening or night shifts, a discussion of how feeding work is organized in families with shift-working women, concerns that mothers have about their children’s eating habits and the factors that shape feeding practices and concerns.

3.1 The Participants

Twelve women were interviewed for this study. Interviews took place between July 16 and September 2, 1999 either in the woman’s home or at a location of her choice. Table 3.1 outlines whether the women were married, worked full-time or part-time, worked evening or night shifts, the age groups of their children and who, in addition to themselves, cared for their children. The women are described in more detail in Appendix O.

Eight of the women were married and four were single. Of the single women, one had never married, two were separated or divorced and one was widowed. One husband also worked shift work; other husbands worked day shifts or were self-employed. With the exception of one woman who lived on Vancouver Island, all participants lived in the Lower Mainland/Greater Vancouver area of British Columbia. The women in this study had one to four children. All had one to three children aged eighteen months to twelve years old and two also had teenagers. Four of the women interviewed worked outside the home full-time while the other eight worked part-time. Part-time employees worked at least four off-shifts (shifts other than day shifts) per month. Shifts ranged from four to twelve hours in length. Some women worked off-shifts on consecutive days, while others had off-shifts scheduled over a one-week period. All evening-working women worked evening hours, but many also worked most or some afternoon hours as part of their shift. Some women worked less
Table 3.1

PROFILES OF THE TWELVE PARTICIPANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>HUSBAND</th>
<th>FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT</th>
<th>EVENING OR NIGHT SHIFTS</th>
<th>PRESCHOOL AGE (6-10)</th>
<th>PRE-TEEN (11-12)</th>
<th>TEEN (S)</th>
<th>FATHER</th>
<th>EXTENDED FAMILY</th>
<th>ADULT/TEEN SITTERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Anita</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>FT</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td>ADULT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>PT</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna</td>
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<td>PT</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>TEEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doreen</td>
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<td>FT</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<td>BOTH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
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<td>FT</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TEEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiona</td>
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1 All names are pseudonyms.
than the usual thirty-five to forty hour full-time week, but were considered full-time or paid as though they worked full-time to compensate for what were considered to be less desirable shifts. The women interviewed were split fairly evenly into two groups – one that liked or preferred shift work and another group that disliked it. Six of the seven women in the former group had chosen their work schedules and had some flexibility about making changes to them. Of the seven who had chosen their shift rotations, five were night workers and two worked evening shifts. Caregivers for women's children included the children's fathers, other family members, and both adult and teenaged sitters. In two families, teen sitters were older siblings.

3.2 The Shift Work Experience

When women were able to choose their shifts, they chose those that worked best for themselves and their families. Because the characteristics of each woman and each family unit are different, the reasons one shift is chosen over another are often unique to that family. On the days they worked at their paid employment, all mothers interviewed fed their children their breakfast meal, either before going to work or upon returning home. Lunches were also usually prepared, served and/or fed to the children by their mothers. On shift work days, suppers were usually prepared by the mothers, but only about half of the mothers interviewed—mostly the night workers—served and/or fed the supper meal to their children.

3.2.1 Working Evenings

Seven women worked evening shifts and were home before midnight. They started their shifts between noon and 5 p.m., and returned home between 9 p.m. and midnight. Five of these women cleaned up from the meal and activities that had taken place while they were away from home at work. Three women did this clean up upon returning home, while the others left it until the next morning. Donna, Janet and Georgina returned to children who had forced themselves to stay awake until their mother came home. This seemed to create a situation of mixed emotions for the mothers who were often happy to see their children, but were tired from working all day, both at home and their workplace, and were concerned that their children were not getting enough sleep.
Janet: For me, it's hard for my little guys. It's really hard...like they will often wait for me 'til 11, sometimes, just for a hug and a kiss and you know, I'm too grateful for it, it's like, you know, 'God, Janet, get another job,' but right now it really comes into play that there is not a lot of full-time jobs out there and if you do get a job, it's guaranteed you're working nights.

Donna said, "He would be awake at midnight waiting for me. He would stare at the clock and he knew what time I was coming home." Notices from schools requesting baking or other items for the next school day were also described as awaiting the mothers of school-aged children upon their return home.

Women who worked evening shifts spoke of a number of difficulties associated with working those hours, including fatigue, parenting issues, increased workload, and their own eating patterns. All but one of the evening workers talked about fatigue as an overriding feature of their lives during their shift-working days. Three of the women whose children were away mid-day at school or playschool arose early to pack lunches and snacks for their children, further shortening the mothers' blocks of sleep. Georgina, the one evening worker who did not talk about being affected by fatigue, appeared to be someone with the ability to function well with little sleep.

Evening-working women with school-aged children often said they did not think they spent enough time with their children. Janet and Donna saw their children only briefly in the morning before school started.

Janet: I see my kids mainly in the morning. And that's about it until the next day. So basically, I get them up for school, kiss them good-bye and I'll say 'See you tomorrow.' Like, for my little guys because they are in bed by the time I get home and my oldest kids are just going to bed when I get home.

The mothers of the school-aged children were generally very aware that on work days, early morning was the only time they would see their children awake. They were also cognizant that breakfast was the only meal they would share with their children that day. Tiffany, who worked part-time, evening shifts, also said she did not have enough time to spend with her toddler. Although her child was home with her in the mornings and she had a job with somewhat flexible hours along with reliable family members to provide child care, she still did not consider that she had enough time together with her child.
The evening-working women also had concerns about not being able to fulfill their parenting responsibilities when they were away from their children in the evenings. Janet and Donna, for example, had concerns about their children's school work. Both said it was difficult to monitor whether homework was being done and, if it was, how well it was being done when there was little or no adult supervision.

Janet: Especially when they only see me in the mornings, that comes into play too when I ask them about their school work. They pick up their brothers, they come home, no one is doing their homework and I ask them, 'Why?' and it's like, you know, they did this and this... It's because I'm not here. It doesn't mean you can't abide by the rules, because you know, you're older now. Like the younger ones, I don't expect them to be there, but I expect them...that things be done just as if I was there. It just seems like they seem to get away with murder sometimes.

Christine, a part-time evening worker with a toddler, said that she missed her family and found it difficult being away from them, especially over her child's supper and bedtime hours. She said that, although she was the major caregiver, she did not always know what was happening at home in her absence. One of the ways she attempted to address this issue was to phone at least once every day from work.

I guess I'm the major caregiver for my son and it's sort of my domain and when I'm not there I feel like I'm not in control and I don't know what's happening. I phone all the time. Like I phone at seven o'clock [laughs] on my break every time just to see, 'How much did he eat,' and 'Did you eat?' I guess because I'm the one who cooks the meals and I'm sort of the one in charge of that, and I'm not there—it bothers me. 'Cause I don't really know what's going on.

Frances, a night worker, also noted that parental responsibilities continued via the telephone from work while on their breaks.

We do a lot of child instruction over the phone, like we're always on the phone. The moms are always on the phone and the dads too. 'Have you done this? Have you done that?' It's a lot of long distance parenting going on.

Evening working women noted a variety of ways in which they believed evening work increased their workload. Mothers often needed to plan and, in many instances prepare, the supper meal if they were working an evening shift later that day. Written instructions might also need to be drafted, particularly if the caregiver was not a family member.
Christine expressed, with a lot of frustration, how much extra work she had with one toddler at home while working evening shifts one week a month.

I mean, it is extra work for me. Because I have to think of things that are going to be already made for when [my husband] comes home, whereas, for instance, we like to have stir-fries. You can't really make that up ahead of time. It's sort of something that you have to cook and eat right away. So we can't have that. I can make spaghetti sauce ahead of time and I'll get Carl to cook the noodles, though, because that's not hard. It's not hard to boil the water and throw in the noodles, right? I can get him to do that...Well, I usually have the water in the pot. I just have to tell him to turn it on. But he can do that. I mean he is capable of doing that.

Janet surmised that, in her experience, some women hired to work evening shifts might not realize the work involved when they accepted that shift. (Janet referred to her evening shifts as night shifts.) A lot of people that have been hired with me, they don't realize what hours they are working. They don't, you know. A lot of time, there's really a lot of conflict with your spouse, like when you're working nights, and sometimes you're both working nights or not seeing each other or you got the kids coming into play, or dinners. You know you really got to think about this, you know, if you're into this, because it's a lot more involved than just work. It's personal, it's your personal life, it's your family, it's, everything always comes into play. And you have to be a lot stronger than you think, you know, you have to be strong to hold the responsibility of your job, 'cause your home is twice as much responsibility and you want things to run a certain way. You want some kind of control...for me, I knew what I was walking into, 'cause I've done it before. A lot of girls at work, like who have one child, single moms, they don't realize. You need some daycare, your child is not eating properly, you're not eating properly, you're tired, you're angry, you're bringing your frustrations to work, you're bringing them home.

Another area of concern for evening workers, as noted by Janet in the above quote, was the effect of evening work on their own eating habits. Emily, who worked full-time, permanent evening shifts noted that she really missed having a hot meal at supper time. She had tried to compensate and have it at noon before leaving for her shift, but found she was uncomfortable working after such a meal.

I find it very difficult to sit down to a hot meal for lunch. When I mean a hot meal, I mean like meat and potatoes and vegetables. I do it occasionally, just so I can get a hot meal in, but I don't feel comfortable doing it. I feel too bloated when I go to work.

Four of the women found they ate less when working evenings. They attributed this to the household work they had to do before leaving for work and then missing what would usually be their main meal, supper.
Chapter 3: Results

Heather: I don't eat properly when I work afternoons. I usually go all day without eating because I get busy and then all of a sudden I'll get to work at 3 and I'm starving. So then I start snacking: cookies or crackers or whatever. Sometimes I'll take my dinner to work that I've cooked from the night before. Other times I'll just buy what's available at work. So I don't eat very well that way.

However, only Janet said this pattern of eating less affected her adversely.

I find I don't eat properly at all. Well, I find when I work the 1:30 to 10, I don't eat dinner, I just have half a lunch, if even that, because I'm leaving here at 1:30, well I have to leave here before 1:30 and it just... and being around the food all the time, you don't want to eat because you smell so much food, so you're kind of full. So I find when I'm doing 1:30 to 10 I'm not eating enough, not nearly as much as I should be, so I can feel that I just don't have the energy, but I can go on anyways. But it's not good for me. It's not good for me at all.

Three evening-working women had limited meal options at their work sites and tried to prepare meals to take with them, often the same meal they had prepared for their families. These three women said they relied more heavily on fast food meals than they liked to, often citing the use of drive-throughs due to tight time schedules or short breaks.

Donna commented that she and her co-workers had seemed to develop more erratic eating habits as a result of their shift, which started in the early afternoon. She described her day's eating this way:

It's terrible! I've been thinking about this too, actually, because my shift is very bizarre: 2:30 to 10:30. So I'll get up and eat breakfast. Usually I'm too rushed trying to do laundry or trying to do whatever I'm doing to actually eat lunch. So I get to work and I start at 2:30 and I'm hungry.

Donna went on to say that she left for work at 1:30 p.m. and so many times did not have anything to eat prior to going to work.

...or, I've had a piece of toast and jam or some stupid thing, and I get to work and I'm hungry, but my first break is at 5 and my first break is twenty minutes. If I haven't been good and made something really good for myself to have at 5, then I'm in big trouble. And so my nutrition, it's been really quite bad. All that we have available to us at work at that time of night is a candy bar machine and a pop machine. So if you haven't packed for yourself, you can go and look, 'Oh, there's some cookies in there or something,' but... so I try and make sure that I have things with me, so even if they're rice cakes and tofunaise. I like tofunaise, cashew butter or something even if just, if I haven't done a real meal. Something that's decent.

Tiffany, who was pregnant with her second child, was concerned about her own
weight and nutrition as well as about the impact of her eating habits on her children. She attributed much of her own weight gain (prior to becoming pregnant) to erratic eating habits developed as a result of fatigue, evening shifts, and work-related travel.

Although only three of the seven evening-shift workers had chosen to work those shifts, some benefits were identified. Three women said they enjoyed the break from the evening “family” work and that their paid employment was easier than their work at home.

Heather: Well, it’s more of a laid back atmosphere at work in that way. And, to be honest with you, I like the break from my kids in the evenings, the bedtime routine and that...I like the break from that. That I got to be honest with. I enjoy that.

Heather’s comments were in contrast to those of Christine and Janet who had perhaps taken on more of the social expectations of the role of mother and appeared to find it more difficult to leave their families during the evening hours. Other benefits of evening shifts, for women who had school-aged children, included time for themselves and flexibility to do things they wanted to do or enjoyed doing during the day rather than the busier evening hours.

Tiffany said that it had been a priority for her and her husband to keep their toddler, Brian, out of daycare. She attributed flexibility in her job and a good babysitter, her mother, to success in meeting that priority. Tiffany went on to say that it might be more stressful if she had to rush around in the morning to get Brian ready and off to daycare. She also speculated as to what might happen if she and her husband were both delayed at work and had to adjust their work schedules and communicate to each other about who would pick up Brian. She imagined that a routine like that would be more stressful, and described the family’s present routine as “relatively low stress for everybody.” Christine also said she was happy her child did not have to be in day care.

Three of the afternoon workers often had to make complex multiple child care arrangements to accommodate their shifts, including after-school care provided by an individual or a centre followed by in-home care for the supper and evening hours.

3.2.2 Working Nights

Five women worked night shifts. The women started between 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. and arrived home between 2 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. Unlike the evening workers, all of the women interviewed who
worked night shifts chose to do so and all but one night-working woman worked night shifts exclusively. The one woman who worked other shifts indicated that she, too, would work only night shifts if she had the opportunity. All had other shifts available to them.

Like the evening workers, mothers who worked night shifts had breakfast with their children and most made lunches for their children in the morning after working all night. Women who had school-aged children would often see their children off to school and then sleep until the school day was over. During the school year, night-working mothers either got up in time to pick up their children after school or would have their children wake them when they got home. During the summer months, a number of the women experienced increased child care and feeding problems related to their children being out of school during the day.

All night workers reported significant levels of fatigue that affected their levels of functioning. Heather, who worked evenings but anticipated that her work schedule would change to include night shifts, said:

Oh, I'm just going to be miserable. [laughs] I am just going to be so miserable. You know, I don't know. I have not done graveyards for a long time. I remember when I used to do them. I used to come home just so exhausted in the mornings that I would hit the pillow and sleep soundly for two hours and then that would be all I'd sleep. Then I'd wander around the rest of the day just feeling awful and sick and exhausted. And nauseated.

Like Heather, Georgina worked evening shifts but had worked nights or graveyards in the past. She recalled what it had been like and speculated that working nights or regularly rotating shifts would be very difficult if one had a family.

Georgina: Your whole body, as far as I know, just wants to catch up. And you don't think about healthy, balanced meals because your focus is on another priority. It's on a personal priority, it's not on a family priority. So for that reason I think probably night shifts are much, much worse. Like midnight shifts, from what I remember of working midnight shifts. Unless you live entirely by yourself in a very quiet place, you never have a structured life.

Women working nights, however, did not support the speculation made by the evening shift workers that working nights was the most difficult on a family. Most of the women who worked nights did so by choice and found it the most compatible shift with family life.
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Frances said, "I’m here for them all the time, except I sleep when they’re in school. The only time it doesn’t work is summer when they’re home."

Doreen: A lot of people wonder why you do nights, but one of my best friends also does nights for the same reason, she has four kids and her husband also does shift work, days and afternoons, and we’re there in the morning, we’re there after school, we’re there in the evening and that’s the trade-off. We’re always tired, but that is the trade-off.

The night-working women unanimously said one advantage was having more time to spend with their families.

Anita: It’s hard, it really is. There again, like I say, by Thursday, Friday it’s just plain tedious. The last thing I want to do is go to work, but, like I say, in a round about way it works because I have the day time with the kids and the only time that we’re apart is when the kids are sleeping.

Fiona: So it seems like you get more time to spend with your family. Like the women who work full-time [nights] still think they have more time to spend with their family.

Unlike the evening workers, these mothers were available to provide and supervise after-school snacks and prepare the family’s supper meal, which was often eaten together by all the family members. Several women packed food or snacks to take to work with them, although only one said she took a meal. Four of these women cleaned up after the supper meal before they went to work, while one said it was left for after her shift the next day. The quality of this additional time was sometimes questioned, though. Fiona qualified it this way:

What good is that time with your kids if you’re so crabby or you’re short on patience or you’re no fun. Summer’s a good thing because I can just throw on a pair of sweatpants or shorts, go outside and just let her wander around the yard. But the winter time—it’s so hard to fill those days because I’m so tired. I just don’t have the energy to play with her or do anything. So I’m thinking well, sure I get to spend the day with her, that’s all great, but how much fun is that for her.

Like the evening workers, night workers often noted concerns about their own eating habits and nutrition due to their shift work. The availability of food during the night shift varied from one workplace to the next. One woman who had access to food during her night shift commented that it seemed quite a few of her co-workers had weight problems. She attributed this to the constant snacking that often went on during the night.
Chapter 3: Results

Frances: I notice a lot of the nurses at work are overweight... It could be because there is readily available food at work all the time... And there is lots of food—I very seldom pack a lunch. I will just eat what’s there and if I don’t like it, I’ll eat cereal, because there is always cereal there.

Fiona also said she did not eat properly.

We eat so weird at work... Like, I have to eat a meal before I come home. If I’m off at 3:30 [a.m.] I’ll eat at 2 or something, 2 or 3, before I come home because if I come home, I’ll start to get hungry and I won’t be able to fall asleep because I’ll be starving, so I’ll eat something. Somebody will bring something. One of the guys will bring something back for me, and it’s greasy and heavy and I feel disgusting when I go to sleep and then that’s probably why I don’t eat breakfast.

When asked if she ate supper before going to her night shift at 7 p.m., Fiona replied:

No, I package mine up and take it to work with me. I don’t eat, I don’t have time. When [my daughter is] eating, I’m ironing or I’m getting dressed or I’m packing my bag for work, do you know what I mean? So I don’t have time to actually sit down and eat the meal. I find it a little bit early for me to eat too at 5 or 6.

The night workers, like the evening workers, also used fast food establishments more than they said they wanted to. Doreen said she frequently ate at fast-food drive-throughs on her shiftwork days, but shared this somewhat sheepishly with me as she actively discouraged her children from eating this kind of food.

While some mothers worked night shifts in order to spend more time with their family, some women also said they did not tolerate these shifts very well. Still, women with school-aged children sometimes felt compelled to work these shifts if the only other option was evenings. Their experience with complex, sometimes unsatisfactory, childcare arrangements and limited time with their children led them to choose night shifts. The excessive fatigue they felt was counterbalanced by the value they placed on being more available to their children.

3.2.3 Summary

Women with children work shift work for a variety of reasons. While many choose these shifts, they still attribute a number of problems to their shift work. Women who worked evening shifts were less likely to have chosen to do so. If night work was unavailable or intolerable, women who worked evening shifts sometimes reported they were looking for other employment opportunities that did not include evening shifts. Evening work was sometimes more acceptable if a woman was able to
work part time. Women who worked evening shifts were concerned about the effect of their absence on their children's eating habits and nutrition as well as other facets of their children's lives. The extent of the concern was often related to whether their children were in school and how many hours a week the mother worked.

The women described various hardships and inconveniences associated with evening shifts, including less time with school-age children, complex childcare arrangements, extra work to feed their families, and dissatisfaction with their own food and nutrition habits. Despite the difficulties associated with working evening shifts, some women still compared it favourably to day or night shifts because they had more time for themselves and found the work they were doing to be easier than the work of home. Although fatigue was identified as a problem for evening workers, it was not described as being either overwhelming or a reason to seek a change in shifts.

All night workers in this study chose to work night shifts. All had the option of working other shifts, including day shifts, but preferred night work because of the benefits they said this work brought to their family life. All of these women, although describing considerable fatigue, said their children benefited from the additional time the mothers were available to their children for feeding and other family matters.

Both evening and night workers said that shift work had an adverse effect on their own eating habits and nutrition. The women reported that household chores or needing to sleep prevented them from eating more nutritiously, and that workplaces had limited food and meals available during evening and night hours.

3.3 Organizing The Feeding Work

This section describes the way that the major feeding tasks of shopping and provisioning; planning, preparing and cooking; and clean up were undertaken in these families with shift-working women.
3.3.1 Shopping & Food Procurement

The women interviewed generally viewed grocery shopping as an easier task as a result of shift work, largely because they were able to shop when grocery stores were less busy. Eight women described their shopping regime as consisting of one or two major shops per month, often scheduled to coincide with pay days. Five of these women shopped before working an evening or night shift, while the other three would wait until their days off, which were not necessarily Saturdays or Sundays. In contrast to the women who shopped less frequently, three of the remaining women (all of whom worked evenings) shopped more often, picking up a few items every day or so. Two commented that they enjoyed being able to shop like that and were able to plan meals much closer to the time they were served, while the other woman found this shopping to be more work. Finally, the remaining participant rarely shopped herself: her husband picked up most of their groceries and they also had groceries delivered to their home. Although this service cost more, she said it was more than worth the additional cost because of the time she saved. She was then able to spend extra time with her toddler.

Although the eleven women who did the majority of the shopping usually shopped alone, four had husbands or children who accompanied them occasionally.

Heather: The odd time we may go together if we go to Costco, but I don't like him coming because he's, you know, steak and all the crap, he buys all the junk, the sugared cereals, and the Doritos, and steak, you know, he's a steak man and so, no, I try to control what comes into the house so I, he doesn't come shopping.

In addition, husbands were sometimes involved for smaller shopping trips or to pick up a couple of specific items. All of the men who did any grocery shopping needed a list to complete this task to the satisfaction of their wives. Often these lists were extremely detailed, including size, brand names, and even colour of packages. Four of the eight married women reported that they did all of the grocery shopping for their households. In three cases, the husbands did no shopping at all, not even picking up milk on the way home after work if needed. Although two of their wives expressed frustration with this, they added that this practice had evolved, generally due to their husband's inability to select the correct items. In the four families where husbands were involved in shopping,
three men shopped for the food items they wanted for the meals or snacks that they prepared for themselves, but might not shop for items for the rest of the family, especially for younger children. Three men appeared to be able to choose what they shopped for and when they wanted to shop for the items. Tiffany and Fiona reported that their husbands were more likely to buy junk food or sweets for themselves or their children, although these items rarely were reported as being on the shopping list.

Five women said they preferred to shop without their children present and seemed to be able to arrange their schedule to do so. Four women would occasionally take their older children, often so they could get an idea of their children’s current food preferences or to avoid child care costs.

Anita: I try and let the kids go to the vegetable market with me. So that I know, I can see what they’re looking for, so I can pick it up a little more. Trying to do the vegetable shopping independently bombed. Because whatever I like, Melody doesn’t.

Four mothers commented that, because they often planned meals while shopping, the family would be fed more nutritiously when they were able to shop without their children. The presence of their children impeded their ability to think and plan carefully because of interruptions and requests for less desirable food items.

These reasons for and against shopping with children highlight two of the factors women tried to consider when purchasing foods: individuals’ food preferences and nutrition.

Finally, some participants talked about their shift working increasing grocery costs and the need for well-organized shopping. Four of the women commented, some upon being asked, that they felt they spent more money on groceries when they worked shifts. They attributed this to the higher cost of more easy-to-prepare or easy-to-serve foods for caregivers to serve. The three women who provided food for teenaged caregivers to eat or drink said they had to consider what kinds of food the sitters would like and eat, in addition to thinking about what members of their own family liked. Donna and Christine mentioned that they had to be very organized and have a fairly clear idea of what they needed to purchase because, unlike day workers, they could not stop quickly on their way home from work to pick up a few things for the supper meal as stores were often closed by the time they finished work.
Mothers of the older children were conscious that their children, along with their husbands, would generally prepare and eat only what their mothers had brought into the house. Five women specifically talked about avoiding buying foods and beverages they wanted their family to use less, and added this as another reason they did not really like their husbands to do the shopping.

In addition to the concerns about food preferences and nutrition, nine women talked about shopping decisions being influenced by knowing that they might need a certain number of meals that could be prepared or served by someone other than themselves. Women tried to shop so as to minimize food waste but did not always feel they were successful in this: three of the women expressed frustration at the amount of food wastage as a result of caregivers being unable or unwilling to prepare certain kinds of foods, usually vegetables and some meats. Donna and Emily said they sometimes overestimated the time they would have available to prepare foods which also resulted in food spoilage.

3.3.2 Planning, Preparing, and Cooking

So it just seems to me that when I’m working afternoons, all I do is pack food or prepare food because before I go to work, I pack the next day’s lunch. And then also I pack them a snack for after school, day care, and then I’m getting dinner ready. So it seems that’s all I do. I could be in my kitchen for three hours doing this. –Heather

All of the women interviewed did all or almost all of the planning, preparing and cooking of meals for their families, including meals that they themselves would miss because of work or sleep. All mothers strove for balanced meals as their goal of meal preparation. They defined balanced meals as those containing foods from a number of food groups. They believed this concept was neglected by all other caregivers except possibly senior females. The eight women who had children requiring packed lunches spoke about the goal of providing a balanced meal there, too. However, it was recognized that, particularly with the older school-aged children, providing nutritious meals did not necessarily mean their children actually consumed those meals.

Anita: You know, get the fruits, the sandwiches, the juice into their lunches. I never know what’s coming back [laugh], but I know it’s going one way, anyways, so the good intention is there.
There were occasionally conflicts in meal planning when a father had different eating habits than the children or what the mother wanted the children to have. The resolution of these conflicts meant extra work for the women if they cooked differently for various family members or led to apparent feelings of frustration and anxiety if the conflict was unresolved. For example, Christine’s husband was eating less meat and poultry and wanted more beans and lentils in his diet while Christine wanted her son to have more meat, poultry and cheese.

So I’m torn because I need to feed these things to my son and yet my husband doesn’t want me to be cooking them. So, I am sort of caught in this vicious little cycle and I’m not about to start cooking like in a restaurant and being some short order cook for my family – I refuse to do that with, whatever we will eat, it’s all going to be pretty much the same.

In Heather’s family, her husband liked to have what Heather thought was an excessive number of steak based meals. She did not want her children to have steak this often. It was unclear whether Heather thought this was a nutritional problem because of the resulting lack of variety of protein foods, the amount of protein or fat or some other issue.

The women used a variety of strategies to help them provide meals for their families when they were absent, including planning and/or beginning preparation for meals that others could complete, planning simpler menus for meals they would not be preparing themselves, and preparing foods in bulk ahead of time. Six fathers did some meal preparation, but their involvement was usually limited to finishing meals that had already been planned and mostly prepared. Their main feeding task was “cooking” and even this was usually limited to reheating; instructions were often provided. Two men were depicted as having particular expertise with the barbecue. Barbecuing was sometimes attributed to being a male role. Rachel said this, referring to her husband: “Seems to be like most men, that’s his thing, to barbecue.” For the three men who did meal preparation beyond reheating, the ability to do so was aided by their wives ensuring there was food available. None of the women spoke of their husbands picking up food items for the family meals they prepared; the food had already been purchased by their wives. Doreen described her husband as having a fair amount of expertise in this area:

I’m really fortunate because my husband knows how to cook and he’s a good cook and there are certain things that he makes that turn out
really, really well. So he plays a big role in food preparation.

She went on to say:

If he's the one that's here, he usually says, 'What do we have?' and I'll say, 'I've got this, this, this and this. You make your choice for what you're going to cook,' kind of thing, and then he'll do something from there.

After describing this routine, Doreen seemed to suddenly perceive how the feeding work was being done and who was actually doing it. "That's what I've got the stuff for," she said, "So I guess ultimately it is me, too, kind of thing."

Women who left meals partially prepared for their children did not always leave meals prepared for their husbands. In the two families where children were young enough to still not be eating regular table foods, there would sometimes be meals left for the husband and sometimes not. As Tiffany said, "He's a big boy. I don't cook for him." In some families where mothers did prepare meals for all family members, but, for some reason the children were not going to be home for a meal, a meal would not always be prepared for the husband either. Fiona: "He can fend for himself as far as I'm concerned on those days."

Sometimes fathers would prepare meals, usually lunch or breakfast, almost by default. For instance, Rachel's husband would prepare his daughter's lunch only after he discovered Rachel had not already done so. The women indicated that all but Doreen's husband did not appear to have any role in determining which foods their children needed or should have. Instead, the wives said their husbands were merely interested in the basic task of getting food (usually whatever had been prepared for them or requested by their children) into the children's mouths.

The kinds of foods served for supper on days when mothers were absent differed from those served when they were home. Casseroles and crock pot meals were commonly cited choices for days they worked, as were Kraft Dinner, grilled cheese sandwiches and canned soup. In contrast, when mothers cooked and ate with their families, meals consisted of meat, fish, or chicken with a starch and one or more vegetables.

Heather: When I work afternoons, there's no such thing as a meat, like a chicken and potatoes and a vegetable or anything like that. It's all one-pot meals or a quick stir-fry that Paul can put together very quickly.
This was in contrast to what women described as having when they were home with their children for supper and the fathers were not there. The meals did not change to those quick and easy-to-prepare and serve; they were the same protein/starch/vegetable combinations that the mothers would serve if their husbands were also present for the meals.

Breakfast foods varied somewhat depending on the shifts worked. Mothers who had worked until late the previous evening or until the early morning hours of the current day said that fatigue often hampered their ability to provide an optimal breakfast. While all mothers served cereal and/or toast, frozen waffles, or bagels and juice or fruit, some spoke of Pop-tarts and Instant Breakfasts as something they used or they knew other mothers used, sometimes on a regular basis. This was in contrast to the breakfasts the mothers provided on their days off, which were described to often consist of eggs, French toast, pancakes or home-made waffles and other items requiring more thought or preparation time.

Five women said time was an important reason why meals differed while on shift work. They indicated that their families would eat better if they had more time to prepare more nutritious meals.

Tiffany: I think the time, the stress, the energy...I get these parents' magazines and they always have these really great recipes and sometimes I go so far as to rip them out and go, 'Yeah, I'm going to make that.' But I often don't get around to that, usually I don't get around to that, so yeah, there would be a lot more home baked stuff here, a lot more home made things if I had the time.

Tiffany went on to say:

I think if I was home and I was preparing more food, I'd get bored of eating the same old stuff and would have a little more energy to cook different types of vegetables or make a casserole or make a lasagna or do something like that. Whereas, because I don't have the energy to do any of that stuff, it's just the same, same old stuff all the time.

It was unclear whether this was directly attributable to shift work or more a reflection of the time pressures that all working mothers experience.

Three women spoke of additional cooking and meal preparation on their days off, including batch cooking and freezing.

Tiffany: Yeah, you know I mean sometimes I motivate myself and I'll make up a huge big batch of spaghetti sauce for instance and, you know, I make that all from scratch and it's quite decent and it fills up half the freezer and we'll eat that for a long time with some pasta and a salad and, you know, some sort of,
like juice or milk or something like that. So I consider that, you know, doing pretty well. Or I'll make up five meat loaves and throw them in the freezer and have them later. At least then I figure it's something home made and it's a little bit better than, you know, whatever.

This was not, however, always an entirely effective practice.

Frances: On my days off I do a lot of cooking, or I try to do a lot of cooking, but again a lot of it doesn't get eaten, especially on afternoons... The crock-pot didn't work at all because they don't like food that touches.

Another strategy used by four of the women was to partly prepare several days' meals and foods and then freeze them, and/or doubling up when they did cook, to reduce the amount of work needed during their block of shifts.

Rachel: I often make porridge, a whole, a huge pot of porridge. And I'll throw different things into it, like raisins, nuts, everything into it and then I just make one enormous pot a week and it goes into the fridge and I cut out a slab every day and reheat it up, because it turns to jelly. So I cut out a slab every day and they like doing that too. So... sometimes my husband will make the instant porridge, but I don't, I don't think that's... I don't care for that so much so we try to always have a big pot, especially in the winter time, in the fridge. And you put it on a plate or microwave and so I'm happy with that.

Heather: On days off, if I'm going to make a batch of spaghetti sauce, I always double it. Anything that can be frozen, I double. Like a batch of spaghetti sauce or chili. If I make, like, a turkey enchilada filling, I'll do the same and I'll freeze that. So anything that can be frozen gets doubled or tripled in a batch and then I freeze them in portions for a dinner.

Frances: I take a chicken and put barbecue sauce right in the baggie and mooosh it all up and freeze it, so when I need it I just defrost it and dump it in a pan and cover it in tinfoil and throw in the oven and it's... like my prep work is done. I'll make hamburger patties, meat loaves and freeze them.

Georgina spoke of how her current practice had evolved to meet necessity.

Well, I can't really remember this phase. But I'm sure there was a phase where I didn't make supper at breakfast time. I sometimes think it's a bit ridiculous sauteing beef in a frying pan at 8 in the morning. I'm sure there was a stage where I didn't, but I imagine that we pretty quickly realized that if I didn't leave supper ready then things kind of fell apart.

When she was asked about other methods she might have tried in the past, Georgina recalled the following about her experience with batch cooking.

Making meals in advance never worked for me. I know that some people talk about oh, you know, making a week's worth of casseroles or, you know, storing things up and putting them all in the freezer and they're marked, 'Monday,' 'Tuesday,' 'Wednesday,' 'Thursday,' 'Friday.' Maybe because my weekend is only really a day and a half long, Saturday and half of Sunday, I
certainly don't want to spend it cooking piles of dinners that can be heated up
during the week. And we tried that when I was pregnant so that after I came
home with the baby, there would be meals ready. I can't do it. I get bored and
I figure if you're going to take something out of the freezer, well, you might as
well just take some salmon steaks out of the freezer and cook your meal right
then instead of a pan of frozen lasagna that you made last Sunday.

The evening shift-working women commented that they thought meal planning and
preparation was more work for them than for day workers. Donna described it this way:

I think I just got better and better at being more efficient because it really called
for me to be ahead of the game all the time. Whereas, if you're cooking every
night when you're coming home, you could stop by the store and get
something, if you wanted to or whatever. Or you could prepare something out
of nothing if you're here. So you really have to be prepared.

Heather concurred, saying:

It's so much harder to make something ahead of time. If you come home from
work at 3 in the afternoon and you don't have a clue what's for supper you can
usually throw it...get something. But to make something that's going to be
okay, you know, six, seven hours later, I find it very stressful. I find it
extremely stressful so that it's okay to eat later, and it's made and it's
convenient and it's nutritious.

3.3.3 Clean Up

Clean up seemed to be a feeding task with varying levels of participation by family members
and caregivers. This task was portrayed by four of the married women as the least successfully
"shared" with their husbands. Although there were comments about husbands' lack of participation in
shopping and cooking, clean up was the feeding work that women said their husbands' did much less
than the women wanted them to do. It was also the aspect of feeding work that the women spoke of
most vehemently as being inequitably divided and with the most disagreement being expressed about
ways to resolve the problem.

Participation in this task ranged from: two husbands who did virtually no clean up; four who
sometimes did partial clean up, including putting food away, putting dishes in the dishwasher (but not
running it), and dealing with dirty dishes, the table and counters, but not pots; to two husbands who
did full clean ups, including counters and stove wipes, but one would not necessarily do this every
time. Georgina summarized the clean-up situation this way:

There's nothing I can do about that. I can't prearrange clean up. I can
prearrange dinner. I can leave the dishwasher empty, which I always try to do.
I try and leave the dishwasher in a condition where they don't have to empty it in order to put dirty dishes in. But it seems like no matter what I do, I can't get them [laughs] to do that part of the job.

Although not confirmed with other participants, it may be possible that Georgina's comments reflect at least partly why clean up is perceived to be less successfully shared than other feeding tasks. Because women can do meal planning, shopping, preparation, and cooking ahead of time, they may not realize as clearly the degree of the inequity of participation in those tasks. However, because the clean up can not be accomplished ahead of time, the amount of this work that the husbands do during their wives' absences is immediately evident to the women when they return from work.

Clean-up work also seemed to be a task that was value laden. Four women reported they were irked by the fact that they had to come home after a shift and clean up from their families' supper meals. Georgina and Heather said the mess had to be at least partly cleaned up before they could go to bed, while others left the clean up until the next morning, facing an even more stubborn task with now dried-on foods.

Christine: And so it's just him, and I manage to get everything cleaned up and put away so I don't have to look at it in the morning. So when I come, the next day, it's like, you know, 'What's this?' 'Well, I've been busy. I had to entertain our son and feed him and I don't have time to clean it up.' And so I'll say, 'Well, what about me? I mean, I don't have time either, but I manage to at least, you know, get the dishes in the dishwasher and some semblance of order in the kitchen.'

Various tactics were used to lessen the amount of mess left for women to clean up. Tiffany continued to spoon-feed her toddler to decrease the mess, but commented that her child would likely be eating more on his own if she did not work shifts. Anita would sometimes leave the dishes to soak overnight while she was away at work. Both of the women with pre-teens and some of the mothers of younger children attempted to get their children to participate more in clean up, but none reported much success. Frances noted that her children only did clean up if she was home and actively supervised. "If I'm here, it is done; if I'm not here, it's not."

The women had varying expectations for the amount of clean up they expected caregivers other than their husbands to do. It seemed to depend somewhat on the age of the caregivers, with lower expectations and performance more frequently noted with teenaged sitters. Donna and Emily
commented that when they used teen sitters to provide care, they were faced not only with the mess left by their own family, but also the mess from the sitter's eating.

The single parents interviewed, especially those with younger children, appeared more stoic. They knew the clean up had to get done and it was just a question of when, since it was always their task. Depending on the starting time of their shift, the single mothers who worked night shifts would do the dishes before going to work or leave the dishes to soak until they returned home: school-aged children would usually assist their mother, if the mother was present to supervise. If their mother was not present or unable to supervise, the children would just leave the dirty dishes. The two single parents who worked evening shifts and had non-family teens babysitting always came home to clean up work.

3.3.4 Summary

The women in this study did the majority of the shopping, planning, preparing, cooking and clean up for their families, even for meals that they would not eat or attend themselves. The married women said they had varying amounts of help from their husbands with these tasks, but the help described appeared to be minimal. Most shift-working women did all or almost all of the shopping. Some husbands or older children helped with shopping. Shopping was generally viewed as being easier when women worked shifts. A few women said they spent more money on groceries because of factors related to their shift work.

Additional considerations had to be recognized for evening shift workers, such as having foods that could be prepared hours in advance of eating and meals that were easily prepared and served by less skilled caregivers. This often meant more work, especially for the evening shift-working women and was another example of the additional obstacles shift-working mothers experienced in contrast to day working mothers.

Clean up was the most contentious of the feeding tasks. The women said they did not receive enough assistance with clean up work, even when they requested help. The women perceived that they did a greater proportion of the clean up work than they did of the other feeding tasks, although this may not have been completely accurate. It appeared to be the inequitable
division of the clean up work that annoyed the women most, although it was unclear whether doing more clean up irritated the women more or whether the inequitable division of this particular task was just more visible to them because they were absent when the mess was created.

3.4 Concerns about Children’s Eating Habits

The study participants identified a variety of concerns about how their shift work affected their children’s eating patterns. How caregivers fed the children or modelled food behaviour and the impact of this on their children’s eating habits was also sometimes expressed as a concern.

3.4.1 Nutrition Concerns

I really hope that there aren’t kids that suffer nutritionally because of their mothers working afternoon shift. - Georgina

All of the study participants had concerns about their children’s nutrition. These concerns were about the quality of the food and meals and the amount of junk food their children were eating, as well as concerns about specific foods, food groups and nutrients. Many women, especially those who worked evening shifts, perceived that while their concerns about their children’s nutrition might be similar to women who worked day shifts, they felt they had less opportunity to make adjustments to improve their children’s nutrition. This was attributed to their absence over the supper hour, which was considered the main meal for most families and the meal that mothers, when home, said they had the most influence over.

The women cited various sources for nutrition and feeding information. These included books, doctors/pediatricians, other health care professionals (usually nurses), cook books, schools and information passed down from their mothers. None of the women mentioned receiving nutrition or feeding information from a dietitian or nutritionist, although Rachel said that her mother had been a nutritionist.

3.4.1.1 Lack of Quality

Many of the women spoke of the concept of balanced, nutritious or high quality meals. While most women did not refer to Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating by name, they were able to identify the principle of food groups and having a number of the food groups represented as a
balanced meal. Over half of the mothers interviewed had concerns that, in their absence, "balanced meals" or meals containing food from all, or even most, of the food groups were not provided.

Lack of quality in foods and meals was sometimes related to pre-preparation, where foods were sometimes prepared long before the time the meal would be consumed. Although most women seemed to be aware of the problem and did their best to keep the food fresh and safe, this was not always possible.

Heather: I make everybody's lunches before I go to work, like for the next day, for my daughter for school and this kind of stuff. I'll make their lunches before I go to work for the next day. So I'm making the next day's lunches, like, twenty-four hours ahead of time, which, I mean, there could be worse things, there could be really worse things, but I feel, like, hmm, that's kind of mediocre, too, because it's not as fresh as it could be and I'm not making, you know, I'm using certain products that will withstand being in a sandwich for twenty-four hours. [laughs] You know, like I wouldn't make egg or tuna or anything like that because that's yucky after twenty-four hours, you know, so there's more processed meats probably than what I would like.

Heather said she cooked for convenience more than for nutrition.

I think a lot of us are using more high convenience foods than we would like to. You know, just talking to the girls, a lot of us, because we're in the health care field we try to do nutritious foods. So when we're home, you get the balanced meal with the two vegetables and, you know, the meat and the potatoes or the fish or whatever, but I know when we're at work, a lot of it is high convenience foods, be it a package or a jar or something like that.

Heather expressed concern that these foods were not only less nutritious, but also contained dyes, chemicals, MSG, sugars and fillers.

3.4.1.2 "Junk Food"

A number of the mothers interviewed identified "junk food," (generally foods with too much sugar, fat, salt and little nutritional value), as foods of particular concern. The women did not want their children to have excessive amounts of sugar in their diet. This concern appeared to be shared by most of these women's husbands and so these foods were limited in those families.

Tiffany: One thing I've been very committed to, and both my mom and my husband have been, you know, committed to this as well, is not feeding [their son] a lot of sugar. So he gets almost no sugar unless it happens to be some in something that's prepared. But other than that I look for things with the lowest sugar possible.
However, in families with older children, mothers had more difficulty controlling the sugar intake of their children, especially if the children were more independent in making their own food selections. Janet agonized over not wanting her children to have excessive sweets and other foods with a high sugar content, but found herself buying these items in an attempt to compensate for missing their school events and generally not being with them in the afternoon and evening hours.

Mothers with preteen-aged children, and especially those who also had teenaged sitters, had the most concerns about the amount of fat in their children’s diets. This was usually associated with these children having a higher intake and easier access to chips, cookies and other high fat junk foods, especially when their mothers were not around to supervise the intake of such foods.

Janet: When I’m not home they’d just as soon eat the cookies, the chips, ice cream and all of that, but I don’t know, it just seems...they seem to see what they can get away with...when I’m not around.

Fatty and processed meats and French fries were perceived to be the other main sources of excessive fat in these children’s diets. Mothers reported an increase in the consumption of these foods due to their easy preparation.

Doreen: I ended up being late for work because I left at 5:40 p.m. and I was supposed to be there for 6 and it’s out by U.B.C. and I got home and I just threw the French fries in the oven and the hotdogs in the pot and Gillian served them. I already had carrot sticks and stuff cut up in the fridge for them, so, instead of making...what I planned to do was to make them some chicken and stuff like that...chicken and rice and that, but I didn’t have time. It took too much time.

Some of the smaller children were fed junk food by their fathers or teenaged sitters. One woman with school-aged children supervised by older teenaged siblings noticed that the children were getting fat and attributed it to the kinds of foods they ate when their mother was at work.

Janet: I can see it physically on them, the bad foods that they’re eating, the foods that they’re eating when I’m not there. I can see it in their bodies physically, it’s like stomachs, little paunches, just fat pockets on their bodies, since I started working.

The practice of caregivers feeding junk food to children was not well accepted by the mothers, nor did the women indicate they fed these foods to their children. Salt, although mentioned as a concern by a few of the mothers, seemed to be more of a problem for those with older children.
who had easier access to chips and other salty, processed foods. Mothers with younger children were generally able to control the amount of salt their children ingested.

3.4.1.3 Concerns About Specific Foods, Food Groups or Nutrients

Vegetables were the foods most often cited as lacking in the diets of these families. Janet said, "I buy lots of vegetables...but they only seem to be eaten when I'm home [laugh]." The reasons for this varied from the children (and sometimes husbands) not liking vegetables and cost, to the time required to prepare fresh vegetables. Five women remarked that their caregivers, whether it be their husbands or someone else, would not take the time to prepare fresh vegetables for the children. In the case of teen sitters, two of the women queried whether the teens knew how to prepare vegetables that did not come from a can or a bag.

Emily: Now with Sarah, you know, as I've said, I feel she doesn't seem to eat or prepare fresh vegetables very much, whether she just doesn't know how or just doesn't like them, I don't know.

Women who indicated concern about their children's vitamin intake usually linked it to a lack of vegetables, although several attributed it to an overall deficit in their children's food intake. Supplements, while mentioned by three mothers, did not appear to be a regular item in any of the children's diets. These three mothers said vitamin usage was sporadic and often forgotten.

Another concern identified was the possible presence of pesticides on fruits and vegetables. One woman hoped to reduce her children's consumption of pesticides by providing organic foods. She had been unable to work this into her schedule so far, which made her feel guilty.

Heather: I know there's a place, Mandeville Gardens, close by, they have organics, but it's just not in my routine. You know, an extra little bit of a drive to go, so...I do suffer guilt and it's something I know I'll be changing in the near future, because I can't handle the guilt.

Dairy product consumption was mentioned as a concern by two mothers of toddlers. One said her child was getting too many dairy products and attributed this to the ease with which caregivers were able to offer them, along with the acceptability of dairy products by her child. This stood in contrast to another mother who was concerned that her two-year-old was drinking insufficient quantities of milk and reverted back to serving it in a bottle rather than a cup.
Concerns about meat ranged from trying to cut back on the amount consumed and the types used, to trying to increase the amount of meat ingested, usually for toddlers and preschoolers. Three mothers said they used more processed meats when they were working because of the convenience. In addition to the fat content, mothers were also concerned about the overall quality of processed meats. One woman had asked several physicians if using these products was healthy, but did not seem satisfied with the mixed responses she received.

Anita: [Processed meat] does become a concern for me because I look at, like I say, the breaded chicken cutlets, and a lot of it is processed meat and there is a lot of concerns. I've read in the newspaper and heard on the radio, you know—is the processed meat really as good as they say? I've spoken to a couple of doctors about it and where you'll get one doctor will say, 'If it's meat and it goes into their mouth and through their stomach, then they got something in there.' Which is, somehow I like to tend to agree with that, but then you know, you'd like to think 'Wow, processed and what's in there and the fillers and this type of stuff.' That does get to be a concern.

Protein was mentioned by four of the women as a nutrient of concern. Generally this was in the context of their children possibly not getting enough protein in their diets when their mothers were at work. With toddlers, mothers said their children did not necessarily like protein-rich foods and that their husbands were not as likely to pursue feeding these foods if the children rebelled. In families where the children were older, food choices were frequently made by the children. Due to the ease and convenience of preparation, foods other than those rich in protein would often be chosen. A few mothers of toddlers had developed ways to add protein to their children's diet. The mothers said this helped compensate for what was lacking in their children's diet while they were at work. These tactics included adding beans or peanuts to other foods and popping pieces of cheese or bits of bread with peanut butter into their child's mouth on a regular basis during the day.

Tiffany: I was pretty worried about Brian eating enough protein so for awhile I was taking those baby food, you know, like the garden vegetables ones, the ones that have different vegetables in them, and mixing in a bunch of beans and mashing that together and sort of making this bean/vegetable hash which he would eat. It was kind of gross, [laughs] but he would eat it.

Frances' children ate little or nothing unless their mother was present and directly supervised the preparation and ingestion of these foods. These sometimes long periods of time with no food were a concern to Frances.
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Lack of protein, I think it is lack of protein and that they do go so long. It's like a starvation thing. They don’t eat all day and they’ll eat from the moment I get up until they go to bed.

Two of the three mothers of toddlers were concerned about insufficient iron in their children’s diets. These women addressed this concern by continuing to use iron-fortified infant cereals. Baby food was also easy to feed and was still being fed on occasion to one toddler. However, using the baby food was not totally stress-free as the mother had seen on the Internet cases where glass had been found in jars of baby food. In addition, she had concerns about the nutritional value of bottled baby foods and said they might not be as nutritious as home-prepared foods.

3.4.1.4 “Self Feeding” by Children

Six mothers said their children were able to do more “self meal planning” when the mothers were absent. The children achieved this self-feeding by rebelling at the foods left for them to eat, or just making their own choices, seemingly knowing that their fathers or other caregivers were not going to make too much, if any, challenge to those choices. Georgina, “I think if I’m not here, he’s kind of allowed to choose for himself.”

Tiffany: I think that my husband tends to take the easier, softer way. If Brian spots them and points to them and asks for them then, you know, that’s kind of what he gets.

Fiona: Oh yes, [her father] is way more slack, way more slack. Like he will give her totally different things than I will...and...he just gives her whatever she wants really.

This practice was perceived by the mothers to occur because caregivers, usually fathers in these examples, were less attentive to their children’s scavenging for food when their mother was at work. In addition, the women said that fathers were less persistent in feeding foods that were rejected by their children.

3.4.1.5 Doing Okay

Doreen, Georgina and Rachel said they were “doing okay” as far as the nutrition of their children was concerned. However, they also mentioned that there were always areas that could
improve. All three women had been working their particular shift for a lengthy period of time, chose to work that shift and had a supportive husband living with them.

Doreen: It doesn't mean much to them now, but they do think about it and they do talk about Canada’s Food Guide, but overall, I think we're managing okay. We're trying to keep away from as much stuff as we can.

Georgina said her family ate better than they would if she worked day shifts, because she had time in the morning to think, plan, purchase and prepare high quality meals. She said she did not have the time to do this when she occasionally worked a day shift.

Two women alluded to the control they retained when they worked shift work. They felt they were better able to plan and prepare meals and, therefore, meet nutritional objectives by keeping some of the feeding tasks within their venue.

Doreen: ...It gives me the time to make sure that I can make a proper supper. When I get home in the morning I can do breakfast and I'm in charge of lunches. I don't have to leave it up to anybody else, so it follows by our standards.

Georgina: I mean, somebody's got to cook dinner. I would rather that it was somebody in my family than the chef at McDonald's. I guess to me that would be bordering on the unacceptable. If they were going out every night that I worked, I'd have to change something. I'd have to find a different job or switch to a different department.

3.4.1.6 Summary of Nutrition Concerns

Shift-working women were concerned about the quality of the food and meals and the amount of junk food their children were eating, as well as about specific foods, food groups and nutrients. Vegetables were the food most often mentioned as being of concern with an occasional woman expressing concern that perhaps her children were not getting enough vitamins. The intake of dairy products, meat consumption and adequate iron were concerns of the mothers of toddlers. The kinds of meats chosen were an issue for mothers with older children, as was the perceived excessive consumption of junk foods. These concerns led some mothers to say their children were not getting high quality or balanced meals when the mothers were at work.

The nutritional concerns expressed by mothers in this study appeared to be consistent with concerns of all mothers, whether they worked or not. In addition, the number and kinds of concerns were fairly consistent between the evening and night workers. What differed between these two
groups, though, was the ability to take corrective action. Women who were absent over the after-school and evening hours appeared to have less ability to take compensatory action, such as introducing missing foods into their children’s diets. Other caregivers were not perceived by the mothers to be attentive to making the desired dietary corrections. Even when detailed instructions were left regarding specific feeding practices that the mothers wanted, these instructions were not always followed.

3.4.2 Socialization Concerns

Food is very important to me and I think it’s a very important part of nurturing and loving people... I really feel it is very, very important. Part of life, like it’s nurturing the body, but it’s also, when you’re preparing food, I actually even believe that you need to be in the proper state of mind, when you’re preparing it because you sort of... fill it with love, you know. So I think it’s also very much an expression of love to feed someone well. — Donna

When the women were interviewed, they were asked if they had any concerns about “social” matters related to food and nutrition. The women identified social matters as those associated with family interaction at a meal table, such as meal-time conversation and table manners and expressed their concerns accordingly.

3.4.2.1 Family Meals

Some women found it easier than others to identify what the non-food, socialization aspects of meal times entailed and how or whether they changed in their absence.

Heather: We don’t eat together as a family. When I’m home at dinnertime, [my husband] isn’t. It’s very seldom he gets home before 6:30 when I’m home. And I won’t wait past then because the kids are little and, like I said before, I have a routine that I like to keep in the evenings, and that’s a bath and that’s story time and with two of them, it takes time, you know, an hour each for bedtime. So, I don’t wait. I have the kitchen to clean up and that and he doesn’t do that. And so I, it bothers me that he’s not home for dinner times. Very seldom do we sit together as a family. Weekends, yes. Now that we have the students it’s more of a family sort of setting. My kids are forced to sit at the table more, you know, because we have other people. So I’m conscious of that so they’re made to sit and have a conversation. Where if it’s just me and the girls, quite often I’ll be handing them, I’ll have their food all set out and they’ll be eating and I’m still preparing my food and they’ll want this and they’ll want that. And they’ll be finished before I’m even sitting down at the table. It happens quite often; it bothers me. So that’s why, in a lot of ways, the students are a good thing because I make a conscious effort of being at the table with everybody and we all sit and talk.
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Doreen: On the weekends lunch is pretty informal, but if we’re all off together, we all eat together and if it’s just me and the kids, we eat together. If it’s my husband and the kids, they all eat together.

Georgina: I think families should eat together, but if you make an effort to do it when you can and to make it as pleasant as possible even though you have to be away, I think that is about the best you can do.

Two women said that it was a concern to them that, in their absence, their children’s meals did not look like meals – it was just food. As Tiffany put it, “There’s food, but there isn’t necessarily dinner.” Fiona wished that her husband would make more of a meal.

Giving [our daughter] a banana or an apple is easy to do, but he wouldn’t think of chopping up vegetables and cooking them or stir-frying them or making some noodles with them, or thinking of stuff like that.

Although the women did not report having a nutritional issue with their children eating “food” instead of “meals,” they did think it was unusual.

Tiffany: I’m thinking and hoping that eventually we will be having more family meals. Because I worry right now that neither of us kind of has that mindset to make dinner every night….There’s food, but there isn’t necessarily dinner….And it’s going to be a little bit weird for these kids coming home from school and there isn’t necessarily a dinner meal.

Georgina felt she was fortunate to have an extended family able to reinforce the non-food values of eating together when Georgina had to work.

We are a family, I think all of us, my parents, my sister, my husband’s family who have a sort of…very traditional attitude towards meal times and how they relate to families. We all feel that eating together is important. That food is important, you know. It should be prepared with care, it should be served with love, it should be consumed with gratitude. And we’re not sort of an ‘eat on the run,’ haphazard kind of a group and so I think that pervades every meal that [our son] attends. It doesn’t matter if I’m there or not. That whole attitude of how you regard what you eat is consistent.

Georgina also noted that, as well as providing a positive social atmosphere in her absence, her husband had less work as a result of her mother-in-law doing the feeding work.

I think my in-laws mostly make it easier for my husband because, for example, every Sunday I have to work….I think family time is important on Sunday, but every Sunday, they go over to my in-laws for supper and so they have that family experience of eating all together and feeling like being part of a bigger group. Even though I can’t do that for them, I’m fortunate that somebody else can do that for them and do it with apparently no resentment or feeling of being imposed upon. They like that tradition and they make it a lot easier on my husband in that way.
Georgina's son was getting a rich, family socialization experience even when his mother was absent. When Georgina's husband and son did eat at home, Georgina, in addition to leaving meals pre-prepared, also usually left the table set for supper for her family to make it attractive and encourage the practice of her husband and son eating together at the supper table.

Usually, not always, but usually, I try to make it look attractive. I leave and I try to leave the table set for supper so that they will sit down together, not sit down in front of the TV, but sit down at the table together and eat. So I figure if I leave the placemats and the cutlery and everything all set up, it's just that much easier for them to do that.

This practice seemed to work successfully in this family; Georgina received positive reinforcement for it.

When I do that I always get told how nice it was to come home and even though I wasn't here, everything was all set up for a family supper. Even though the family that night was just the two of them.

Christine expressed concerns regarding the social atmosphere surrounding family meals when she was absent. She explained that, while her husband could feed their son, she had concerns about whether he could encourage their son, who was described as a picky eater, to eat enough food if he was resistant to feeding. "I can be really creative and think of stories and stuff like that while my husband is just more interested in getting the food in him," said Christine.

Tiffany and Emily felt there was "something missing," but were not always able to put the thoughts and feelings they seemed to be struggling with into words. For example, Tiffany expressed concerns about a lack of socialization because, in her family, each member operated in isolation from one another instead of as a cohesive, family unit.

I think that's a big issue. I think the social aspect of it; I think that it is important to have that family cohesiveness; I think it does impact on that. That you become just more scattered and more disjointed and there's less intimacy in the family... But just the... sort of family routines. I think [that family routines/meals] should feel more inclusionary than, you know, three separate people in a household, three or four separate people in a household all kind of on their own path, their own agenda.

Five women said sitting down and eating together as a family either did not occur or happened less frequently when they were away over the supper hour.

Tiffany: There's a much better chance that we'll have a sit-down meal if I'm home. If I'm not home, Eric will eat a few bagels and then have a bag of chips
or something later on. And he’ll feed Brian in the high chair, but it doesn’t look like a meal so...I guess that’s a part of it. Brian really isn’t getting that experience of having the family sit down to a meal that much.

Fiona commented that it was certainly different from the supper meals she remembered growing up with.

We never sit down as a family and eat. Really. Except for on the weekends, so that’s really hard. It must be weird for her, because we always did that when I was a kid, even though my dad worked late, we would wait for him. I don’t know, it’s just different. I don’t have time, I’ve got to go to work and I have to feed her before I go.

Five of the women appeared taken by surprise when asked whether their family ate together when the mother was at work. One woman said outright, with some surprise, that she did not know and had never asked; two indicated they were guessing, based on what they saw and heard when they got home. "I can only assume yes," said Emily. "I really don’t know." When Heather was asked if she knew what happened on the evenings when she was working and her husband was at home with the children, she responded:

No, I don’t know. I don’t want to know. [laughs]...I think they are [sitting down and eating together at the table]. I think they are. You know, I’ll phone home the odd time and I hear all the chaos or whatever, but, um, I think so.

When asked whether she had any idea what happened when the children ate with a teen sitter, Heather’s answer was, "No. No, I haven’t. Isn’t that interesting?"

Christine said her husband and son probably ate together, but this was because her son was still confined to a high chair or booster seat for his meals. She hinted that this practice might not continue once her son was a bit older.

I think that when I’m not there, they sit down, but, mind you, he has to be there because he’s either in his high chair or booster seat so it’s not like they can both sit in front of the TV and watch the baseball game.

Donna thought that her sitters probably did not sit and eat with her son because they had already eaten before they arrived or ate a different meal than the one Donna left for her son.

But mostly I think it’s important to sit at the table and have a proper meal and to eat together, and so with the sitters, I don’t believe that happens. Well for one thing, they’re having their own dinners so this is something that we agreed to because I said to them, ‘You know, I can’t really afford to feed you guys, so what do you want to do? Do you want to sort of put in some money for the groceries and then we will feed you, or do you want to just provide your own
food?' And so they decided to provide their own food and their moms make their dinners, which are generally McDonald’s or subs for the other one. And so... because they’re at that age and I guess their moms are tired of the whole thing, and so they’re not eating together, they’re not eating the same thing.

When mothers were asked for their perceptions on how teen sitters handled socializing through food, they generally responded that they thought the teens mainly fulfilled the feeding task, but that other feeding work was likely lacking.

Emily: I think sometimes [the teen sitter] can be a little lax and some things that I might not allow, she will. But... I think she is pretty good at, like, making them eat. But then again, I’m only assuming.

Heather: [The teen sitter is] a pretty good kid and I don’t think she’d let them run wild, no. And it’s funny that you say that because I have been known to say to her, ‘If you have a hard time, just let them do this.’ You know, that wouldn’t happen with me, but I also want to make it okay for her, too. That this isn’t a nightmare job for her, so, whatever works, without the kids running all over her, of course.

Janet, apparently after a long period of reinforcement and disciplinary action, had achieved success in having her four children eat at the kitchen table in her absence.

They all sit at the kitchen table. They know that’s the only place you eat in our house, at the kitchen table. Because a few times they’ve wandered out and it’s like you know, I ask so, ‘Who ate at the coffee table?’ ‘Nobody, nobody, nobody.’ But now I’ve got spots all around my coffee table. No one put them there, though. So, it’s like, you know what, if I can catch any one of you down here, your eating will be done and you’ll just go upstairs and stay by yourself. So they stopped doing that. They always eat at the kitchen table.

Various strategies were used to compensate for missed socialization opportunities. Emily, Georgina and Anita attempted to make breakfast or lunch into a meal where the entire family sat down, ate together and interacted with one another. Success depended upon a number of variables, including the working schedules of one or both parents, if there were two parents involved, and the age and school routine of the children.

Georgina: I try to have breakfast together as a family because we, on the days that I work, don’t get supper together as a family. I think it’s important to eat together at least one meal a day, you should sit down and talk to each other. So I try and make breakfast that time. And we’ll sit down and have breakfast together. Not necessarily a big fry up breakfast or anything like that, but something nutritious where we all sit down together.

Eight women also said or described how they tried to compensate with extra attention to family meal-times on their days off or when they were on different shifts.
Fiona: Well, on the weekend, I really push that we do these gung ho big family things together, and my husband thinks I go a little bit too far because I’m trying so hard because we don’t have that during the week. He comes home late at night and then we’ve got things to do and it’s just... and then he does her bath and puts her to bed or he’s eating and I don’t know. I’ve tried to make up for it on the weekends, but I sometimes over-compensate a bit I think.

Frances, as reported earlier, had requested a move to permanent night shifts as one of her strategies. At the time of the interview, in the summer when her children were out of school, Frances slept a lot of the time her children were awake. However, she said the routine the rest of the year allowed more interaction and supervision on her part than when she worked day or afternoon shifts, as she was awake over the after-school through bedtime period, including over the supper meal.

3.4.2.2 Conversation Skills

Seven women specifically said they wanted their family meals to include pleasant conversation along with a peaceful, relaxed atmosphere. Christine and Heather said they had previously worked on improving their husband’s conversational practices at the table. These men were described by their wives as coming from family backgrounds that did not encourage conversation while eating. Christine’s husband wanted to finish his own eating as quickly as possible so he could work around the family’s property after supper. He often left the table when he was finished eating, before all the family had completed their meals.

Christine: I like to have nice conversation at the dinner table and I want it to be a real family event and a pleasant sort of gathering and where we can all discuss what we did during the day and, you know, Michael and I can tell Dad what we did during the day and we can talk to him about what he did. But I am the one who has to instigate it and initiate the conversation, and I just, yeah, my fear is that my husband is very regimented and when it comes to the meal time, he’s not, when I’m not there, I don’t think he’s having those happy little conversations that I have over the meal. He just wants to get the meal over with. Eat, and get on with it and of course Michael’s very, very slow at eating. I mean, it takes us, like tonight for instance it was half an hour. Of course, Carl was finished and he, he was gone and he’s always anxious to go.

When Anita was questioned about meal time conversation on shift nights, she responded that what she missed at the supper meal, she tried to make up at breakfast, saying, “You sort of miss that. There again, with my kids I like to try and sit down, eat breakfast, you know, not in a rush.”

Of all the caregivers, teen sitters were felt to be the least proficient at socializing the children through conversation.
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Emily: I know Sarah, being a typical teenager, is on the phone a lot, so I have a feeling that she's, you know, she might just sit them down to the table and then not talk with them or anything like that. I know from past experiences, trying to phone home and my line would always be busy.

It was clear in four instances that the mothers preferred it when the family was eating with extended family members when they were absent, rather than having to rely solely on the feeding and socialization practices of their husbands.

Christine: So sometimes I plan it so that if Carl's mom and dad are here, that Jacqueline, my mother-in-law, cooks a meal and they come over here and have a dinner. Because they are happy and have the conversation and I know that [my son's] going to get that good interaction from Grandma and Grandpa... And he's not going to be rushed through the meal.

In general, based on what they observed when they were at home, seven women believed there might be limited supper conversation when they were at work. However, six mothers felt senior females could guide meal time conversation satisfactorily when the mothers were unavailable.

3.4.2.3 Table Manners

All mothers said table manners were important. For example, Fiona was already addressing unacceptable manners with her toddler:

I'm really old fashioned and kind of fussy when it comes to manners. Like she throws her food and we get really angry about that. We don't like her to... she's probably too young to even care about that kind of stuff, but we've really enforced that.

Six women expressed concern about table manners or other feeding-related behaviours. They suggested that these concerns were attributable to their shiftwork-generated lack of availability at meals.

Fiona: I do worry about her table manners there, though, because here she is plunked in her booster seat, and I put the chair in the middle of the room so she can see me when I talk to her, when I'm doing stuff, and she eats alone, which isn't very nice, and so yeah, she's just sort of plunked in... She's eating alone in the middle of the kitchen, her food thrown in front of her and I don't think it's a very relaxed way to feed your family, but we don't have a choice.

Tiffany related how lunch time, which was her principal family meal with her son, was lacking in reinforcement of family-acceptable eating behaviour.

I'm probably the worst one for having something on my plate sitting in the living room and just feeding him off my plate. And he does this thing where he, you know, he does a little bird mouth, right, [laughs], and the food goes in, which I
think is a really bad habit and every time I do it, I think ‘I shouldn’t be doing this, I should be teaching him that he eats in his high chair and we eat in the kitchen.’

When questioned, ten women were unsure whether table manners were even enforced or reinforced in their absence. Heather said, “I don’t think [my husband] probably bothers with the manners thing,” while Georgina said, “I think [our son] realizes that things are a bit more relaxed when Mom’s not there and standards aren’t quite so strict.”

All but one of the women interviewed felt they were home enough to be able to reinforce behaviours that were important to them. Frances, a single mother who had worked shift work for quite a long while and whose children were a little bit older, was the sole mother who seemed to feel she had lost control of the socialization of her children. When asked about her children’s table manners and social eating habits, she responded:

Oh, I wish mine had it! Yeah! That would be nice, but it’s a completely... like I said, Little House on the Prairie compared to The Simpsons. It’s two different environments. Absolutely different. I would love to see them have more social skills and more table manners and, you know, just common courtesy would be nice.

Frances seemed to think that her children’s behaviour was now both unacceptable and perhaps irreversible. She said, “I mean, I would love to be able to take them out to, like, my boss’s house for dinner, but I would never, never, with their table manners, ever.”

3.4.2.4 Summary of Socialization Concerns

Shift-working women had a number of concerns about the effect their shift work might be having on their children. While they identified that their concerns might be the same or similar to the concerns of day-working women, the shift-working women repeatedly asserted that the problems they faced were worse when working shifts.

Shift-working women were concerned about their families not eating together frequently enough and about the adverse effect of their absence on their children’s table manners and meal time conversations. This was especially so if the caregiver in the mother’s absence was a teenager.

Although it was felt that table manners were not enforced as rigidly when mothers were at work as when they were at home, all but Frances thought they were home enough to provide
adequate guidance regarding acceptable table manners. Teen sitters were described as being able to care for children, but their ability to feed and socialize young children was considered to be limited. The mothers did not think that most other care givers were able to socialize their children as well as the mothers could if they were able to be at home for meals. The “next best” caregivers, in the mothers’ absences were identified as senior females, often family members.

The women had developed a number of strategies to improve their children's socialization, including trying to make meals other than supper into “family” meals and ensuring that attention was given to family meals when the women were at home.

3.5 Factors Shaping Feeding Practices and Concerns

The women identified a number of factors that affected how they did their feeding work. These included fatigue, which was identified as being greater than that felt by other, day shift working, mothers, and feelings of guilt, often related to the mother’s perceptions of her reduced availability to her children. The women’s perceptions of their gendered roles are also explored in this section, as are support networks, identified earlier in this paper as an important factor in shift work. Finally, this section concludes with a review of how factors relating to the ages of the women’s children may affect feeding practices and concerns.

3.5.1 Factors Relating to Work

Two work-related factors that appeared to influence a woman’s ability to feed her family were whether she worked an evening or night shift and how many hours were worked, either in one shift or over the week. While women who worked night work felt the effect of the shiftwork personally more than evening workers, they were able to justify and tolerate these effects because of their perceived increase in time available to spend with their children. Women who worked nights on a part-time basis had more time to recover from the effects of the night work, especially fatigue, and had even more time with their children. Conversely, women who worked evening shifts reported a lesser effect on themselves personally, but reported greater difficulties with feeding and socialization matters with their children due to the mothers’ absence over what was thought to be a critical part of their
Children's day. Once again, if a woman worked part-time, evening work was reported to be more tolerable.

Five women said they struggled with feelings of guilt, even when the work situations that caused the guilt seemed to be unavoidable. Three women indicated they had developed compensatory, coping strategies to appease their guilt. It was unclear whether these mechanisms were successful. For instance, Janet changed her feeding practices to compensate for the guilt she suffered as a result of being away from her children and missing their activities.

The guilt—for me, it's the guilt. I have two small boys and sometimes, just seeing them in the morning, it's two hours, it's like, how can you do this much? For me, that's what comes into play. So yes, I over compensate with a chocolate bar or the chips—that's what kills me the most. Because I know what I'm doing.

Janet's compensatory action resulted in behaviour that then caused her further guilt.

It's hard to be consistent when you are not around and sometimes that's another thing that comes into play with me too, I'm not around with the kids a lot and I miss out on a lot of things. So I think I compensate, overcompensate with junk food. Bring home the treats, and it's, like... I miss family nights at school and what not, the plays and everything and I try to compensate with a cake, or just little things, but I know I'm doing it, and it's guilt, but when you're not there all the time, you can feel it, you can really feel it.

Fiona rationalized that there should be no reason to feel guilty about the food and meals she provided for her family, but felt guilty nevertheless.

I always feel guilty because I think that soup and sandwich just isn't good enough or I have to make this big full meal like my grandmother did to feed them properly and I go through this whole guilt thing. Even though they are probably just as happy with peanut butter sandwiches.

The other main work-related factor affecting the women's food practices and concerns was fatigue. As reported earlier, significant fatigue was experienced by all but one woman interviewed.

Donna: I think days is easier, definitely. And afternoons, and I think even I could make some assumptions about working the graveyard shifts is that you're all so tired. So even if you are there, you're working when your child is in bed, and you're there; you're tired. You're going to be tired, you have to catch up eventually. Parenting is tiring. And when you're tired, you don't tend to cook.

When asked for her opinion whether shift-working women had a different level of fatigue than non-shift-working women, Fiona replied, "Oh, definitely, I know people who work Monday to Friday days,
straight day jobs, and they are not nearly as tired as we are." Six women commented, either directly or upon questioning, on how fatigue specifically affected food and nutrition matters in their families. Emily, having already identified that breakfast was the meal at highest risk of suffering when she was tired, expanded on how the tiredness could continue and affect the family’s next and last meal together before she left for work for the day.

...but usually the trouble is, it will probably carry over until lunchtime. You know if I’m really tired, and the kids usually don’t give me a chance to nap or anything like that, so then I just have to throw something really quick together for lunch. You know, open a can of soup, or sandwiches. That’s what I mean, I guess, by throw something together.

Anita also commented that, as she got towards the end of her string of shifts or on her first days off, the kinds of foods her family ate could change to those requiring less preparation on her part because of her exhaustion. In addition, Fiona found her creativity and enjoyment in food preparation were diminished because of her fatigue.

The days off after I’ve worked, I’m so tired that I sleep when she goes down to sleep. So I really have no extra time. I used to love to cook, but I have no extra time to be creative in the kitchen. I slap things together now. It’s very basic.

Four women would compromise their sleep, thereby increasing their fatigue, to provide better meals for their families. This was reported to sometimes result in other effects, such as the women becoming even more tired or feeling irritable.

Fiona: Well, the next day, ...when she’s sleeping, quite often, even though I’m really tired from working the night before, I’ll compromise my sleep to stay up and make this big wonderful meal during her nap time when I should be sleeping. And then I’m tired and crabby when I serve that beautiful meal [laugh].

Conversely, when Fiona tried to get more sleep, she would have less time to prepare a meal before leaving for work.

If I’m really, really tired and I decide to lie down and have a sleep with her then I actually get up around 4 or 5 and I don’t have time to make a dinner. So I’ll whip up something fast or I just don’t feel like it.

Shiftwork-related fatigue appeared to affect feeding, nutrition and socialization in step-wise and sometimes cyclical, negative ways. A woman would be tired from her shift work. This might lead to less than ideal meal preparation, as well as sometimes being too tired to shop. Either of these
could then lead to less nutritious meals. Occasionally, eating out then became an option, though not necessarily the most financially viable one. If this occurred, finances became tighter and the ability to purchase nutritious foods became more impeded.

Donna: Well, if I'm too tired then I don't want to cook, or I don't even want to go to the grocery store, so you'll just go with what is in the fridge or whatever and maybe won't make the effort to cook as nutritious a meal, or go out even, which really I don't have the budget for, but then that impacts the food later, because you can't buy...So, it can snowball.

In summary, fatigue was the major work-related factor that affected women's abilities to feed their families and affected most shift-working women by impairing their ability to feed their families as they wished to. Some women noted that there was a cumulative effect that led to a worsening of the fatigue with each shift they worked in a row. Fatigue was reported to be a greater problem for night workers than evening workers and for women who worked full-time or almost full-time hours than those who worked part-time. Some women noted that they had feelings of guilt which they said arose from their shift work.

3.5.2 Factors Related to Gendered Roles

The gendered roles of family members helped to shape the feeding practices in the women's families in this study. Factors that related to gendered roles and affected feeding practices and concerns included the role of mother, feeling responsible for feeding a family and sharing the feeding work.

3.5.2.1 The Role of Mother

Four women worked full-time for a number of years before having children, and then returned to the paid work force on a part-time basis. Christine, who had done this after having her first child, struggled somewhat with her changed identity.

Sometimes I think if I went somewhere and met new people and they said, 'What do you do?' and if I say, 'I'm a full-time mom because I didn't have my son until I was thirty-six. I was a career girl.' And I just sometimes think I can't imagine saying, 'Oh, [laughs] I don't, I'm a mom.' Even though I know it's the hardest job I've ever done in my life. Harder than any career I've ever had. That social stigma attached to just being a housewife haunts me. I don't know why. It shouldn't. But it does. So there's the social pressures, too. So I feel kind of like it's my little security blanket, too. At least, yes, I have a brain, too, I'm not just a breeder. You know, I'm not just a breeder. Yes, I had a career
and I still do part-time, you know. Which is kind of unfortunate that I would cave into that, but I’m only human, right?

Christine struggled with a pull between her former career and her new parental and household responsibilities. She appeared to crave the intellectual challenges and social interaction of her past employment, while knowing she was fulfilling what she considered to be one of her most important and rigorous roles. She said that when she and her husband worked full-time and there were no children, they seemed to equally share household work, including meal preparation and clean up. Now Christine found she was doing almost all this work. Like Christine, Heather and Tiffany commented that, when they became mothers, the division of labour in household work became more their responsibility, despite their doing most of the new and added work associated with their child(ren).

3.5.2.2 Feeling Responsible for Feeding a Family

Four women, directly or indirectly, described feeling responsible for feeding their family, particularly their children.

Georgina: To be quite honest, until I started talking to you, I had never really thought about it. It just seemed to me that it was the way things should be. Not that the mom should work afternoon shift, but that if you’re going to work afternoon shift [feeding your family is] one responsibility you can’t absolve yourself of.

The women also indicated that, because they felt responsible, they took what they thought to be responsible action.

Heather: I think most of us feel an obligation, no matter what our husbands are working or not working or whatever, but I think most of the girls that I’ve talked to, most of us prepare our meals before we come to work. I know a lot of the girls just leave a note for their husbands saying, ‘There’s Tater Tots and chicken strips in the freezer. That’s your dinner tonight.’ I’ve done that the odd time and I think I’m going to start doing that more [laughs] because it’s a lot easier. So I know most of us, I don’t think that there’s very many of us at work that have families that don’t cook ahead of time.

Janet felt that her responsibility included buying food, taking meat out of the freezer as needed and leaving instructions for her children regarding what to eat and how to cook it. She became frustrated when she either did not fulfill what she thought was her responsibility or when the children neglected to follow the instructions she left for them.
Janet: I find another thing is, I buy a lot of meat, stick it in my freezer. Sometimes I leave for work assuming that I've pulled something out. The kids come home from school and it's like, 'What's for supper?' It's like, ' Didn't I pull something out? ... and they tell me, 'No.' And it's like ughh! So then they know that's when they get to go digging for what they want and that's another thing that comes into play. That's my biggest irk is not pulling something out. Even though, I know it's my job to do that, but, sometimes, getting the house cleaned up, getting all the laundry done, everything folded, getting my work clothes washed and ironed. Make sure the upstairs is clean, I have to do this in a few hours' span, I work out and everything, I do that and sometimes it's like, phew!

While Heather, Georgina and Christine seemed to have accepted that they were responsible for the feeding work, they did not necessarily like or understand it.

Heather: Well, I have not been to the gym this last year and I want to go back in September and it has been crossing my mind, 'Oh, my God. What am I going to do Monday, Wednesday, Friday when I'm working evenings?' I go to the gym. I get home. It's noon. I've got like two hours to do what I've got to do and also get dinner ready. So, therefore, who's going to sacrifice? It's going to be me. I'm not going to go to the gym, I betcha. It's going to get too stressful [laughs].

Georgina: And I'm usually aware that my husband's going to come home from work after a very busy day and it's going to be difficult for him to turn around and come up with something creative for dinner and when Alex's five, he wants to eat right away, he doesn't have a lot of patience for somebody leafing through cookbooks and looking in the fridge and making decisions. So usually I leave supper made for them if they don't have an alternate arrangement. If they're not going to a friend's place for supper or going for a picnic at the beach or going to my mother-in-law's, I'll usually leave supper made for them so they don't have to figure out what they're going to have at quarter to six at night.

Georgina acknowledged that, if she worked day shifts instead of evenings, she would be in the same situation as the one she shields her husband from. There did not seem to be a sense of sharing the feeding work; she seemed to feel responsible for the outcome.

And then I would be in the same situation as Matthew and I'd be rushing in at half past five wondering what are we going to have for supper instead of having it all set up ahead of time.

Heather and Christine appeared to have tried to work out the problem with their husbands, but to no avail. This left them with feelings of resentment and frustration. But they said they continued to act responsibly.

Heather: I used to ask for his input, and it was 'I don't know,' or 'Steak,' so I just quit asking. I get really tired of cooking. I don't like cooking. I'm a good cook, but I don't enjoy it, it's not a passion of mine. Maybe it would be if I, I
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don’t know, I don’t know, if I didn’t have to [laughs]. I get tired, it’s really
tiresome for me and with these students, too, I have more of an obligation. For
instance, tonight my kids are actually going to my mother’s for the night. Now
normally, I wouldn’t be cooking. He’d be on his own. Wendy’s for all I care.
But because of these students, I have this obligation. So I get a little resentful
that it’s all on me.

Tiffany, Heather and Christine said they had improved their ability to provide nutritious meals
to their families by seeking out information on how to feed their families better. It seemed that this
knowledge further alienated some of them from their husbands, who did not feel the need to acquire
this knowledge. It also appeared to make the women feel even more responsible, both for feeding
and feeding well.

Heather: I’ve also taken it upon myself to learn about nutrition and the proper
ways of feeding us and cutting back on red meat and incorporating the
vegetables and that, where he hasn’t, he hasn’t got a clue that way. He’s very
stubborn; he still wants his steak. If I would buy it, he would cook it three times
a week, I swear. Same with bacon; if I would buy bacon, he would cook that
both Saturday and Sunday mornings. But I don’t buy that very often so—it is
my responsibility. He’s not going to do it; he’s not going to look after it.

Heather alluded to the amount of “invisible” feeding work she had to do—work that is either
not seen or appears to be an unrelated activity. Invisible feeding work is the backbone work of
feeding a family and includes such things as planning meals, going over a mental list of what foods
are on hand at home and comparing food costs while appearing to be just reading the newspaper.
Invisible work tends to reveal itself only when it is not done, for instance, when certain foods are no
longer in the fridge or cupboard.

Heather: I think it’s expected of us. I mean, it is in my family. It really is my
job. It’s become my job or it has always been my job to feed everybody.
Whether I actually put it out on the table or not, I’m buying it, I’m stocking the
fridge and freezer and most time preparing things in advance, whether it’s in
the freezer and he gets it out of the freezer or, you know, fridge, or cupboards,
he gets it out. And it just has become my responsibility.

Heather went on to explain that, while she knew her work was appreciated, there did not seem to be
an acknowledgement of how much work was involved.

I think he appreciates what I do and everybody is fed well, but I don’t think he
appreciates the work and the planning that goes into it because when he goes
and does it, what does he do? He pulls out a package of steak or a package
of chicken and a box out of the cupboard to do potatoes. Well, can you
imagine if I fed my family like that five times a week? [laughs] You know, yuck!
[laughs]
Fiona described how her husband would occasionally take their child out for meals at McDonald's and the feelings that generated for her. When asked why she thought she couldn't do that with her daughter, too, she replied that she had to use meals when she was home to compensate nutritionally for the things her daughter didn't get when Fiona was not there. She said, "I'm the responsible parent." Fiona seemed almost bemused with the roles in her family. It did not necessarily make much sense, but just followed traditional gender role models.

My husband is pretty open-minded, but I just still have this thing. I mean, look at it. He's the one working full-time. Even though I have the potential of making tons of money working full-time, he's still a full-time person. How weird is this? This is 1999. He still works full-time. We just sort of blended into these roles. I still take care of all our nutritional needs and our home stuff and all of that. I still make meals most of the time, not always.

In summary, many women studied not only did all the feeding work, but most also felt responsible for this work. Some accepted this with a degree of stoicism, others attempted to make changes and a few were somewhat angered by the role they had apparently fallen into without knowing how they got there.

3.5.2.3 Sharing the Feeding Work

As reported earlier in this report, mothers did the majority of the feeding and socialization work for their families. All the women portrayed their feeding work as being undertaken in the context of loving and caring for their family. Georgina characterized the reassignment of feeding work duties with the arrival of their first child as a reflection of the changes that had occurred in the couple's employment responsibilities and time commitments.

We've been together a very long time and when we first met...when we were both students, and then when Matthew's job was less demanding, no, it was much more equally shared. He baked bread every week. But as the demands on his time have gotten greater, especially compared to the demands on my time in terms of my work, I've just kind of taken over. Oh, yes. He's capable of planning and shopping and he is an excellent cook. It's more a matter of him having less time than me.

It was interesting to note, though, what occurred on the one day of the week when Georgina's husband worked from home and Georgina's shift started an hour earlier than other days. This earlier start created a bit of a time pressure for her, but the routine at home stayed the same.
My husband works at home one day a week. Usually Fridays. Because that's the day that I work. Always. And it's kind of the end of the week for him. He likes to knock off about 3:30 and go for a bike ride or something. Go to the gym. And so that, I still leave supper for them on Fridays, but the way the dynamic works, Friday's a bit of a less structured day for Alex and Matthew...The only difference is that I start earlier, I start at 1, instead of 2, and I get off earlier, which is very nice. But I find that even that one hour difference, I have to struggle just a little bit harder to make sure that everything's done before I walk out the door.

Christine and Heather expressed dissatisfaction with their caring role; they acknowledged that feeding was indeed work and that they were doing too much of it, caring work or not.

Of the eight married women in the study, two considered their husbands to be almost equal partners with them in doing the feeding work; several husbands contributed very little to the feeding of their family, while the remaining husbands were described in terms that fell somewhere in between. When there was a relatively equitable or acceptable sharing of household and feeding work, the women did not seem to bring forward as many concerns. When the sharing of this work seemed inequitable, unfair or unacceptable to the women, issues arose regarding each parent's role. For instance, conflict occasionally surfaced when the matter of "enough time" affected both parents equally; neither parent felt they had enough time to do feeding work required.

Fiona: We decided. I didn't have time. 'Well, then, you're going to have to make something.' And then he'll have to make whatever...Kraft Dinner. Yes, I buy it for that reason because I know that as a last resort it's something he can make and she will eat. As much as I don't like it.

Sharing the feeding work appeared to be value laden in some families. The worth of the feeding work often seemed to differ between husbands and wives. Women perceived that their husbands withdrew some or most of their participation in feeding work as a result of their wives "only working part-time" outside the home. It seemed that where this was the case, the women were saying that while they worked full-time hours, there was a lack of value being placed on the work done at home. Heather described this using one of her day shifts as an example.

So I get a little resentful that it's all on me. Whether I work or not, because of the hours I work, when I work days, I'm home at 3 or 2. I can start at 6 and be home at 2, but his perception of me working a full day isn't there because 'a,' I only work part-time, and 'b,' I'm home at two o'clock in the afternoon. So you know when I start complaining, he'll say, 'Well you only work part-time' or 'You're home at two o'clock in the afternoon.' But the thought's not there that I hit the deck at 5 a.m. and I'm walking on my feet for eight hours and I come
home and it's not like I sit at home and have a cup of tea. There's lunches to be made and dinner to prepare and quite often there's an activity after school. And laundry to do. So, yeah, I get tired of it all.

Heather and Georgina struggled with how to share the work fairly knowing their husbands worked more paid hours than they did. The women did not know how to fairly share the feeding work, but Heather knew that she did not like the current division. Often both parents were tired after working full days, whether at home or at paid employment, but there was still feeding work to do before the day was over.

Georgina: Sometimes it doesn't seem fair when he's tired to throw one more job on his shoulders. But on the other hand, I'm tired, too, and I hate going to bed when there's a messy kitchen.

Christine, who worked full-time and then changed to part-time work after the birth of her son, was being strongly encouraged to continue working outside the home.

Like I say, every month I think about quitting and not doing this any more. But it's my husband who's the one who encourages me to keep working, to keep doing it. But, I mean, it hasn't made, it hasn't changed his life at all really.

As Christine explained, her husband no longer shared the feeding or household work with her.

It seems to me I'm going to work but I still have to do all the cooking and cleaning. So I've got twice as much work and my husband talks about when my son is old enough to go to school, would I go back to work full-time. And I said, 'There's just no way.' Why would I do that? Go to work full-time and do all the cooking and cleaning. That would be twice as much work for me because I know that my husband wouldn't participate in the cleaning and cooking. Because he's shown me now even when I work part-time that he doesn't, he isn't capable of it. He's capable, but he's just not willing. And so...is he going to be able to change just because I'm working full-time? I don't think so. No, I don't.

Struggling with the perceived inequitable division of labour occasionally brought strong emotions to the forefront.

Heather: And I resent it, too, I do resent it. I feel, I get very angry sometimes because I think, 'My God, here I am out working just like he is. Yet he's not putting the thought into meals, he's not doing the grocery shopping and he's not doing the cooking, per se, as I am. He's not making the lunches, I am.' But what gets thrown back in my face is 'Well, you only work part-time.' So, yeah, I get very resentful.
Christine and Georgina tried to reason through why the changes had taken place, seemingly concurrent with the change from being a couple to being parents. Christine spoke to her husband's mother in her quest for understanding.

I ask my mother-in-law all the time, what did she do to make Carl like that and she tells me that they used to have wonderful family meals and it was never, um, rushed, it was always relaxed and I don't know. And she said that she raised him to be not a chauvinist, but sometimes I think he does act like one. So I don't know. I don't know. Maybe society, just the pressures from society make men like that. I don't know. I know women talk about women's lib and all the advances that they've made, but quite frankly I think that it's a step backwards and women going back to work...

Although Georgina seemed to have accepted the division of labour in her family, she still struggled with the behavioural modelling that resulted from her husband's actions.

I hate coming home and finding that I've left the meal and they've eaten it, but that the dishes are still stacked beside the sink and, you know, the napkins are sort of crumpled up on the table. I mean, they're happy, he's doing something worthwhile like reading him a story or playing Lego or something interactive with parental... But I feel like it teaches the wrong lesson. Mom made the dinner, Mom will come home and clean up the mess. The guys can just leave things this way and it will be looked after and the next morning it will all be sparkling clean again and we can start all over.

"Sharing" the work meant different things to different women. Four of the married women in this study said feeding work was shared with their husbands. However, most of the daily, repetitive feeding work was reported to be performed by the women. Sharing did not appear to mean an equal sharing of all the work nor an equal sharing of all the various tasks involved in feeding a family. Four women expressed few, if any, concerns with the sharing of feeding work in their households while four others expressed mild irritation to fairly extensive frustration and anger over the "sharing" they described.

Tiffany and Doreen characterized their husbands as having relatively equal roles in the feeding of their children. However, descriptions given throughout their interviews did not always support a model of equality. Tiffany, after describing her husband as doing a relatively equal amount of feeding work then reported that she either did or took the leading role in every specific feeding task she was asked about. When asked again at the end of the interview about what would need to happen to make her spouse an equal partner, even after describing everything she did, Tiffany
continued to say that her husband was taking an equal role. Doreen initially said, too, that her husband was an equal partner. She then described, however, that she did all the shopping, planning and preparing for the family. Her husband cooked items that were already in the house, selected and purchased by Doreen because she knew they were things he could cook. When further clarifying that she had procured certain items that she knew her husband could or was likely to cook, Doreen corrected me with: “Or willing to cook.” He did, however, clean up after supper on days he cooked. Doreen paused and seemed to be reconsidering the degree of her husband’s participation after describing it to me.

When husbands participated in feeding-related work, there sometimes appeared to be an optional element to it. Three men were described as usually doing specific and discrete shopping, meal preparation and clean up tasks, apparently when they felt like doing so. One husband’s participation in clean up was described by his spouse as mood dependent.

Heather: Well, sometimes it’s done and sometimes it’s not. I think it depends on his mood. If he gets into a mood, he does it better than me. But most times, I’d say it’s 50/50.

Another woman, whose husband did no regular grocery shopping, delineated the kind of shopping he did, though not in a negative way.

Georgina: He looks after all the wine that we drink. My brother-in-law is in the wine business, so he shops for wine and it’s not sort of a matter of going into the liquor store and grabbing a convenient bottle. He shops for wine. He shops for bargains. He shops for things that will be kept for five or ten years and then consumed. He’ll shop for gourmet items. He’ll shop for really nice vinegars and that kind of thing. But, in a general way, no. He’ll shop at markets. He’ll go, he’ll pick up fresh things, like he’ll detour through Ladner and go to vegetable stands in the summer time and pick up bags of fresh peas and then the following...he’ll go out and buy corn and things like that, but he’s not much for supermarkets. I guess that’s the best way to sum it up.

Georgina was asked if this shopping was done as a result of needing certain items.

No, it’s more part of an excursion. He and Alex will go for a bike ride or something and that’s where they’ll bike ride to, out to Westham Island and they’ll come home with corn and squash and things like that. Or they’ll go for a bike ride and they’ll come home with big buckets full of berries.

As introduced earlier, there appeared to be different ways to share feeding work. The sharing of feeding work as described previously appeared to have an optional element for fathers to
"choose" what and when they wanted to do certain feeding tasks. For instance, only one man regularly "chose" clean up as a feeding task, even though this work was required at least once a day. The women’s tolerance for these practices varied considerably—from almost total acceptance to almost total outrage. Three women spoke of or alluded to having addressed these issues of conflict with their husbands. A couple of different approaches were mentioned. Heather and Christine spoke of discussing the issue with their husbands; apparently at some length and in some detail. Georgina was not sure whether she had done so extensively or whether her husband was clear about the extent of her concern. None of these women indicated that discussion had resolved the matter.

Christine: Oh, we've discussed it, yeah, but to no avail, so I mean, I just figure, I don't want to fight about it, so... I'll say something like, 'Well, it would have been nice if you could have at least have taken it off the table and let it soak because now I'm going to have... you know, it's harder to clean it up when the table's got... crusted food on it. Now I have to really scrub it to get it clean,' and it would have been easier if he'd just give it a nice wipe when it was still wet and, you know, now it's twice the work for me and I don't say it meanly. I mention it.

When Georgina was asked if her husband knew that coming home to a dirty kitchen was a problem for her, she responded, "Probably not. Probably not. He probably is aware that it irks me, but he's probably not aware how much."

Another strategy mentioned was "backing off." This tended to be a stage that followed the discussion stage and when discussion had reached a stalemate.

Heather: I've sort of, I've now backed off that when I work afternoons on weekends, I don't even plan—it's up to him. You know, if he's working days on Saturdays then I might take something out of the freezer for him to put together, but now I've backed off on that because I'm just finding it too stressful and too tiring. I'm tired of it all and so weekends he'll cook. And even if I'm off, I make him cook. Actually on a Sunday if he's off, I just back off.

When Heather was asked how she felt when she backed off, she said she thought she was shirking her responsibilities: "Because it's not going to get done properly or what I perceive is properly." Three other women speculated as to what might happen if they backed off, but had not actually tried that tactic. They guessed there would be more fast food meals and eating with other family members.

Georgina: I don't know what Matthew would do if I wasn't prepared to leave food for them. I think he'd probably go to my mother-in-law's more often. He's not much of a fast food kind of a person so I don't think he would choose that option.
Christine: I have a feeling that if I didn’t plan the meals that he might hop in the car and drive in. Like I just don’t know if he’d have the gumption to prepare something.

Other strategies were mentioned. Fiona had come to a stage of what she called “nagging,” which seemed to be a combination of discussion, backing off, and then just allowing natural consequences to ensue. “It’s changing in my house, but I’m a bit of a nag. But you know what, hey, I bet that’s the only way to get results in the end. He’s starting to come around.” Fiona had earlier said that she did, however, keep items in the house that her husband would be able to prepare if he had to. Tiffany continued to work towards an equal partnership role with her husband. She was less specific about her method, but it appeared to be more enabling than punitive.

I think those kinds of things like giving responsibility and giving up the control. And, you know, treating, you know, treating your partner as someone who’s got some brains of his own and directing it towards the reading material rather than cooking up all the food, putting it into little containers and stuff.

In summary, when women were dissatisfied with the way that feeding work was divided in their family, they used various strategies to deal with the dissatisfaction. Some women talked to their husbands about their frustration; some described this as progressing to “nagging.” Other women, usually after having tried the discussion technique, just backed off. The women indicated that it had become too “hot” an issue to discuss further, as they had seen no change in their husbands’ participation in feeding work and the discussions were becoming too stressful for them to deal with. Some women went further, no longer performing certain feeding tasks. The results of these strategies were not always reported to be successful, but some women persisted.

3.5.3 Factors Relating to Support Networks

It was reported earlier that a number of the women in this study identified supportive networks as a pivotal factor essential to the success of working shift work. All the women said or implied by describing their situations that a strong support network was integral to the functioning of the family unit, including matters around food, nutrition and socialization. Support networks often included members of a woman’s immediate family living with her. Other family members who didn’t live with the families also formed part of the support network in some families, with grandparents of
the children being the most commonly mentioned. Donna’s child had a godmother who was an important member of that family’s support network. Non-family adults and teenagers were the other caregivers who formed support networks when mothers worked shift work.

3.5.3.1 Husbands

The eight women who had husbands living with them generally thought their husbands could contribute more to the feeding work.

Fiona: I just think that it would be easier for most women in my position and my husband is by no means perfect, but he’s not the worst that you can get either. If that the husbands, the dads, helped out a lot more. If they were able to come home early enough before you went to work to cook some of the meals or to be more into that stuff, care more.

As well as not contributing enough to the feeding work, husbands were often said to require support rather than assuming a supportive role. This meant extra work for some women. As reported earlier, men did not do all the feeding work for their families when their wives went to work. Four women spoke of having to leave quite detailed instructions for their husbands, sometimes in writing, regarding what to prepare and how to prepare it. Four mothers also said they needed to leave instructions for their husbands about when to feed their children. One of the most commonly expressed concerns was that children were fed too late. The mothers said they thought the children either became too tired to eat and did not want to eat even if they were hungry or that some other evening regime such as the bedtime story would be sacrificed.

Fiona: Or he’ll wait for her to ask to be fed whereas I will always have it ready for her and I’m always asking her, ‘Do you want more to eat, or are you hungry now?’ and he doesn’t do that. He waits for her to come to him and say, ‘I’m starving.’

Three women also said they left detailed instructions about other feeding matters, such as how to feed their children. These mothers thought they needed to remind their husbands that they had to actually feed their children, usually toddlers, and could not just put the food in front of them. As reported earlier, three women commented that their husbands did not know how to compile a balanced meal and were often reluctant to pursue feeding when the children resisted. These fathers were described as either feeding what the children asked for, or feeding foods they knew the children would eat. This would occur despite instructions left for them. This apparent inability resulted in the
women having to do additional work prior to leaving for their paid work to ensure their children were fed in a way the women thought was nutritious and appropriate. Four women also described compensating for the ways their children were fed by the fathers.

Christine: I'm always really quite worried if he had enough to eat... and I always ask my husband in the morning, 'Did he eat very much at supper?' and Carl says, 'Oh, he didn't eat that much.' And I think, 'Ohhhhh' so then the next day I'm, you know, I'm trying to get lots of food into him at breakfast and lunch and stuff because I know that [my husband's] not really as... now I wouldn't say forceful, I don't force food on my son, but I'm very good at finessing food in him.

The women said they sometimes used additional measures to ensure their children were fed as the mothers wished while they were away and the fathers were caregiving. For example, Christine would leave foods that required that her husband assist in feeding their son.

Unfortunately my son doesn't like to eat, so he needs to be encouraged and help him along. But my husband doesn't like to do that so I have to think of foods, too, that [laughs] I know he sort of has to help him with, like soup or something because it's tricky for a little two-year-old to eat soup or stew or something like that.

These women often phoned home from work to check up on and to ensure that their children had been fed properly and to problem-solve if a child had not eaten enough or enough of some foodstuff. Five women also acknowledged that they worried less if they pre-prepared the meal and retained some control of the overall eating, even if from afar. One woman described her husband as having limited cooking ability, which appeared to preclude some of his responsibility for meal preparation.

"He tries really hard," said Janet, "but I wish he wouldn't." Another woman described her former husband's ineptitude in the kitchen as a learned behaviour used in an attempt to absolve his responsibility for feeding work. Frances said this only occurred because his mother had lived close by and often covered for him by preparing meals for the family. "We tried to take turns cooking, but I found when my back was turned, that Grandma would take over his turn."

Five women speculated or indicated that they knew of families where the standard practice was for fathers to feed their children at or from fast food establishments when mothers worked shifts.

Christine: I know other women who work nights and if they haven't had a chance to prepare anything, they leave it up to Dad and they know that Dad is just going to take them to McDonald's, or to Burger King or wherever. That it's not going to happen. I know that's sort of not a fair comment because I'm sure
there are some Dads out there who are very good at cooking nutritious meals and, you know, making sure that all the food requirements are met there, but I would say on the whole that it doesn’t happen, that the burden falls on women’s shoulders more than men and that most men don’t even think about it. They just figure, well, whatever, it’s okay a few nights if they eat junk or whatever.

This practice, however, was not substantiated by the women in this study. Although four women thought that perhaps their husbands might eat out more if they did not do as much meal preparation as they did, eating out appeared to be only an occasional practice. Reasons cited for not eating out more included the expense, the distance to travel and the difficulty the fathers had in controlling their children’s behaviour in a restaurant when alone with them. One woman commented that her former husband regularly relied on take-out when he was called upon to feed the family.

Frances: Hidden Cook! Dad’s cooking, pizza will be here in a minute. [laugh]. He did do an awful lot of that. Like Dad’s night to cook was dinner was ready when the doorbell rings.

Fiona said she and her husband discussed differences in the ways they fed their daughter. However, Fiona appeared to contradict herself about how well her husband fed his child, though.

He is very close to his daughter, they were like ‘this’ from the moment she was born and so when I went back to work, I started getting neurotic, ‘feed her... here’s the snack, here’s the bottles, blah, blah, blah’ and he was insulted. He said, ‘What makes you think I can’t feed my daughter?’ So I had to stop doing stuff like that and I just let him do it and he says...he’s never going to do things the way I do things, but that’s okay, I have to accept that. Even though it’s not perfect, his eating and stuff like that, but...he still knows how to feed his daughter and he’s never been one of those dads who I have to explain...leave the baby food jars out or...he always used to make formula, he does all of that kind of stuff.

Although Fiona said she had accepted that Tim was able to feed Kelly, she appeared to have concerns about how well this task was accomplished. When asked what Tim would feed their daughter, Fiona replied, “Kraft Dinner, soup, a can of soup, grilled cheese sandwiches, that kind of stuff.” When asked how those meals measured up nutritionally in her view, her response was, “Not at all.”

Three of the four single women said they thought shift work would be easier for women who had husbands. “[Married women] know that there is at least one parent there with them and nine times out of ten you are going to get someone who’s going to prepare the food properly,” was the way
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Emily put it. For one single woman, there was concern regarding eating behaviours that took place when the children were with their father. In particular, she knew that the children had more junk food when he was feeding them. However, because visiting periods were relatively short and because she recognized that she had little or no control over the situation, she appeared to have accepted it.

Anita: I get a little concerned, because he'll send them down to the store with two dollars and say, ‘Buy whatever you like’ and they’ll go down for a bag of chips or something like that. So they got off the plane and they had a whole plastic bag of jaw-breakers. You know, ‘This is for us to eat.’ Well, they don’t realize that I’ve chucked them in the corner of a closet somewhere and they’ve forgotten about them. So yes, they’re into candy out there good! But he is their father and I can’t get on the phone from Vancouver and say, you know, ‘Be sure and brush your teeth,” or stuff like that. So, I have to contend with that.

The single women’s perceptions of what husbands’ contributions might be like contradicted their recollections of past experiences. All three women described their former husbands’ participation, in retrospect, in a negative way, recounting situations similar to those of the married women in this study, with husbands showing little interest and participating minimally, if at all, in feeding matters.

While most married women indicated that they were somewhat unhappy with the amount of participation their husbands provided in feeding matters, there was no suggestion from these women that feeding or parenting might be easier if they were single. In fact, three married women said they did not know how single mothers coped with combining shift work and raising a family. The focus of this study was on feeding and while feeding may be a large component of parenting, there were a number of other aspects of parenting where husbands were said to participate more. Their participation in these other areas of parenting appeared to reduce the overall impact of their lesser participation in feeding.

In summary, married women felt their husbands were not as supportive as they could be in feeding their children when mothers worked. Husbands were reported to need assistance to undertake and complete feeding work and when this was done, it was not always to the satisfaction of their wives. Fathers were not reported to use fast food take-out or restaurants to feed their children on a regular basis. Single mothers felt feeding their family would be easier if they had a husband to
help, but this was not supported by either their memories of when they had been married or by the experiences shared by the married women in this study.

### 3.5.3.2 Extended Family

Five women had various members of their extended families whose contributions increased their ability to work shifts successfully. For the purpose of this study, extended family was considered to include relatives who did not live with the participants interviewed. Extended family members tended to be senior women, often the children's grandmothers, who had completed their own child-rearing and were now able and willing to assist with the care of their grandchildren. The participants sometimes commented that there was less stress and that it was "easier" when these family members were available and willing to help with child care and feeding.

Georgina: We're extremely fortunate that my husband's family is all in the Lower Mainland. They're all an extremely close and warm and generous group of people and my in-laws in particular have made my work situation and my husband's work situation infinitely easier because of their love for my son and their desire to look after him sometimes.

Two women commented on what it had been like in the past when their mother-in-laws were able to provide child care.

Janet: Yes, Richard's mom watched them, so, yeah, that was a lot easier too having her around. She would just come into our home instead of taking them out for weeks at a time. And that was good too.

Frances: I was working downtown as a secretary, my husband was a shift worker. He worked days, and afternoons, twelve hours, two days, two afternoons, these are twelve hour shifts, four on and four off and he was Island Paper Mills so he was that rotating shift thing. Then Grandma was working afternoons, taking care of the kids during the day and I was working days taking care of the kids in the afternoon and at night when I got home.

Extended family members in three families were able to fill in child care gaps and help mothers contend with the often complicated child care arrangements that were needed and that often spanned meal times because of the shifts and non-standardized days off.

Doreen: During the school year or when my son was in Kindergarten last year, because of my husband's shift work, he often was the one to pick up Spencer at 11:30. But if he was on nights, or day shift, and I was working, my mom would pick him up and take him to her place and give him lunch and then I would get up before 3 and pick the kids up at 3 and go get him from my mom's place at the same time.
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It was sometimes reported that these family members were better than husbands at following instructions regarding the feeding of the children. These caregivers gave mothers a greater peace of mind because they were felt to be able to feed the children satisfactorily with little or no coaching.

Donna: Yes, I don't even really have to think about... that's the beauty, when he spends time with her I don't even have to think about anything. Like I don't have to wonder if she's going to feed him properly, or what kind of activities she's going to do with him, or... it's all good.

There seemed to be an element of increased trust that extended family members were able to fulfill the feeding and socialization role such that the mother's comfort level was increased and anxiety level was decreased. Although Christine questioned whether the events were being told to her in a totally truthful way, she appeared to have a higher level of trust in how her mother-in-law was able to feed and socialize her child. When Christine was asked if she knew who fed her son when he ate at his grandparents' house, she replied, "Yeah, probably Grandma would sit beside him. It wouldn't be Carl." She continued, saying:

I feel better if he's having dinner with Grandma and Grandpa. Because I always phone and they'll say, 'Oh, he just gobbled the food down. I gave him, you know, two servings.' So I don't know if they're pulling my leg and just saying that, you know what I mean. But I think he does. But because they're, you know, they're very nurturing, you know. Grandma's very much like me, you know what I mean, and knows how to talk to him and nudge him along for eating.

It was noted, however, that sometimes expectations were lower and more feeding options were provided for the extended family members than were provided for the women's husbands. Tiffany said, "I guess when [my mother is] here what I try to do is make up more food." Tiffany also reported that her mother was also more approachable and accommodating than her husband if Tiffany wanted something to be done differently.

Not all family members, however, were satisfied with the child care arrangements provided by grandmothers. Frances' daughter reportedly found it difficult to cope with her younger brother after he arrived home from Grandma's.

Frances: [Grandma will] feed him nice little meals and make things he specifically wants and so he goes through this little, you know it's a Grandma... and she acts like a Grandma. And it's really nice and he comes back here and he doesn't have that and he wants it from everybody. And my daughter is not going to give it to him [laughs].
The occasional grandparent would take the children to McDonald’s, with one grandmother reported as having taken the children there every time that she looked after them. Although two women commented that grandparents provided more junk food than they would, it was considered to be within the realm of the “grandparent’s prerogative” to spoil their grandchildren. Only one seemed to go beyond the level tolerated by the family.

Janet: [The grandparents] eat very well, but they seem to bring the junk food home to our place. You know it’s good that you buy that stuff, and sometimes it’s not too bad in contents, it’s, at times, it can be just so much. Like they buy a lot for the kids and then they bring it home and it’s like, ‘Jesus Christ, man.’ They don’t eat all this shit here, you know you could have bought half of this, or just left it at your house. That would have been fine too.

The five women who had extended family members able to provide child care and do feeding work in the mother’s absence were grateful for this assistance. The mothers in this study also reported that it was easier to leave the home to go to paid work when extended family members took over the responsibilities of feeding work.

3.5.3.3 Other Adult Caregivers

Three women had adults who were not relatives providing childcare. Only Anita had an adult caregiver as a regular arrangement. Anita would drop her daughters off at the sitter’s home on the way to her night shift and pick them up again on her way home from work, after 7 a.m. This arrangement worked extremely well for Anita and she credited the arrangement with her success in being able to work full-time night work as a single mother.

Some non-family, adult care-providers appeared willing to provide some meals or snacks, but the offers to do so were not always accepted by the women studied.

Heather: She offered to, but I just felt, no, because then I don’t know what my kids are eating. I’d rather, as much as, sometimes I wish I had done the other way. [laughs] But this way I know when they come home with a lunch bag, I know what they’ve eaten and haven’t eaten. It gives me a better idea of what’s going on. My husband did forget their lunch one day and they told me what they ate, what she fed them and you know and that sounded fine. So, who knows, I may change things. I will see. I will see how things go.
Donna commented that, although the daycare provided snacks for her son, she did not think the selections were as nutritious as they could be and often consisted of foods she preferred her son not have.

They provide snacks. Now, I’m not too impressed with the snacks that they provide. It’s often kind of sugary or things like, you know, those freezies and those things don’t do well with Brendan. My son is hyper he’s actually been diagnosed as having ADHD, so I’m hesitant to give him too much sugar, and certainly dyes I’ve noticed, like in the freezies and those things. So I’ve told them about the freezies, so they don’t give him that anymore, but they’ll give him snacks. But I wish they would go more towards fruit and things like that, but they don’t seem to do that.

In general, women who had adult caregivers reported mixed experiences with the feeding of their children. Some mothers thought their children were fed well in their absence, others had concerns, and one had not taken advantage of her adult sitter’s offer to feed her children.

3.5.3.4 Teenagers

Seven women did not have extended family able or willing to provide child care. These women had to depend on non-family sitters, often teenagers, for child care when immediate family members were not available. Teenaged caregivers ranged in age from fourteen to nineteen with most about fifteen years old. Older teens tended to be hired when a greater amount of caregiving time was required on a regular basis.

Written, or very occasionally, oral instructions were usually left for these caregivers. The women perceived that the teens were better at following feeding instructions than their husbands. However, this was sometimes qualified with statements that indicated expectations were lower for this group than for husbands.

Heather: [The teen sitter is] pretty good. I leave her a note, like I leave her a letter, basically, of the routine to follow—what’s for dinner, if they don’t eat it, what the substitute can be and what can be for bedtime snack and she pretty much follows that to the letter. No, actually she’s better than my husband [laughs].

While they were generally thought to be better at following feeding instructions than husbands, there were some instances when the teenagers, too, would choose the easiest feeding routes.

Emily: I buy granola bars at the store and I find that [my children] eat a granola bar anywhere from half hour to an hour before they eat. Then they
don't want to eat a full, a proper meal... I think [the teen sitter is] a little more lenient. She would probably just give them whatever they asked for.

In addition, there were often alternative plans provided for the teen sitters to follow if they had difficulty with the children. This practice was unique to the teen sitters, with no alternative plans mentioned for other caregivers. Doreen, who had high nutritional standards for her family, explained it this way:

Well, the little one, the six year old can give the babysitters a run for their money. So it's kind of a bargaining chip for her that if he doesn't behave or go to bed then he doesn't get pop and chips kind of thing, as opposed to, you know, if it's just a regular fruit or something like that. It doesn't mean anything to him, but getting the pop and the chips is a bargaining point. And she can use that as a way of getting him to comply and go to bed.

The practice of going out to eat more regularly at fast food outlets was more commonly seen with teen sitters than with other caregivers. This practice often caused some level of distress to the mothers.

Emily: So they'll go to McDonald's a lot. I mean there's a couple of times she'll tell me that she's gone to McDonald's a couple of times and if it's two days in a row or something and I'll say, 'No, that's enough.'

Donna: I don't ask the sitter to do much because, well, I don't think she's... well, she's not a cook necessarily. So many of the days when she has him, they'll do one of two things: she goes to McDonald's for dinner a lot [laugh]. So if I feel inclined I will give her money and she'll take him and he'll get McDonald's food. Which again is no burgers, for him Chicken McNuggets and so that might happen once a week, because I don't really want to do that too often.

As similarly reported earlier by Fiona, who felt she was not able to go to McDonald's with her daughter because her husband did this, Donna also expressed her feelings regarding her inability to do some of the "fun" or easy feeding with her child. In this case, it was having to compensate for the teenaged sitter's feeding practices instead of a spouse's feeding practice.

So I'm not making Kraft Dinner. Even though I would love to have the opportunity once in a while to just slough off and make Kraft Dinner, I don't dare do that really. I shouldn't say never, because I have, but I feel even more pressure to make sure that I make really good meals.

Donna and Emily reported difficulties with teen sitters, particularly as the women had children they considered difficult to feed. Teenagers were perceived to be less tenacious in encouraging feeding and especially feeding foods the mothers wanted fed.
Donna: I'm concerned about the limitations of what the sitter might be willing or able to make for him. Whether she would really be willing to spend the time that I spend with him to sit down, make sure he eats and so on. Because he seems to need that kind of grounding to eat. Like he can tell you he's hungry and you can put food in front of him and he can not eat it, because he's distracted. And you have to remind him, and I usually try to remove him from the T.V., but when he's with her, I'm pretty sure they watch T.V. from the moment she gets here, which is something I wouldn't let him do.

It was reported that teens tried to avoid meal preparation and clean up whenever they could. The teens used various means to avoid this work.

Emily: I guess my major concern is that I just don't have any control over what they are eating when I'm away. Even if I do put something out, if I don't prepare something like a dish, then I find that I have very little control, that if I put out some chicken, well I could come home and the chicken would still be there and she'll say, 'Well, you know, we were playing at the park, it got late and we went to McDonald's instead.' You know, that kind of stuff, and I hear that quite often and especially now in the summer time. They will be out playing in the park and the next thing she'll know it's like 6 and she'll go, 'Oh, it's too late to come home and cook, so we go to McDonald's.' That I don't like.

All teen sitters were reported to be unable or unwilling to prepare anything other than the most basic meals. The mothers were unsure if this was due to a lack of knowledge or a lack of willingness. "Most of the teenage girls don't know how to cook at all kind of thing, and I think it's asking a lot of them as well," was Doreen's comment. When the teens were able to do some of the meal preparation and cooking, the other comment heard was that they had a very limited scope in what they could or would do. One example was a teen sitter who reportedly could cook chicken only one way and did not appear to be open to suggestions of other methods of preparation.

Despite the limitations, the mothers tended to have a fairly wide tolerance of the feeding behaviours of their teen sitters and generally were grateful that they were available and able to provide care for their children. The mothers thought the teens could keep their children safe, but that the teens had limited feeding skills and little interest in gaining expertise in this area.

Donna: Well, when I'm shopping for the days that I'm off, I always think of something simple and easy and I don't want to ask the sitter to do much. I mean they are not paid very well for what they are doing and I'm just so grateful that they are here and willing to do it. And they both have been very good with Brendan. They're very responsible around his care. So yes, I have to think of what is going to be the easiest thing, and I keep going back to grilled cheese sandwiches and Kraft Dinner. Neither of which I think are terribly nutritious.
The teen sitters also fulfilled a role, on occasion, in bridging the gap between various child care arrangements.

Heather: Quite often I have my teenage babysitter who will pick them up from the daycare, bring them home and I have dinner ready and she does the dinner thing and puts them to bed until Paul gets home. It’s a juggling act [laughs].

With the teen sitters, there was the additional factor that mothers wanted all the sitter’s attention and energy directed to the care and safety of their children and that they thought this could be compromised if the teen sitter was required to do meal preparation.

Doreen: ...and then there is safety issues, if they are here cooking, then the kids aren’t being looked after. You know that sort of thing, so I’ve never ever considered leaving it up to them.

Where there were teenagers in a family, they often became the “teen sitters.” Often the standards and expectations for these teens were higher than in families where non-family teens provided child care. Apart from that, there were many of the same issues as with non-family teen sitters. These included limited meal preparation and cooking abilities, lack of attention to socialization and behaviour at meal time, and sometimes an apparent lack of interest in following the parent’s guidelines for feeding.

Janet: I make chilis and stuff, I’ll make up a couple batches and throw them in the fridge, or the freezer. The kids will pull those out and those will work pretty well, but sometimes, I don’t know, they know it’s there, they know what to pull out, but they just don’t. They just grab, you know, a package of fries, the chicken pies to go with it. I don’t know, sometimes, I don’t know, they just don’t seem to hear...Like we’ve done the thing where we’ve prepared meals before, but it just seems like they seem to eat it before it’s time to eat it. So it’s like I’ll make dinner before I leave for work, and the kids will come home and they see something and they start eating it then. And then there is nothing for dinner, so they end up putting on something like French fries, or their dad will order pizza, or what not.

Four of the mothers had started to encourage their pre-teens (and teens) to participate in feeding work by making their own bag lunches. However, this process had to be supervised or, if done independently by the children, the contents often needed to be inspected.

Janet: Some nights I get home from work and Sam and Alicia will have already made lunches for the next day, and I go through them and it’s like, ‘Oh, my God.’ It’s like, there may not even be a sandwich, there’s chips, there’s
pop, there’s chocolate bars, like you know ‘Where’s your lunch?’ So, eating properly, that’s a big thing for me for the kids.

In families where there were teenagers, the teenagers often babysat their younger siblings when their mothers worked. Family teens functioned like non-family teen sitters, though their mothers often set higher standards for them than for non-family teen sitters.

3.5.4 Factors Relating to Children’s Ages

The main characteristic shaping children's feeding practices was age. Feeding and socialization issues were different depending upon whether a family had toddlers, six to ten-year-olds (school-aged) or pre-teens (eleven and twelve-year-olds). The presence of teenagers, though not a focus of this study, also influenced feeding practices in those families. The ages of the children affected their eating habits, eating behaviours and seemingly the anxiety level of their mothers regarding these factors.

3.5.4.1 Toddlers and Preschool-Aged Children

"Oh geez, I would never have done this when Brendan was a baby." – Donna.

The six mothers of toddlers and pre-schoolers appeared to have the highest level of concern about what was happening when they were away at work. This seemed to be because these small children could not relay to their mothers what was occurring at home. The concern then shifted to a trust issue about whether the women felt they could trust their caregiver to fulfill the expected role.

Three women described their small children as picky eaters. The two women who had toddlers who were picky eaters appeared to find working shift work challenging as it involved additional planning and preparation to accommodate their children’s eating habits. They knew that caregivers could not just feed the children without knowledge of the children’s habits. Toddlers who were picky eaters were also sometimes described as poor eaters and reported to need extra encouragement to eat. Two of the three mothers who reported having children who were picky eaters had developed strategies, sometimes along with the suggestions of their doctors, to feed their children. These often time-consuming practices were frequently not continued when the mothers were not home for meals. Husbands and caregivers alike seemed unable or unwilling, according to these mothers, to adequately feed picky eaters. As earlier reported, the caregivers generally
considered able to accomplish this task were adult women caregivers, often grandmothers or female adults who had a close relationship with the children.

Five mothers of preschoolers and toddlers were anxious as to whether their children were being fed adequately in their absence, though only Christine expressed concern about her child being underweight. Four mothers adjusted their feeding practices when they came off their shift rotation to compensate for what they believed had occurred while they were away.

### 3.5.4.2 Six to Ten-Year-Old Children

The six women who had children in the six-to-ten year old age group were concerned primarily with a lack of good socialization practices, but also with the quality of food eaten by their children when the mothers were absent. These children were becoming more independent in making food choices. The mothers said they had fewer concerns when there was a good support network in place. These mothers also had concerns other than those just related to feeding. When Janet, whose younger two children were eight and seven, was asked about what it was like to work shift work with children at various ages, she put it this way:

> The little guys, they need someone there constantly. They need the attention, they need to know, like that's the other thing, they need to know just because I'm not here doesn't mean I don't feel things for you, okay. It's just as strong, I just miss you more when I'm at work, you just don't realize it sometimes.

Janet went on to say that she would not necessarily do it the same way if she had to do it over again, unless necessity prevailed. She said, "I wouldn't do it again, though. I would wait 'till they got to be like this age, then start working. But sometimes that's not the situation—you have to start working."

Donna commented that her son found it very difficult when she returned to shift work after a temporary assignment to day work. "Even now it is difficult, but he is at least old enough. Like, I mean, he went through so much emotionally when I first started doing this."

Two mothers with children in this age group reported that their children were picky eaters. As the children by this age had more developed conversational ability, their mothers appeared to find feeding in their absence frustrating, but not overwhelming.
3.5.4.3 Pre-Teens (Eleven and Twelve-Year-Olds)

The two women with pre-teens commented on the frustration they felt regarding their children's eating habits. They said it did not seem to matter what they did to plan and prepare meals: this age group simply did not do as instructed.

Frances: Sometimes I'll leave a hint, like I'll leave a box of something on the stove and sometimes I wake up and the box is still there, and sometimes they've done it. Like I should have taken the cans out and put them on the stove and the pot with a spoon in it and a note, 'This is lunch.' And they will, sometimes they will...if it's something they want to eat. If it's something they don't want to eat then it's...all the hounds from hell isn't going to do it [laugh].

Unlike the mothers of smaller children, these mothers were able to elicit from their children what had transpired in their absence. However, the mothers did not always like what they heard.

Janet: Sometimes, I don't know, they just don't seem to hear. Like, I could leave a note before I leave, talking with them before they leave for school, call them after school, tell them what I want, but by the time I get home and check things out, it's like, how come no one ever hears me. You know, I told you to do this, this, and this, and that's what I said, but just, I don't know...They know I'm not going to be there, their dad's not going to be there until late, or they just assume they can just, you know, go with the alternative, and it's like no, no.

The eating habits of the older, pre-teen children seemed to be more disappointing than anxiety-provoking for their mothers. As the children became more independent regarding their food choices, their mothers reported less ability to control what they ate. As the pre-teen children gained increasing autonomy, their mothers reported a corresponding decreased interest and aptitude in making nutritious food choices. This was reported to be combined with an apparent lessening in the pre-teens' ability to follow instructions left for them regarding food and meals. Although both mothers recounted this with some frustration, Janet occasionally exhibited anger and resignation when sharing this information.

The mothers of pre-teens were primarily concerned with the amount of junk food their children consumed. It did not seem to make much difference who was providing care to this group as the pre-teens were fairly autonomous and often just helped themselves to whatever they wanted.

In summary, the women in this study reported that it was harder to feed their children (in the mothers’ absence) when the children were younger. The youngest children were not always reported to be "good" eaters. Mothers reported frustration because their children could not tell them what went
on while they were at work. The mothers had to rely on the reports they received from the children's caregivers; these reports were not always thought to be accurate. The mothers of school-aged and pre-teenaged children reported more frustration than anxiety over their lack of control over their children's eating habits when they were away at work. These mothers also said they had concerns about the socialization of their children. These mothers appeared to have more concerns regarding socialization than the mothers of the younger children. Good caregivers, usually senior females, helped somewhat to appease the food worries experienced by the mothers.

3.5.5 Summary of Factors Shaping Feeding Practices & Concerns

In summary, shift-working mothers reported that fatigue was a major factor affecting their ability to feed their families, and the factor that most often prevented some mothers from feeding their children well. Fatigue was also cited as the main reason for mothers choosing to provide a "quick" or "easy" meal, or even eat out on the usually rare occasions when they did so. The mothers also reported feeling guilty about feeding concerns caused by shift work. Some women had developed compensatory actions or behaviours to appease the guilt, but these behaviours sometimes appeared to cause further guilt.

Although they may not have said it directly, most of the women described their roles in their families as being traditional, gendered "mother" roles. Although most women did not indicate they were unhappy with this role, several were. The women who were unhappy with their roles, or more particularly with the roles that their husbands had seemed to assume with fatherhood, had tried various means to effect change. None of the strategies undertaken were reported to have achieved much change, leaving women with further frustration and anger.

Strong support networks were reported to be essential to successful shift work. Successful networks did not always have to include family members although the contributions the non-family caregivers made in supporting shift-working mothers appeared to be more erratic and tenuous than those made by family members. Husbands, when present, were described as being able to feed their children, but with varying levels of interest and expertise. Most husbands needed a fairly high degree of support from their wives to accomplish this. Verbal, and sometimes written, instructions were left
for fathers to use and the meal to be served was often mostly (or totally) prepared by the mothers before they went to work. Teens were thought to be able to care for children, but their ability to “feed” was limited. This group needed a lot of instruction and easy or pre-prepared food. Teens were also the caregivers reported most likely to take children to fast food restaurants. Senior females were thought to be the preferred caregivers when mothers worked over meal times. The mothers reported being almost worry-free when senior females assumed the feeding work in their absence.

Shift-working women had concerns about their children’s eating habits regardless of their ages, but the nature of the concerns differed slightly depending on the ages of the children in the home. Mothers with younger children (toddlers and pre-schoolers) were concerned mostly about their children getting enough food and adequate nutrition. Mothers with slightly older children (the six to ten-year-olds) had food and nutrition concerns, but also had concerns about socialization practices. The mothers of pre-teens were primarily frustrated because their children didn’t follow guidelines left for them. The pre-teens were fairly autonomous and often made food choices for which their mothers did not approve.

In sum, a number of factors shaped feeding practices and concerns. Personal factors affecting the mothers (primarily fatigue and guilt), the gendered roles of the mothers, characteristics of the support networks available to the mothers, and the age of the mothers’ children were all major factors affecting feeding practices.
4. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore how women perceived that feeding and socialization matters were handled in their family, along with exploring family feeding concerns of shift-working mothers when they were absent because they worked shift work. The major areas of concern that emerged from the study were issues that the shift-working mothers had about shift work itself, how the feeding work was organized in their families, and the effects that shift work had on their children's eating habits. Individuals' specific concerns were shaped by a variety of factors that shaped the feeding practices and socialization of their children. In this chapter, the major findings from each of these areas are compared to the findings of previous research. This chapter also includes discussion of the limitations of this study, as well as possible implications this study might have for various practitioners and for future research.

4.1 The Shift Work Experience

Mothers reported a number of concerns about shift work. Other research has indicated that the ability to tolerate and possibly even enjoy shift work is influenced by a number of factors, including the ability to choose the hours one works. If this is realized, then (along with other factors) workers are more likely to continue with shift work.

The findings of this study support the findings of other researchers (Barton & Folkard, 1991) whose subjects included both female and male nurses who chose to work either permanent day or night shifts. They found, in contrast to a number of earlier studies that used predominantly men in the industrial sector, that women with some ability to choose the shifts they work have less problems with shift work than those who are assigned to specific hours of work. Barton and Folkard (1991) found that many night-working female nurses chose to work at night in order to minimize domestic problems, especially when there were younger children in the home. The female night shift nurses reported fewer problems and an overall higher satisfaction than the female day shift nurses in the study. These results were also supported in the work by Robson...
and Wedderburn (1990), whose subjects included both males and females from various employment backgrounds. In this sample of twelve women, 58% chose to work shift work while 42% did not. This is similar to what has been reported elsewhere, with about 70% of shift workers liking or tolerating shift work reasonably well, and between 20 to 30% disliking shift work (Folkard et al., 1985). Anita, Christine and Rachel had not worked shift work before having their children. Anita and Rachel chose to work shifts after their children were born and found the family routine somewhat easier as a result; Christine had evening work imposed and found her family routine much more difficult. The five women in this study who did not necessarily like working shift work and who may or may not have chosen the shifts they worked, still acknowledged, as has been noted in other studies, that there were aspects about the work during the evening/night hours that made it attractive. The work was sometimes reported to be lighter than day-shift work and there were often longer stretches of days off. Similar reasons for choosing night work were reported (Sadler, 1990) in a study including both female and male nurses.

Many individuals, both men and women, leave shift work if they find it intolerable. Where this study differs from some, however, is that the women in this study continued to work shifts, rather than leaving shift work, because it was more conducive to their family situations, with some women continuing to work night shifts even while indicating they did not tolerate the effects of the shift very well. Robson and Wedderburn (1990) reported similar results when they found that married women with children choose employment situations that fit with their home lives as a primary consideration when choosing a job. Married women in that study showed a preference for permanent evenings or nights over day shifts; they preferred work that gave ample scope and consistent priority to their family commitments. The women in this study who did not like working shifts reported conflicts between their hours of work and the highly valued activities that occurred at home in the evening and early night. The supper meal time was considered as one of those highly valued activities. These conflicts were earlier reported (Bohle, 1990; Bohle & Tilley, 1989) in studies of female student nurses. However, those studies reported on student nurses' first
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exposure to shift work where they were scheduled to work rotating shifts and did not have a choice in the shifts they were assigned. The similarity between that study and the present study is that the women in this study who did not like working shift work and found it intrusive often had not chosen the shift they were currently working. One participant responded several months after she received the summary of findings and Feedback Response Form. She had not responded to the form but wrote to tell me that shortly after receiving the summary she had quit her job. She wrote, "I realized it was not me, my lack of organization, etc., that made working evenings so difficult." She appeared to have left shift work due to the inherent difficulties with it.

The women in this study who worked night shifts confirmed that they did so in order to have more time available with their children. This finding is consistent, too, with the findings of Presser (1990) who reported that while fewer people work permanent night work than the more common shift work schedules consisting of rotating shifts, women with school-aged children were most likely to work permanent nights to accommodate their family arrangements. The extra time that certain shift rotations brings does not always mean improved quality time for a family. The findings from this study differed from the findings of Cunningham (1989), who in a study of male coal miners in Alberta, found that when the men changed from a three-shift rotation to twelve hour shifts the men had more leisure time. However, the extra time these men had was spent pursuing personal hobbies and less of their extra time was reported as being spent with their family differing from the women in the present study.

Child care was raised as one reason some women chose shift work. By working shifts, women were sometimes able to have their children looked after exclusively by themselves and their husbands, decreasing the amount of time caregiving was provided by others. This fact, along with the lesser financial output required, was also reported by other researchers as a reason for women to work shift work (Johnson, Duxbury & Higgins, 1996).

Although it was not a main focus of this study, the participants, whether working evening or night shifts, reported changes in their eating habits and a subjective decrease in their nutritional status. This is consistent with other research of predominantly male shift-working coal
workers Cunningham (1989). In that study, it was reported that the night shift interfered most with "regular eating habits" and that the lowest eating satisfaction levels were associated with irregular meals and meal times (Duchon & Keran, 1990). That study also reported that it was sometimes more difficult to obtain food and especially meals at or near work during certain shifts and that workers had to bring food and meals from home if they wanted a reliable source of food. This was consistent with earlier findings (Folkard et al., 1985); however, it may also be plausible that in both of the earlier studies the male participants may have had women prepare the food for them to take to work, rather than having to be self-reliant and responsible for their own nutritional intake.

The women in this study who commented on their own nutritional status thought they were not eating as well as they should be. However, these women were all actively attempting to ensure that their children were well-nourished. This finding supports that of Devine and Olson (1991) who found that women in the lifestyle stage they called "Mothering," and who were between 32 and 43 years of age with children under age 9 living at home show a high level of responsibility for their children's health and nutrition and fulfill that responsibility at the cost of lower than optimal attention to their own personal health.

Shift-working mothers have to handle a number of potential problems that result from the hours they work. Even when there is some latitude in choosing their hours of work, for most women there are very specific feeding and child care functions affected when certain shifts are worked. Women who choose night work because it gives them more time at home when their children are awake often are extremely tired. The quality of the extra time gained with their family is sometimes questionable. Mothers tend not to choose evening work and seem to work it mostly when assigned to do so and there is no other apparent choice. Only two of the evening workers chose those hours of work and liked it. Georgina preferred the evening shift because it provided more time for herself and with her pre-schooler while Heather had "chosen" evening work to avoid night shifts. Evening work was often reported to not be desirable because it was felt to be the most detrimental to family life, including feeding.
If a woman is able to choose the shifts she works, and she has a strong support network, shift work, especially night work, may be a positive choice and seems to outweigh most personal costs to the mother. Most women who work shift work, however, and especially evening workers, face even more feeding work than day-working mothers.

4.2 Organizing the Feeding Work

The second area of interest explored in this study was the way that feeding work was organized in homes where women work shifts. Feeding work was broken into three main components: shopping and food procurement; planning, preparing and cooking; and clean up. As reported by other researchers who looked at working women, though not shift-working women (Charles & Kerr, 1988; DeVault, 1991; Hochschild, 1989/1997; Kogi, 1990; Lupton, 1996), the women in this study still performed the majority of the feeding work required in each of the three main areas. Not only did these women still tend to be the ones who cooked, they often cooked hours in advance of a meal they could not attend or eat. The women also did the majority of the planning and shopping for meals. This was reported elsewhere and was thought to be due to the fact that, because men are rarely involved with cooking, they therefore are rarely aware of the foods needed to cook (Charles & Kerr, 1988). As the other family members in this study were often “only eating,” they were involved minimally in preparation tasks, as was also reported by DeVault (1991). Husbands in this study who did some shopping were reported to need detailed lists.

The women in this study said, for the most part, that their husbands did not cook. They reheated foods that their wives had prepared or used convenience foods. These convenience foods were often purchased exclusively for their use and were left out for them to use with instructions on how to do so. This was also reported in an earlier study where the men did not produce meals, but instead fed their children something that was easy to prepare and did not involve cooking (Charles & Kerr, 1988). In addition, this study confirmed work done by Lupton (1996), who reported that when women worked more paid hours outside the home, an increase in
convenience foods was often introduced into the family diet. Lupton also suggested that a
woman's major feeding role, whether she was working outside the home or not, has shifted to
one of coordinating food work. This describes the nature of the feeding work done by the women
in this study.

One unique finding of this study was that none of the women "double cooked." "Double
cooking" was found in other studies who reported women cooking different meals for different
family members (DeVault, 1991). The women in this study did not report doing this, and one said
she refused to do so. Some men, therefore, were left to fend for themselves, possibly because of
a continuation of an earlier practice, before the couple had children, where each individual fed
themselves somewhat autonomously or shared food responsibilities as equal adults rather than
as the gendered roles of "mother" and "father." Three women who did not cook for their
husbands were unhappy about how the feeding work was shared in their family. It was not
addressed as such, but may have been another subtle tactic to try to increase a husband's
participation in household work.

Generally, the findings of this study support the findings reported elsewhere regarding
women continuing to assume the bulk of feeding work, whether or not they work outside the
home. Although most other research has been undertaken with women working days, the results
are very similar. What is unique for shift-working women, however, is the "extra" work, as
reported in this study, and the conditions under which the women sometimes have to do the work,
such as extreme fatigue. Extra planning and preparation were almost always needed to ensure
that a meal could be produced by someone other than the mother and often many hours later.
Many of the women reported having learned about nutrition and knew that meals prepared that
much ahead of time were less than ideal. This led to concerns, discussed later, regarding the
quality of the food eaten by the children.
4.3 Concerns About Children’s Eating Habits

The mothers in this study reported a number of concerns about the effect of their shift work on their children’s feeding and socialization. Women had concerns about specific nutrients, foods, and food groups, as well as concerns about the quality of food and meals. The general concerns expressed were not unlike those seen in other studies looking at working women who attempted to nourish their children and teach them appropriate meal time behaviours and family routines (Charles & Kerr, 1988; DeVault, 1991). These women said their paid employment work, combined with their heavy caretaking responsibilities, led to more haphazard, skipped and poorly balanced meals (Devine & Olson, 1992).

One unique finding of this study was the apparent extent of the concerns of some mothers. The evening-shift-working women in the present study said their additional concern resulted from their unavailability to make adjustments at what they considered to be a critical part of their children’s day – from the afternoon or after-school period, over the supper meal and through until their children’s bedtimes. This differed from other studies, and from the night-shift-working mothers in this study, where mothers were often present for more of their children's waking time and were available to supervise eating habits at supper time. All but one of the women in this study said they were present enough of the time to keep these concerns contained, but reported that it was time-consuming and often resulted in them taking additional or different feeding actions after a set of shifts to compensate for what they thought occurred during their absences. This, in turn, created more work for these women.

Shift-working women also raised concerns regarding the socialization of their children around feeding and meals. The women expressed their thoughts and concerns about topics such as eating “food” rather than meals, eating together as a family, holding meal time conversations, and practicing acceptable table manners when they were absent.

Mothers who spoke about the importance of family members eating together also realized, as identified in earlier studies, that a “family” itself is constructed from day to day through activities like eating together (DeVault, 1991). The mothers in this study, as in Devault’s (1991),
study indicated that the social experience of eating something together may be more important than the food itself.

The mothers in this study, as was noted by Lupton (1996), had concerns about whether their children would learn which foods were considered appropriate and how to eat them as part of their entry into the social world because the mother was not always at the supper table to reinforce this information. As found in earlier research (DeVault, 1991), it was rare for meals to be eaten together with all family members present. Even when a mother was not working an off-shift, her husband might not be home over the supper meal. The mothers, therefore, felt that their opportunities to shape eating and socialization behaviours were more limited than day-working mothers. As supported by earlier research (Charles & Kerr, 1988), the women in this study identified that mealtimes are not only about eating, but also a time to be together as a family and talk to each other; all of these functions depend upon social organization (DeVault, 1991). However, unlike the participants in the earlier studies, the mothers who participated in this study were unable to always be present and, as a result, appeared to be more concerned about the problems resulting from their absence. One participant in this study was concerned about how the individual members of her family operate somewhat autonomously. She reinforced an earlier finding (DeVault, 1991) that mothers want to weave together the paths of household members and create patterns of joint activity out of the otherwise separate lives of family members.

This study differs from some earlier research that found fathers organized mealtime conversation and supervised children's eating (DeVault, 1991). The mothers in the current study were concerned that mealtime conversation and supervision of the supper meal were lacking or were sub-optimal in their homes when the mothers were away at work.

Table manners were said to be important by all the mothers in this study. They realized that table manners are taught from early childhood and are based on both the copying of adults and direct intervention on the part of parents and other adult family members (Lupton, 1996).
The mothers in this study were particularly concerned when there was no adult to supervise mealtime behaviours.

As outlined in this section, shift-working mothers had concerns about food, nutrition and socialization resulting from the mother's shift work. The mothers had similar concerns regarding these matters to those reported elsewhere with other working women. It is important to note a significant difference, however. While women who work day shifts are able to monitor a large part of their children's eating day, shift-working mothers, especially those working evening shifts, sometimes do not. This has implications for both nutrition practice and education.

4.4 Factors Shaping Feeding Practices & Concerns

In this section, various factors that affect feeding practices and concerns are discussed, including the effects of fatigue and guilt on the mothers, gendered roles, characteristics of support networks, and the ages of the children.

4.4.1 Factors Related to the Women's Shift Work

One major concern that women in this study often spoke of was the extreme and sometimes incapacitating fatigue resulting from their shift work. As found in other studies, night-working women in this study reported extreme fatigue and often "felt sick" due to lack of sleep. This is consistent with findings in a study of shift-working women (Costa et al., 1990) in the industrial sector who had shift work imposed upon them. That study differed, however, from the present study in that most of the women had children aged thirteen years or older. Shift-work associated fatigue has been well-documented in previous research, which reported that women with family responsibilities sleep fewer hours, have more interruptions to their sleep, and feel more tired and irritable (Beerman, Schmidt et al., 1990; Estryn-Behar et al., 1990; Kogi, 1990; Kogi & Thurman, 1990; Kurumatani et al., 1994). The results of this study vary from that of Robson and Wedderburn (1990) who did not find that women with children had poorer sleep. The women in that study, however, had fewer young children. Although data was not provided, most of the children in that study appeared to be between five and eleven years.
Another unique finding from this study was the reports of how fatigue specifically affected women's abilities to feed their families. The women reported that when they were extremely tired, all feeding and socialization functions suffered. The feeding work might not be done at all, less of it might be undertaken and what was done could very well be inferior to the woman's usual standards.

One of the reasons shift-working mothers often get less sleep than either single shift-working women with no children or shift-working fathers is mothers' attentiveness to their surroundings even when they should be sleeping. The mothers in this study faced the same strong timing cues previously reported in the literature, including wake-up times of others, meals and school (Morehouse, 1995). All of these cues ultimately may result in less sleep for shift-working mothers with younger children. The women in this study said they thought they were more tired than when they worked day shifts and were also of the opinion that they were more tired than day workers they knew. In addition, fatigue could adversely affect already stretched finances if the solution to the weariness was to eat out or purchase fast food.

The women in this study said they felt guilty about a number of perceived short-comings related to working shift and feeding their families: not spending enough time with their children; what kinds of foods their children were eating when they were away at work; and their lessened ability to feed and nurture their children properly due to shift work. These findings support earlier research indicating that, because mothers are held responsible for producing healthy families, they are also held responsible when family members have problems arising from their perceived inadequate performance (DeVault, 1991). Like the participants in DeVault's study, the women in this study felt guilty when they did not do everything they thought they should be doing.

One positive effect of working nights was that some women had more time for themselves. However, it is important to remember, as reported elsewhere, that when a group of male and female shift-workers were asked about their most "popular" way to spend free time, women indicated it was doing housework (Oginska (1993) in Morehouse, 1995). The difference these findings provide is that when men choose a shift that gives them additional leisure time,
that time may be spent on personal activities. However, when the women in this study chose to work shift work, it was for the greater good of their families. If the shift rotation does provide some extra time for the woman herself, she rarely uses that time for her own leisure activities and if she does, may feel guilty about doing so.

4.4.2 Factors Related to Gendered Roles

The women in this study, for the most part, had assumed fairly traditional roles as mothers. They did the majority of feeding and caring work in their families and most felt responsible for this work. Although they may not have said it, most of the women demonstrated affection and caring for their family members through the food they provided for them. This concept has been reported previously (Lupton, 1996) and was described in Chapter 1. Most women in this study did not report problems with the way food matters were handled in their family in the context of their gendered role. Five women identified that feeding was considered women's work in their family, but said this with emotions varying from indifference to anger.

It is important to consider the views of the participants in this study in the context of women's traditional roles. Researchers have identified that in Western cultures, the supper meal is currently seen as the most important family meal and that the cultural ideal is for the meal to be eaten when all family members are together, sitting around a table, talking to each other and enjoying the food and each other's company (Charles & Kerr, 1988). However, the shift-working mothers in this study could not be at all meals themselves and often had concerns about what went on at family meals when they were absent. These mothers could not always assume or ensure that the food their families would eat was nutritious and prepared in such a way that every family member would enjoy it (DeVault, 1991). Although the women were sometimes absent for meals, they would go to great limits to try to feed their families in a way that was acceptable to them. This resulted in additional work as women prepared meals often served many hours later, with the corresponding limitations on the kinds of foods that could be used. In addition, because the mothers were unable to serve the meal themselves, even if they prepared something
nutritious, there was no guarantee that the meal would make it to the supper table or be eaten by their families.

Three women in this study said that one reason they chose shift work was to allow them to do, or to control, all of the feeding work they wanted to. They thought they were able to do so either by having more time at home or by doing what might be fairly extensive pre-preparation of meals before going to work themselves. This finding has also been reported elsewhere (Robson & Wedderburn, 1990). By continuing to control the feeding work, the women’s families were fed the kind of food the women wanted and socialization practices continued to be reinforced.

Six women in this study said they had educated themselves about nutrition and feeding their family. In a quest to feed their families “well,” they sought information and learned about nutrition and feeding matters for their families and especially their children. This is consistent with other studies that reported women being more likely to seek out information to further their knowledge about appropriate food habits and practices (Schafer & Keith, 1981). It also supports the premise that women in the life stage of having young children are most receptive to nutrition information and making dietary changes (Devine & Olson, 1991).

In this study, fathers were said to be minimally effective in performing feeding work. A few fathers were believed to be scarcely able even in some cases, to get food into their children’s mouths. Women reported that fathers did not seem to know or care about nutritional matters and often spoke of resistance from their husbands to both learning about nutrition and reinforcement of nutrition principles when the fathers were in charge of meal times. When mothers tried to balance out a day’s food groups and ensure that adequate servings were consumed, fathers were reported to be unable to continue this practice and ensure that missing foods were consumed. The present study confirms other research that indicated that, while fathers could do caring work, they did not feel the same compulsion as mothers that it was their duty (DeVault, 1991). Men’s responsibilities were indicated to extend as far as making sure that children did not complain of being hungry. While few fathers would want to be considered to be feeding their
children poorly, change is slow and fathers may not recognize how their feeding contributions are being characterized at present. Feeding is essential, daily work. Women may take the primary responsibility for feeding because they find it difficult to let go of "caring" work, and because men are not taking this responsibility onto themselves, perhaps because they find it difficult (DeVault, 1991). One woman in this study reported that she would permanently change her shift if she found she was unable to successfully perform the feeding work for her family. As discussed earlier, husbands in this study were reported to seem unaware that feeding children nutritiously was a responsibility. Perhaps for most men this was true because, in their family, it was not their responsibility. Their wives, even when unhappy with the role, continued to assume responsibility for feeding their children.

Feeding work, when described as shared by a mother and father, seemed to be divided into tasks not required on a daily or even regular basis such as shopping, which the men might do, and work needed on at least a daily basis, which was primarily performed by women. This type of sharing was described in other research (Hochschild, 1989/1997). DeVault (1991) also described sharing work that reinforces this study's finding that sharing does not necessarily mean sharing all the work or sharing it equally. This study also confirmed earlier studies indicating that husbands seem to have a great deal of ability to control what household work they do (Hochschild, 1989/1997). Three women in this study who reported that their husbands did some feeding work, when probed for details, described their husbands doing occasional tasks, usually things they wanted to do and often with extensive coaching from their wives. The findings in this study also confirmed that the amount of help women receive with feeding work seems to depend on the availability and good will of their husbands (Charles & Kerr, 1988).

Rachel and Doreen said their husbands were "helpful" with some aspects of feeding. Both described their husbands as "good" at cooking: Rachel went on to describe barbecuing as her husband's one cooking skill; Doreen, as she told her story, seemed to then realize that she planned and shopped for her husband to put the already procured ingredients together and
"cook." She had been told by a co-worker, and reported herself, that she was "lucky" to have such a husband. The concepts of feeling gratitude for men's help, accepting that feeding is a woman's responsibility, and believing that "help" with these tasks is a bonus, have all been identified earlier (Charles & Kerr, 1988). These two women did not indicate any particular dissatisfaction with the way that feeding work was shared in their families which is consistent with other studies where women were described as imbedded in roles and rationalizing reasons for why each partner does particular tasks (DeVault, 1991).

Christine and Heather struggled with strong feelings arising from what they perceived to be inequitable divisions of home labour. They knew they worked just as hard as their husbands, often working a "double day." These women recognized, too, as has been earlier explored, that the work they performed in the context of the family was not being viewed as "real" work by their husbands (Lupton, 1996). In addition, when they tried to elicit more help from their husbands they seemed to be challenging a powerful understanding of womanly character by suggesting that their care for others was work and not love for their family (DeVault, 1991). Like the women in DeVault's study, it was sometimes easier for these women to do the work than to press for it to be more equitably divided. These struggles illustrate the complexity surrounding the issues of taking and giving responsibility and maintaining and giving up control. Some mothers and fathers (as described by their wives) reflected the difficulty of trying to work out equitable roles for both parents. Norms appeared to have been internalized that led mothers to feel responsible for and have control over feeding their families. When some mothers internalized these roles (and some attempted to then change or address the internalization), their husbands appeared to respond by resisting (either actively or passively) participation. In addition, some women also appeared to be limiting participation by their husbands by either not giving them responsibility or giving up the wives' control. One participant wrote in her response to the Summary of Findings, "On reading this report I felt that we really haven't come very far in the struggle for equality. We mostly have more opportunities to do more work. It was quite disheartening."
This seems to indicate that social change, at least as it pertains to feeding work, is advancing at a very slow rate. Earlier major studies cited (Charles & Kerr, 1988; DeVault, 1991) are based on data collected about ten years ago. Changes recommended then appear to be slow in coming. While concern has been expressed about the decline of the “family meal,” it appears there is still little recognition by many individuals and the public sphere as to how family meals happen and who makes them happen (DeVault, 1991). Meanwhile, more and more women are moving into the labour force and are increasingly unavailable to make family meals happen. It is wondered when this will become enough of a crisis to catch the full attention of those who can start social change from the policy level down.

One finding of this study not supported by previous research was the extra feeding work resulting from shift work. This may be because there is so little literature specific to shift-working women and feeding work. Most reported research on shift work has focussed on men, most of whom did not have the primary responsibility for feeding their families. Extra feeding work for women working outside the home reported in earlier research included the extra work entailed in bringing together family members for a meal when one or more of the family worked irregular hours (DeVault, 1991). DeVault’s work did not appear, however, to contemplate that it was the mother herself who would have both the “organizer” and shift worker roles.

4.4.3 Factors Related to Support Networks

A strong support network was a factor identified by the participants as a key factor in being able to work shift work successfully. Support networks include those in the work place as well as those at home. Social support has been recognized as important by other researchers who have, in addition, suggested that support from shift workers’ supervisors leads to a higher overall level of well-being (Beermann et al., 1990; Bohle, 1990; Bohle & Tilley, 1989). Although few women in the current study noted specific support from their supervisors, it is assumed that where they had some choice in the shifts they worked, there was some support from their employers.
When a mother had a good support network at home, then there was often less work and greater peace of mind when she had to go to work. This finding supports that of others who suggest that good support networks help in coping with the stress produced by working shift work (Beerman et al., 1990). In this study, women’s support networks included immediate and extended family members as well as other adults and teenagers. Single women in this study believed that having a husband would make shift working easier. The women without husbands who had more tenuous support networks, often consisting of regularly rotating teenaged sitters, said they found shift work difficult and feeding more worrisome. Senior female family members were considered the optimal caregivers when mothers were away over a meal time. Women said that they found it less stressful to work over their family’s supper hour when a senior female was doing the feeding work at home.

Support networks that included teen sitters were considered more tenuous. Teen sitters, including teens who were older children in the families studied, were felt to be able to manage only basic feeding tasks, such as getting children to eat. Other feeding tasks and socialization matters were handled less adeptly and were speculated by children’s mothers to be of little interest to this group of caregivers. However, the mothers did not portray this in an entirely negative fashion. They were grateful that the sitters were caring for their children and Donna acknowledged that the teen was not paid very much for babysitting, let alone feeding work.

4.4.4 Factors Related to Children’s Ages

Because of the perceived inequitable division of home labour and the hard and extra work that women reported doing when they worked outside the home for paid employment as well as doing most of the feeding work at home, most said that the age of their children affected the ease with which they could leave the home to go to paid employment.

The women in this study said it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to work shift work if one had an infant. The mothers who had toddlers and preschoolers said they found shift work difficult because their children could not communicate, or communicate well, what went on at home when the mothers were at work. This left the mothers feeling anxious that they were not
there to teach their preschool children how to eat within the accepted parameters of that family's framework, including the rights and wrongs of mealtime behaviour. These concerns were also reported in another study (Charles & Kerr, 1988).

Women with six to ten-year-olds found shift work somewhat easier, but if they worked evening shifts, they seemed to suffer the most guilt about not seeing enough of their family and missing events that were important to their children. These mothers said they had less control over what was being eaten by their children during their absence, except where there was a good support network in place. Mothers with pre-teens were frustrated and sometimes angry that this age group did not eat as they were instructed, despite what might be considerable work by their mothers putting snacks and meals in place. With pre-teens, a fairly autonomous group, mothers had even less control over eating practices than the six to ten-year-old group, even if a good caregiver was present.

Many of the findings of this study appear to be new to the literature; this may be due to this study's focus on women who were sometimes absent over their family's main meal. In other studies, women may not have had the same feeding concerns because they were more available to make "corrections" to perceived poor eating patterns. This study discovered that children as young as pre-schoolers are making their own food choices, and that most pre-teens, at ten or eleven years old, are very autonomous when selecting foods. Opportunities for children to make food choices independently were more frequent when mothers worked shift work, especially evening shifts.

To summarize, shift-working women were often extremely weary and sometimes reported feeling guilt-ridden as a result of their shift work. The women in this study, by their words or actions, seemed to be situated in traditional gendered roles as "mothers." Where a strong support network was in place as a mitigating factor, mothers reported that shift work was more acceptable. Children's ages were felt by mothers to be another factor affecting their ability to combine shift work and feeding their families successfully.
4.5 Limitations of the Study

This study had a number of limiting factors, including the number of participants, limitations resulting from the characteristics of the women recruited, and the nature of the study. Twenty-eight women were recruited and met the inclusion criteria; the scope and time-lines of the project resulted in a sample size of twelve women. While this number of participants allowed themes from the data to emerge and be examined, there is no assurance that any theme was fully saturated due to the number in the sample. A larger sample would give increased confidence that themes were fully identified and explored.

The study was also limited by the characteristics of the women recruited. All of the women had to be able to read as most were recruited after reading a notice in their community newspaper. Because they needed to be able to contact me, they sometimes needed to be persistent enough to reach me at my home phone number, and sometimes take further initiative by leaving a voice message. This may have further limited the study participants to women interested enough in the topic to persevere and volunteer. There was no remuneration for participating in this study; three women asked about payment during their initial call, but withdrew upon learning there was none. The women who were interviewed were predominantly of European descent. Included in the group of women who dropped out prior to the interviewing were several women who, based on their name and after speaking with them on the telephone one or more times, may have been from non-European backgrounds. This indicates that the recruitment process reached these women, they were interested in participating and met the criteria, but were absent in the sample primarily due to unavailability at the time of interviewing. As this study required that women were working, women with very low incomes are not represented. Three women spoke of concerns about money, but none indicated they were ever without food because of a shortage of money. The women studied had easy access to a wide selection of healthy food.

A further limitation of the study was the pressure some women may have felt to give what they considered to be "good" and "correct" responses knowing that the research was nutrition-
The women were told that there were no right or wrong answers, but their internalized societal expectations of how a "good" mother feeds her children may have shaped some women's responses.

These factors limit the applicability of the findings of this study to other, similar women. Applicability of these findings to other shift-working women should be done cautiously as there are notable differences between women who work evening and night shifts, and between women with different ages of children and differing support networks.

4.6 Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of this study led to a number of conclusions and recommendations which are now addressed. Theoretical and practical implications from the study findings are addressed at the end of this section.

Women who work shift work and have young children at home face the same burdens of the "second shift" borne by all working mothers, and more. As such, shift-working mothers have many of the same concerns as other mothers who work outside the home regarding the feeding and socializing of their children, but often have less time than day workers with their children to shape desired behaviours.

Along with the extra work and stress that shift work itself entails, the ability of women to work shift work effectively is influenced by a number of factors, including how many and what hours they work, the characteristics of their support networks, and the ages of their children. Personal factors such as fatigue and guilt can also affect a mother's ability to perform feeding work. This study revealed that there were substantive differences between working evening or night shifts. Women often chose one or the other shift based on their ability to tolerate the work and the conditions entailed, along with a consideration of what worked best for their specific families. Fatigue and compensatory behaviour resulting from it, along with mothers' expectations of how they should feed their children, often led to guilt and further compensatory behaviour, which sometimes led to cycles of feeding behaviour and actions that were undesirable to the
women. Night-working women, as well as women who avoided that shift, often reported extreme fatigue and feelings of being unwell when they worked nights. Evening-shift-working women who had school-aged children, while not as tired, often said they did not have enough time to spend with their children. Some night-working women actually believed they had more time with their children, but had concerns about the quality of that time due to the extent of their fatigue.

Shift-working women reported eating differently and often more poorly than either their children or when they worked days. The women attributed this to their erratic and heavy household work schedules at home along with limited food availability at their workplace during the evening and night shifts. The women reported that they did the majority of the feeding work required at home and most reported feeling responsible for doing this work. Shift-working mothers, like other working mothers, had concerns about various nutrients, foods, food groups and the quality of food consumed by their children during the mothers' absences. The evening-shift-working women in this study believed, too, that they had a lesser ability than either day or night workers to promote good eating habits because they were unavailable to their children over the evening and sometimes afternoon hours. The mothers considered these hours a time when they had a great influence over their children's eating. The mothers did not believe that their children had adequate supervision of their eating habits during the mothers' absences and were also concerned about the long term effects of their own, often erratic, schedules on their children.

To work shifts successfully, mothers needed strong support networks. When mothers were away over supper time, senior female family members were considered to be the best replacement. Mothers went to work with fewer concerns when senior females took over the feeding work. Husbands were indicated to be the next acceptable caregivers, although a number of limitations were expressed regarding the husbands' interest and abilities in feeding their children. Teen sitters provided the most tenuous feeding support for shift-working mothers.

The shift-working mothers in this study said a mother could not work shifts if she had an infant at home. The mothers had children between eighteen months and twelve years old and had various concerns dependent on their children's ages. A child's age contributed to their ability
to communicate with their mother, as well as how autonomous they were about feeding choices and following instructions. In addition to concerns regarding the feeding and nutrition of their children, shift-working mothers were concerned about the socialization of their children. The mothers in this study had concerns about the number of meals their families ate together and whether their children were receiving an adequate shaping of acceptable mealtime conversation and table manners when the mothers were at their paid work. Once again, senior females were considered to provide and reinforce good socialization behaviour when shift-working mothers were absent; fathers and teenagers were considered to provide limited support. An increased level of concern was expressed by evening-shift-working mothers of school-aged children, and especially those women who needed to rely heavily on teenaged sitters, about the feeding and socialization of their children. School-aged children of this group of women appeared to be at highest risk of sub-optimal nutrition and less-than-ideal socialization practices.

Overall, then, the main challenges that shift-working women face in feeding their families include overcoming the effects of fatigue, struggling with both the role of mother and the feeding work imbedded within that role, organizing feeding work and ensuring continuity in feeding practices when absent and addressing perceived nutritional and socialization deficiencies at times other than the evening and supper hours.

There are a number of possible implications and outcomes arising from the findings of this study. The size and scope of the study was small, but as an exploratory study these findings may be indicative of what exists in a larger population. Clearly, much of the challenge shift-working women face relates to the demands of fulfilling the socially prescribed and internalized roles of "mother" while also maintaining paid employment outside the home. Social changes in role expectations that would result in mothers and fathers being able to more equitably share the responsibilities and control of feeding children would ease these demands. However, it appears from this study that, while social change with gendered roles may be occurring, it remains a very slow process. While there are statements of intent sometimes made by politicians and other policy-makers indicating that such social change is desirable, little appears to happen.
On a smaller scale, individual educators, practitioners, and parents themselves may need to look at changes at the household level that can take place to help promote a more equitable and fairer distribution of labour. Women are entering the labour market in ever increasing numbers. What is sometimes portrayed as an equity issue – women being "allowed" to work outside the home, and that most types and hours of work should not be restricted to women – has instead perpetuated and perhaps worsened the inequity in the division of labour at home with many women continuing to do all the caring work at home while working at paid employment, too. Women have achieved great gains in the employment market, but perhaps didn’t realize that these gains would carry such costs. One of the unanswered questions is what it will take to create the next major shift. It will be interesting to see what happens over the next several decades with the predicted changes to the demographics as baby boomers leave large gaps in employment markets and potentially need more of the kinds of services currently provided by shift-working women. The next generation of shift-working women will have to come from an even smaller population base. It is possible that some of these factors may help to force the issue and create more equitable divisions in the work at home. In addition, it will be interesting to see whether the generation of men currently being raised by feminist mothers change feeding practices by the modelling they in turn provide for their children.

Shift-working women may also be able to help one another. Several of the women in this study had developed ways of coping that may be helpful to other shift-working women, such as strategies to lessen feeding work during blocks of shifts and developing different ways to think about foods. Nutrition educators and practitioners might also turn their thoughts to ways to promote healthy eating that are more useful for those preparing meals served by others or prepared many hours before the meals are served. There may be novel ways to promote the concept of healthy eating rather than the traditional one of combining several food groups at one meal. Perhaps shift-working women need to be informed that balance can occur over a greater period than just one meal and still be a healthy, nutritious way to eat. Knowing there is a broader scope to “balanced” eating may in turn reduce the amount of feeding work and guilt for some
shift-working mothers who presently spend part of their time when home doing extra feeding work to compensate for what they perceive to be inadequate meals and food eaten by their children while they were away at work. There has already been some work done in the area of nutrition practice to address the needs of, for example, persons with diabetes mellitus who work shift work. This may be an area that could be further adapted to be applicable to all shift workers, as many of the women in this study, while having concerns about the eating habits and nutrition of their children, admitted that their own eating habits were often far worse.

Employers may also need to be more responsive to the needs of shift-working women and create more positive working conditions, including better food availability, for them. Already women are leaving fields with large numbers of shift-working women such as the nursing profession. If employers want to recruit and retain mothers as shift workers, they will need to be receptive to issues such as flexibility and choice in the hours they work. Employers must be more cognizant that some female employees have equal or heavier workloads at home in addition to their paid work. Organizational policy makers need to include shift-working mothers when creating policies to enhance working conditions.

The availability of reasonably-priced, high quality child care continues to be a major issue for working women and is an even more pressing matter for shift-working women. Reliable child care is urgently needed particularly by single mothers who work shift work and have few or no family members in their support network. Of the women interviewed for this study, single mothers who relied on teen sitters appeared to identify more nutrition and socialization concerns for their children than other mothers. Teens, perhaps because they were recently children themselves, are often incapable of providing the degree of support needed to effectively nourish and socialize young children. Not only did single mothers use teens more, these mothers also required more child care and left their children with what may be marginally adequate child care for longer periods of time because they needed to work full-time for financial reasons.

The findings of this study lead to several recommendations for changes and improvements for policy makers, nutrition practitioners and educators to implement to better
assist shift-working mothers in combining paid employment and feeding their families. These include:

- knowing who is providing meals in homes with shift-working mothers;
- helping women and men critically assess their participation in and responsibility for feeding their children including ways in which they facilitate, constrain and/or resist their own and others' participation;
- developing and delivering nutrition education targeted towards younger children who may be feeding themselves at an earlier age than assumed;
- promoting nutrition information that increases parents' knowledge about the many ways that nutrition principles can be applied;
- recognizing that nutrition information may be taken more rigidly than realized, and that more positive reinforcement of women's abilities to feed their children might allow a more relaxed and flexible approach to feeding;
- developing nutrition guidelines that outline more highly nutrient dense foods and meals earlier in the day for families who have shift-working mothers, and particularly those working evening shifts, but offering these guidelines as one of several choices, all of which are acceptable and good feeding practices; and
- ensuring nutrition education is in place to assist fathers in feeding their children.

In conclusion, shift-working mothers have many, if not all, of the same problems and concerns as other working mothers, but with additional, usually negative, factors resulting from their shift work. This affects the women's abilities to feed themselves and their children, particularly if a strong support network is not in place. Changes and improvements to the situations faced by shift-working mothers at work and at home are possible, but are currently slow in coming.
4.7 Implications for Nutrition Practice & Future Research

The findings of this study will be useful in broadening the limited base of research that currently exists about nutrition and socialization practices of shift-working mothers. A number of implications arising from this study have already been addressed in the previous section so this section provides a broader overview of suggested uses of the findings from this research.

The results from this study may be used by nutrition practitioners and educators to help plan both individual nutrition regimes and nutrition programs more effectively when they are working with families that include shift-working women. In addition, employers may use the results of this study to become more responsive to the difficulties that shift-working mothers often encounter on a daily basis. Employers may also use this research to find new and/or creative ways to better accommodate the “second shift.” This could result in increased recruitment and retention, along with decreased absenteeism, of female workers who are also mothers.

This research has provided information about the daily struggles that shift-working women face in feeding and socializing their children. One of the participants of this study suggested that it would be useful and “interesting to have more information about the importance of regular family mealtimes in relation to behaviour development, delinquency, problems, etc., for growing children.” Although she wished these topics could be covered in this research, I must leave those topics to those who follow me. In addition, research to further delineate the differences that became evident from this study between working evening or night shifts and what supports are needed to help women working these shifts would also be useful. As the area studied is new, other potential topics may also arise to astute readers of this research who may wish to isolate and examine other areas of interest.


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6.3 Appendix C: Recruitment Letter

[UBC Letterhead]

“How Evening/Night Work Affects Women’s Ability to Feed Their Families and Socialize Their Children”

Date

Name,
Address

Dear Name,

I am writing to invite you to participate in a study that will help others to understand how women who work evening/night shifts cope with feeding their families. In order to participate in this study you must:

- Be female,
- Work at least four (4) shifts a month that result in you not being able to join your family when they usually eat supper because you are either working or sleeping, and
- Have at least one child 13 years old or younger who lives with you.

I am a graduate student at the University of British Columbia who as part of the requirement for the completion of my Masters degree will be conducting group interviews to find out from women how their families get fed when they are working evening/night work.

I am writing to ask you if you would be willing to participate in one of the group interviews. Each group will have six to eight evening/night-working women in it. Each focus group session is anticipated to last about one and one-half hours and will be tape-recorded. Any information that you provide in the group will be considered confidential.

You will be asked to share your experiences and opinions about how it feels to be a evening/night-working woman and what effect your evening/night work has on the feeding of your family. The session will be moderated by myself along with an assistant to help with the taping and any note-taking required.

If you would like to participate in one of the group sessions, please contact me by phone or fax as soon as possible. Please pass this letter on to any other woman you know who may be interested in participating in this study. I will try to reach you by phone shortly to see if you are interested but please feel free to contact me sooner if you are able to do so.
6.4 Appendix D: Screening Form

Screening Form

1. Name:

2. Phone numbers:  
   H:   
   W:   

3. Fax number:

4. Address:

5. Who is in their family unit:

6. Number of children and their ages:

7. Occupation/Job Title/Employer:

8. Rotation (permanent or rotating evening/nights; full time/part time/casual):

9. Confirm that their evening/night shifts occur over their family’s usual supper hour.

10. How often do they work evenings/nights?

11. How long have they worked evening/night shifts?

12. What are the best days and times of day to attend a focus group?

13. What would be convenient locations for them to attend a focus group?

14. Do you know of any other women who might be interested in joining one of the focus groups? Please have them contact me.

15. How did you become aware of this study?
6.6 Appendix F: Focus Group Discussion Topics

"How Evening/Night Work Affects Women's Ability to Feed Their Families and Socialize Their Children"

POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AT FOCUS GROUPS

1. How did you come to be working evening/night work?

2. What is it like for you to provide food and meals for your family, specifically your younger children, when you are working evenings/night?

3. What concerns do you have about the feeding and nutrition of your family when you work evenings/night?

4. What happens at home regarding food, meal times and other food-related matters when you either aren't there or are sleeping?
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6.9 Appendix I: Consent Form

[UBC Letterhead]

CONSENT FORM

“How Evening/Night Work Affects Women's Ability to Feed Their Families and Socialize Their Children”

I agree to participate in a research project about women's ways of dealing with feeding their families when they work evening/night shifts.

Purpose:

• I understand that the purpose of this study is to hold a number of interviews to find out more about the ways that mothers manage the feeding of their children. We will discuss general ideas about food and nutrition and related issues and how these are handled when we work evening/night shifts.

Study Procedures:

• I understand that I will be one of a number of women who are each individually interviewed. The interviewer is Sue Carr who is a graduate student in the School of Family and Nutritional Sciences, UBC, and who is conducting this research in partial requirement for her Master of Science (Human Nutrition) degree. The interview will last approximately ninety (90) minutes and will be tape-recorded.

Confidentiality:

• I understand that anything I say during the interview will remain confidential and my name will not be used in any report of the study. All documents will be identified only by code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet.

Remuneration/Compensation:

• There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, I understand that I may ask for and receive up to fifteen dollars ($15.00) to cover or partially cover any child care costs that I may have that result from my participation in this interview.
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6.10 Appendix J: (Original) Interview Guide

Interview Guide

“How Evening/Night Work Affects Women’s Ability to Feed Their Families and
Socialize Their Children”

A. Opening

My name is Sue Carr. I am a Master’s student in Human Nutrition at UBC. As part of
my work, I am interested in finding out how mothers with younger children handle food
and nutrition matters when they work nights. You were invited to attend this interview to
help me find out what it is like – because you are doing it.

[Have each participant share the following information as an ice-breaker and to gain
some demographic information. In addition, these questions are designed to increase
the participant’s ‘comfort’ level with the setting and the fact that their comments are
being tape recorded. ]

1. What is your job title? Tell me a little bit about what your job is like.
2. Describe your current working schedule and how long you have worked
evening/nights.

   How did it come about that you are working evening/night work?

   Probes: chose it, bid into it, by default, only job/position available

3. Who is in your family unit and how old are your children?
4. What is your favourite food?

B. Interview Questions and Possible Probes

5. Describe how food and meals are organized for your family when you are
working evening/nights?

6. Do you have any concerns related to the feeding or nutrition of your
children when you work evening/nights?

   (a) -what concerns do you have about the health or nutrition of
   your child(ren)?

   (b) -describe what happens at home about social concerns when
   you are working or sleeping because of your work schedule
   through a meal time.

   Probes:
   -table manners, etiquette, ‘family’ meals
(c) do you have concerns about any other food-related issues when you work evenings/night?

7. I'd like you to think about all that we have talked about today. What do you think are the most important food/nutrition issues for mothers working evening/night work?

[Ask for summary statement from the participant]
[Give a short oral summary of the key questions and big ideas that resulted.]

8. Does this sound okay to you? Have we missed anything?

These questions will act as a guide to keep the interview focused on the important issues. The questions may not be asked in exactly the same order or using the same words in each interview. Additional questions, probes and follow-up questions as outlined below may be asked based on the direction that the discussion is proceeding or if there is sufficient time.

9. Think back to the last evening/night shift that you worked and describe one thing that you really like and one thing that you really hate about being a mother and the organizing of food and meals for your family when you are working evenings/night.

10. Have there been any changes made in the way that food matters are handled in your family because you work evenings/night? Describe these for me? Have they been successful?

11. Have you tried things that didn't work well. Tell me about these.

12. If you had one minute to talk to young women contemplating a job that involves evening/night work while raising and feeding a family, what would you like to say to them?
6.11 Appendix K

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

"How Evening/Night Work Affects Women's Ability to Feed Their Families and Socialize Their Children"
Sue Carr
University of British Columbia

1. INTRODUCTION

Women have for centuries been the main provider of caring work, including feeding work, in the home.

Women have been entering the paid labour force at ever increasing numbers over the past sixty years. The reasons for this include various social and economic factors. In addition, the number of mothers with small children entering the work force has escalated dramatically. In 1950 in the U.S., it was so rare for women to work if they had a child younger than one year that records were not even kept of the numbers who did so. By 1995 almost 60% of married working women had a child one-year-old or younger at home.

With the adding of paid employment work to the already existing caring and feeding work, women have picked up a 'second shift.'

As the number of individuals entering the traditional 'day' work force increases, the need for services during off hours also increases in order to provide these services to the day workers.

At the same time that women's participation in the paid work force has been increasing, there have also been technological and economic reasons why employers have wanted or needed to keep their businesses operating for longer hours. As such, the number of people and therefore women working off shifts has also risen.

Many research studies have looked at men working shift work. There are fewer studies looking at female shift workers. This study was developed to look at how families, and especially families with smaller children, handle feeding matters when their mother works shift work and may not be available over the afternoon, evening or night hours or who may need to sleep during the day.

I was interested in the following research questions:

- Do evening and night-working women perceive that the nutritional and socialization needs of their children are being met?
- Has there been changes to the children's eating habits or behaviours as a result of their mother working evening or night shifts?
- How do women understand and feel about being absent from home during family meal times: who feeds their families, who socializes their children and how is this done when the women are unavailable due to their work schedule?

2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This study was a qualitative study consisting of information provided during semi-structured individual interviews of a number of women who worked afternoon or night shifts. All of the interviews were taped and the tapes were then transcribed verbatim. Each participant and all her family members were given pseudonyms. The information from the transcripts was then broken down into areas of interest (codes) to enable the researcher to look for similarities and differences amongst the responses.

This is a report of the findings to date. The analysis is not totally complete but is getting close to that point. This summary includes some of the major findings. Not every finding from the
transcripts will be reported even in the final thesis report as that is beyond the scope of this project.

The women interviewed were reminded that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' answers to any of the questions asked. In reading this report, I stress that concept again.

A Description of the Women who Participated

Twelve women were interviewed for this study. Eight of the women were married while four were either separated/divorced, single or widowed. All but one of the married women had a husband who worked day shifts. However, as a number of the husbands were self-employed, their hours were often long, sometimes irregular and could include weekend work. The one shift-working husband worked rotating shifts, including nights. The women had one to four children, aged from one to twelve years old; two of the women also had children thirteen years or older at home. Four of the women worked full-time hours in paid employment, the other eight worked part-time hours outside the home.

Seven of the women worked afternoon shifts and were home before midnight. The other five women worked night shifts of varying lengths. None of the women worked rotating shifts although they might work additional shifts that were at different times than their regular shifts.

Caregivers for the women's children while they worked included husbands; other family members; adult sitters, sometimes in a daycare setting; and teenaged sitters.

3. RESULTS

When analyzing the findings of this study, I looked at several major areas. These included:

a) Issues that women have about working shift work,
b) How the feeding work is organized,
c) Issues that mothers have regarding their children's nutrition, feeding and socializing, and,
d) Factors that affected feeding practices, including support networks, gender roles, and the age of the children.

3a) Issues that women had about working shift work

There were many concerns that women had about working shift work. Although seven women preferred working shifts to permanent day work and most of these women had chosen the particular shift they were working, there were still issues with it. These concerns were not all related directly to feeding their children but usually had some effect on it. In addition, while many of these issues may also be concerns for working women in general, the shift-working women emphasized repeatedly that these issues were worse for shift workers. Most women either worked some day shifts or had done so in the past and therefore had something to compare shift work with.

The issues raised most frequently were that the women didn't spend enough time with their children, the effect of shift work (usually the fatigue and 'feeling sick') on themselves, and child care issues. In addition, the importance of having a good support system along with some control over the hours and shifts worked were also issues addressed by the women.

The next grouping of concerns were those that were mentioned by at least a few of the mothers. These issues included: the extra work that shift work created, issues related to their children being in school, the negative effect that shift work has on a child's social or interpersonal skills, and that children were 'parenting' them, the adult. In addition, there were concerns expressed about the effect that shift work had on family finances and that the children often stayed awake to see their mother after she returned home from work. A number of mothers also felt they didn't know what was going on at home in their absence and didn't like that feeling.
The two most positive aspects of shift work mentioned were that some shift-working mothers thought that they had more time with their children and the increased flexibility that shift work provided for them.

Most of the women who had some choice in the shift they worked, had chosen it for reasons that made it work for their family. The reasons for choosing an afternoon shift or a night shift made that shift more appealing for them and the other shifts seem more formidable. For instance, most of the women who were working night shifts found that it was personally very hard on them but continued to choose it because they thought it was the best shift overall for their family.

Although the nutrition and eating habits of the mothers themselves were not a main focus of this study, a number of the women indicated that they thought that their own nutrition and eating habits were worsened by working shifts and were worse than that of their children.

3b) How the feeding work is organized

Three main areas of feeding work were looked at. These were shopping and provisioning of the food; planning, preparing, and cooking; and clean up.

Shopping and Provisioning

Many women interviewed found shopping easier because of their shift work. They were able to shop when the stores were quieter and didn’t have to face the after-work and weekend hordes. Almost all the women did most or all of the shopping for their families. Husbands who did shop, usually just picked up a few items when needed rather than doing a main shop; they always needed a list of what to get; the lists often needed to be extremely detailed. When husbands did shop, they didn’t necessarily follow the list. They were more likely to come home with junk food which mothers didn’t sanction. Women had to remember, when they were shopping, how many meals were needed that would be served in their absence as the kinds of foods needed for these meals were usually different. They had to be more organized and try not to forget anything because they couldn’t stop after work to pick up a couple of things. The stores were often closed then. Some women also fed their sitters so needed to remember to purchase appropriate foods for them. A few women thought that it cost more to feed their family because of the quantity of convenience foods needed due to the shift work but this was not confirmed by all the women.

Planning, Preparing and Cooking

Planning and preparing of meals was considered to be more time-consuming for shift-working women. They had to plan and prepare foods that were often going to be served many hours later. The women did almost all of this food work, too; husbands were rarely mentioned as participating in these tasks. Foods that were left for caregivers, including fathers, to feed had to be easy-to-serve and often consisted of one-pot type meals. The meals were usually pre-prepared and either left in the fridge for reheating or sometimes in a slow cooker, ready for eating when the rest of the family returned home. The kinds of foods served on shift work days didn’t look like the meals on non-shift days. Non-shift day meals tended to be more of the meat/fish/chicken plus a starch and one or more vegetables type of meal. Some women prepared several meals in advance, batch cooked and froze foods, or used other methods to lessen the food work they had to do during their shift rotation but this was not a practice common to all the women. For the most part, women cooked; men generally just reheated.

Clean up

Clean up was the most controversial feeding task discussed. Although women were still doing most of the clean up, as they did with the other feeding work, this was the task that women perceived was the one that was least successfully ‘shared’. Husbands might do anything from no clean up to complete clean up. Most were at the lower end, though, often leaving clean up for their wives to contend with after they returned home from work. Several women had discussed this issue with their spouse but few wives thought that there had been any significant improvement. There were even fewer expectations that non-family caregivers would do clean up. If it was done, it was usually considered to just be a bit of a bonus.
3c) Issues that mothers had regarding their children’s nutrition, feeding and socializing

There were a number of issues that mothers had regarding their children’s nutrition. These issues included concerns about specific nutrients, certain foods or food groups, and quality and/or quantity of foods eaten. In addition, the impact on their child’s nutrition by the way that caregivers either modelled food behaviour or how the caregiver actually fed the children were identified as concerns by some mothers.

The main issues for mothers of preschoolers and toddlers were to ensure that their children got enough protein foods, making sure that toddlers had sufficient iron and concerns about dairy products - both that children were getting too much or too little. The mothers of the about six to ten year olds had difficulty controlling the amount of junk food their children ate. The children were sometimes fed these junk foods by their fathers, sitters or older siblings; the mothers did not approve. The mothers of pre-teens had the most concerns about the amount of junk foods being consumed by their children. These children were often fairly independent and would buy or help themselves to junk food when they wanted it and if it was available. Several mothers had concerns about their children’s weight but this was split between children being fed too much and not enough.

Most mothers talked about the concept of balanced, high quality meals and thought that these were not necessarily the kinds of meals being served in their absence. The kinds of food were different, the supervision of the eating was sometimes unreliable and fathers, along with other caregivers, were often reported to be less than vigilant in ensuring that nutritional requirements were met. Many women reported using more quick-to-prepare and serve convenience foods on days they worked. When the meal had to be served and who would be preparing and serving it to the children were factors that sometimes determined food selection. The food group thought to be most deficient when mothers worked was the vegetable group. The mothers were uncertain why this group was a problem but thought it was a combination of not being liked, being more trouble/time to cook and a lack of knowledge or skill in how to prepare these foods. An additional concern existed because fresh vegetables couldn’t be pre-prepared by the mother because the quality deteriorated before serving time. Some mothers thought that this led to a possible deficiency in their children’s vitamin intake. However, vitamin supplements were only mentioned by an occasional woman as being a regular part of their child’s diet.

Several women thought that there were few problems nutritionally for their family as a result of working shift work and one woman thought that her family ate better because of her afternoon work. These women had chosen the shift they were working, had been working that shift for a while and had a supportive husband living with them.

Another concept that was mentioned by a number of the women was the lack of routine that the family had as a result of the shift work. Meal times were irregular and often were based around the mother’s shift schedule.

The two main issues that mothers discussed regarding the socialization of their children were table manners and conversation at the meal table. All of the mothers thought that table manners were important. They thought that table manners were enforced, but probably to a lesser degree than their own standard, by other caregivers including fathers. Only one woman thought that table manners were a significant problem for her children. Most other mothers thought that they were home enough to reinforce acceptable table manners. Mothers were concerned about meal time conversation when they were absent. In general, the only caregivers who were thought to be able to socialize the children at meal times using conversation were senior female caregivers, usually family members. Teen aged sitters were thought to be almost totally deficient in this matter and some partners were reported to be not much better. This aspect of feeding seemed to be more of a concern to mothers than most other feeding issues.

3d) Factors that affected feeding practices

The main factors that affected feeding practices were reported to be fatigue, guilt, support networks, gender roles and the age of the women’s children.
Fatigue

Fatigue was an issue for many of the women. It affected their ability to feed their family as the mothers were sometimes too tired to shop, plan, prepare or cook. If they did these things anyway, the end result was often perceived to be inferior, particularly the quality of breakfast meals, or they were too tired to enjoy their efforts. If the mothers succumbed to the fatigue and went out to eat or ordered in, finances suffered and then affected all the feeding tasks, too.

Guilt

Guilt was a commonly reported emotion felt by these shift-working women. They often had to work and often thought there was no other choice than working shift work. They tried to feed their family as well as they could, but they still felt guilty. The things that women felt guilty about included not seeing enough of or having enough time for their children, 'not knowing' and yet 'knowing' what their children were eating in the mother's absence and concerns about their adequacy as the providers of nurture and nutrition. Some women had developed strategies to help lessen their guilt. These included bringing treats home for their children and finding new ways to think about less-nutritionally-optimal foods. The ways used to lessen the women's guilt didn't seem to be totally successful in doing so.

Support networks

Support networks included immediate family members, extended family members and non-family members, both adult and teen-aged. Virtually all women claimed that women can't work shift work successfully unless they have a good support system. A good support system doesn't necessarily have to include family members. While women who were without a live-in partner thought that it would be easier if there was a spouse present, their stories of when they did have a partner present and the stories of the women with husbands present did not necessarily support that idea.

Women who had partners often reported that the women planned, prepared, shopped, cooked and cleaned up for their spouse in addition to their children. A few women let their husbands fend for themselves when the mothers had to work but most prepared meals for their husbands, especially if the women were already doing that work for their children.

Fathers who cared for their children in their mother's absence, and most fathers did, often had to be left detailed instructions about what to feed, how to prepare it and sometimes even when to feed the children. Most fathers were reported to have limited ability, and even less interest, in doing these feeding tasks. Instructions left for the fathers were sometimes followed, but not always. If children didn't want to eat certain foods, fathers would capitulate to the children's wishes even if instructions were left about what needed to be fed to the child to ensure their nutritional requirements were met for the day. Having to do all the pre-preparation and leaving instructions meant extra work for shift-working women.

Although a number of women said that they knew that lots of fathers took their children out to eat or brought home fast food, this practice was not found in this study. However, a number of the women speculated that there might be more of this done if they did not do the amount of pre-preparation work that they did.

Extended family members who provided child care tended to be senior female family members. These caregivers were thought by the mothers to be the best providers of feeding and socialization. Nutritional needs were met, table manners were reinforced and table conversation was exceptional. Instructions left for them were usually followed. It was 'easier' for women to go to work over the supper hour when extended family members were providing care.

Non-family care givers were mostly reported to be teenagers. The women who used teenagers for caregiving were generally grateful for the care the teens provided to their children. Expectations for and performance of teens as sitters both tended to be lower. Verbal and/or written instructions were usually left for the teens. They were reported to generally follow these instructions a bit better than husbands did but not as well as extended family members. Teens were reported to have limited cooking and meal preparation abilities. Mothers tended to leave alternate choices of foods to be used by the teens if they had difficulties with feeding or disciplinary matters. This practice wasn't seen with the other care givers.
Some mothers had agreed to feed the teens, while others were expected to provide their own food. In addition, most were reported to snack on the family’s food, too.

Teen sitters were the group most likely to take the children out to eat at fast food restaurants. This practice happened more often than most mothers liked. The mothers had some control over this practice though, as they would provide the money for their children’s food. This money supply would be cut off when the mothers thought the children had had enough. The teens were reported to still take the children to the restaurants but then also had to ensure that the children were fed.

It was thought that the teens did little in the way of monitoring table manners or behaviour reinforcement. Although most of the mothers thought that the teens fed the children at the table, they also thought that the teens rarely joined the children there. Instead, based on the mothers’ inability to reach the teens by phone, it was thought that the teens spent a lot of time on the phone during the children’s meal times.

Most teens were not expected to do clean up and didn’t. At least one teen was reported to leave the meal remains from his own eating for the mother to also clean up.

Although the issues that mothers had with non-family teen sitters were similar to those of their own teens, the mothers seemed to expect a higher level of performance from their own offspring when the teens babysat their younger siblings.

Gender roles

The gender roles of family members sometimes shaped the feeding practices as well. Being a woman and a mother affected how families were fed. Previously, as a ‘wife’ only, many of the married women had developed relatively equal and acceptable ways to share the household and feeding work with their husbands. Several women commented on the change in roles they saw with the addition of the role of ‘mother’ to their slate. This was despite the earlier, relatively equal role in feeding the couple. It was compounded by what the women considered to be an inadequate justification by their husbands that the mother now ‘just worked part time’. Little consideration seemed to be given, by some husbands, of the magnitude of the feeding and caring work that having children entailed.

While fathers were sometimes reported to feed their families, the mothers still appeared to feel ultimately responsible for doing so. Taking on this responsibility seemed to be accepted as part of the role of a mother – but that didn’t always mean that it was liked. Even in families where it would have made some sense to change, e.g. where the woman was a high wage earner yet only worked part-time while her husband worked full-time, traditional gender roles were still maintained.

Two husbands were reported to be fairly equal partners and several more men were described as being helpful. However, when the work was broken down into the individual feeding tasks, the fathers often did work that was optional as to when it had to be done, e.g. shop today or tomorrow, and sometimes did only work that they ‘felt’ like doing or ‘didn’t mind’ doing. This was in contrast to the day-in, day-out nature of the feeding work undertaken by the mothers every day.

Feeding families remained, for the most part, woman’s work. The value of the work was thought to be recognized by some of the husbands – but not to the point of undertaking to do more of it themselves.

Division of the feeding work had sometimes been discussed with the fathers but any changes that were reported seemed to be slow in coming. When changes did not come, women reported feelings of frustration and sometimes anger.

Age of the children

The other major aspect of feeding practices had to do with the age of the children. Shift work was reported to be ‘harder’ to work when children were younger. None of the women interviewed had infants at home. Most of the mothers of toddlers and preschoolers found shift work very stressful, especially those who reported that they had a child who was a ‘picky’ eater. The children couldn’t tell their mothers what was going on in her absence and the children required more attention to get them to eat. This extra attention often wasn’t perceived to be
present when the mother was away. All of this led to additional anxiety for the mother regarding the feeding and nutrition of her child.

Mothers who worked afternoon shifts and had school-aged children only saw their children briefly in the mornings before they went to school. These mothers thought they had little influence over what was eaten from the time the child got home from school until they went to bed. This resulted in concerns about their children’s nutrition and socialization and led to feelings of guilt for the mothers about their absence from the home, even when working was a necessity.

Mothers of the pre-teens (and teens) were frustrated with their children’s lack of interest in eating well and their apparent inability to follow the mother’s instructions regarding meals and food to eat. Their children were able to tell these mothers exactly what the children ate when their mother wasn’t there. The mothers didn’t necessarily like what they heard.

4. CONCLUSIONS

While women who work outside the home, in general, have concerns about the feeding, nutrition and socialization of their children, shift-working women seem to have both additional, and perhaps more far-reaching, concerns.

The women in this study expressed concerns regardless of the shift they worked, how long they had been working shift work, or whether they had had some choice in the selection of the shift worked. This appeared to be particularly the case for those mothers who were unavailable to their children because the mother regularly worked shifts that covered the period from late afternoon to their children’s bedtime. This was not exclusive to the women whose children were in school; women who had toddlers and preschoolers also found this a difficult time to be away from their children. It was difficult even when there was a father present. There were, however, several positive issues raised regarding shift work as well.

Mothers were concerned about various aspects of their children’s nutrition, feeding and socialization. In particular, the mothers who worked afternoon/evening shifts thought that their absence over the supper and evening hours further hampered them from monitoring these aspects adequately. Feeding work was done predominantly by the women. Fathers in some families helped with feeding tasks to varying degrees.

Fatigue, guilt, support networks, and gender roles all contributed to the ability of mothers to work shift work and feed their families effectively. Most of the shift-working women were tired; more tired than when they worked days. Many mothers felt guilty, even when they knew they were doing their best and shouldn’t feel guilty. Female extended family members were regarded as the best caregivers when the mothers were away over meal times. However, the mothers were grateful for the care that was given by all sitters.

Women who have younger children and also work at paid employment outside the home encounter the ‘second shift’ syndrome on a daily basis. It appears, as a result of this study, that women whose work outside the home involves afternoon/evening/night shifts have an even heavier load to bear.

The findings from this study will broaden the base of research about nutrition and socialization practices of shift-working mothers.

The results from this study may be used by nutrition practitioners to help them plan both individual nutrition regimes as well as nutrition programs more effectively when they are working with families with shift-working women in them.

In addition, employers may use the results of this study and become more responsive to the difficulties that shift-working mothers have to encounter on a daily basis. Employers may possibly work to find new ways to accommodate the ‘second shift’ and to improve the quality of their workplace leading to a possible increased recruitment and retention along with decreased absenteeism of female workers who are also mothers.
Appendices

6.13 Appendix M: Feedback Report Form

Feedback on Draft Research Report

(feel free to write on the back of this page and/or write general comments if you do not want to use these questions)

1. Some of the things in this report that I thought made a lot of sense were:

2. Some of the things that I disagreed with or thought did not make sense in this report were:

3. Some of the things that I thought were missing from this report were:

4. The things I found most interesting in this report were:

5. Other comments:

________________________

Name (optional):

(If you would like to talk to me about this report, please leave your name and phone number here, along with when the best times would be to reach you over the next week or so.)
PROFILES OF THE WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES*

1) Anita: Anita lives with her two daughters, Melody, eleven years old, and Julia, nine years old. Anita works full-time, twelve hours per shift, permanent night shifts in the service industry. The children see their father for blocks of time, usually in the summer. Anita has an adult female, non-family member, Jacquie, who provides evening and overnight care for the children in Jacquie's home.

2) Christine: Christine is married to Carl. They have one son, Michael, who is two years old. Christine works in the newspaper industry. Her husband works full-time with some work involving extended hours into the evening. They live on Vancouver Island. Carl's parents provide caregiving when Christine and Carl are both unavailable to do so and sometimes even when Carl is available. Christine works evening shifts, one week out of each month.

3) Donna: Donna lives with her son, Brendan who is eight years old. Donna works part-time, permanent evening shifts. She has worked day shifts in the past. During the summer interview period, child care was provided by two teen sitters during the week, along with Brendan's godmother who cared for Brendan on Saturdays. During the school year, Brendan would go to after-school care where he would then be picked up by either his mother or a teen sitter.

4) Doreen: Doreen is married to Marty, who works rotating shifts, including night shifts. They have three children, Nathan, ten years, Meghan, eight years, and Spencer, six years. Doreen works full-time, permanent, seven-and-a-half hour night shifts in the health care industry. In addition, she picks up some additional afternoon/early evening work. Child care is provided both in and out of the home with teen and young adult sitters and family members.
5) **Emily:** Emily lives with her two children, Justin, four years old, and Jennifer, three years old. She works full-time, permanent evening shifts in the health care industry though has worked an occasional day or night shift in the past. Emily's parents used to provide child care but currently it is provided almost exclusively by an eighteen year old. The children's father is not involved in their care.

6) **Fiona:** Fiona is married to Tim who is self employed, working long hours. They have one daughter, Kelly, who is two years old. Fiona works only night shifts, part-time in the public service industry but can pick up additional shifts if she wishes. No additional child care is used.

7) **Frances:** Frances, a widow, lives with her two children, Alison, fifteen, and Jacob, ten. Frances works full-time, permanent night shifts in the health care industry. Alison, along with the occasional help of her grandmother, cares for Jacob when Frances works. Frances has worked both day and evening shifts in the past.

8) **Georgina:** Georgina is married to Matthew. They have a five year old son, Alex. Georgina works two or more evening shifts a week in the newspaper industry while her husband is in a full-time professional career that has somewhat flexible but often long hours. Georgina has worked night shifts in the past and currently works an occasional day shift. Georgina has a high school age, teen sitter and Matthew's family as caregivers.

9) **Heather:** Heather is married to Paul. They have two daughters, Carly, who is eight years old and Chrysta who is five years old. Heather works in the health care industry; her husband is self-employed. His work sometimes involves evening work and occasional weekend work. Heather works evening and day shifts. She has worked night shifts in the past. Heather has a sixteen year old sitter along with an adult woman day care provider to provide child care when both she and Paul are working. Heather also has two students living with the family who require three meals a day. They provide no child care.
10) **Janet:** Janet is married to Richard. They have four children: Sam, fifteen years, Alicia, fourteen years, Peter, eight years, and Ken, seven years. Janet works about twenty hours per week involving usually four to six hour evening shifts in the retail industry. Richard is self-employed and works long daily hours. The younger children are cared for by the older children. The grandparents sometimes provide child care.

11) **Rachel:** Rachel is married to Ryan. They have one daughter, Katrina, who is twelve years old. Rachel works in the public service field. Her husband works full-time; day shifts only. No outside care giving is needed. Rachel works night shifts, part-time, with occasional day or evening shifts and some weekends. She has rotating days off.

12) **Tiffany:** Tiffany is married to Eric. They have one son, Brian, who is eighteen months old. Tiffany works in the community health care field. Her husband works full-time as well. It was not indicated that he worked any shifts other than days. Their caregiver, when neither of them was available, was Tiffany’s mother. Tiffany works evening shifts, part-time, with an occasional day shift and some weekend days.

*All names are pseudonyms*