The Second Shift

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The second shift

- The Second Shift (1989) by Arlie Hochschild
- Research method: interviewed and surveyed 50 couples, in-depth observations of 12 families
- Some major findings:
  - Only 20% of husbands shared housework (did over 1/3)
  - Women do more of daily jobs (cooking, cleaning, childcare)
  - Men do more jobs that are occasional (repairs) or can be scheduled flexibly (changing the oil)
  - Women do more undesirable tasks (washing toilets)
  - Women do more child maintenance (feeding and bathing)
  - Men do more enjoyable activities with children (trip to park)
  - Men have more leisure time ("leisure gap")

Effects of second shift

- Women: overworked, sleep-deprived, emotionally drained, resentful of husbands
- Men: resentment from wives, marital conflict
- Both men and women may be failing to live up to their beliefs about gender and family
- Families often develop "family myths" that obscure truth about division of labor in order to manage family tension
  - Upstairs-downstairs myth
  - Second-shift fetishes

Upstairs-downstairs

"One day, when I asked Nancy to tell me who did which tasks from a long list of household chores, she interrupted me with a broad wave of her hand and said, 'I do the upstairs. Evan does the downstairs.' What does that mean? I asked. Matter-of-factly, she explained that the upstairs included the living room, the dining room, the kitchen, two bedrooms, and two baths. The downstairs meant the garage, a place for storage and hobbies—Evan's hobbies. She explained this as a 'sharing' arrangement, without humor or irony—just as Evan did later. Both said they had agreed it was the best solution to the dispute. Evan could take care of the car, the garage, and Max, the family dog. As Nancy explained, 'The dog is all Evan's problem. I don't have to deal with the dog. Nancy took care of the rest.' (p. 43)"

Second-shift fetishes

"For Evan, also, the dog came to symbolize the entire second shift: it became a fetish. Other men, I found, had second-shift fetishes too. When I asked one man what he did to share the work of the home, he answered, 'I make all the pies we eat.' He didn't have to share much responsibility for home; 'pies' did it for him. Another man grilled fish. Another baked bread. In their pies, their fish, and their bread, such men converted a single act into a substitute for a multitude of chores in the second shift, a token. Evan took care of the dog." (p. 47)