

HOUSING FEATURES AND FURNISHINGS PERCEIVED  
BY MOTHERS TO AID OR IMPEDE FAMILY-SHARED  
MEALTIME

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY  
JACQUELYN WILLIAMS McCRAY  
1967

## ABSTRACT

### HOUSING FEATURES AND FURNISHINGS PERCEIVED BY MOTHERS TO AID OR IMPEDE FAMILY-SHARED MEALTIME

By Jacquelyn Williams McCray

Considering the fact that housing today frequently is supplied without reference to specific families it is conceivable that families may be unable to implement their preferences. The objectives of this study were to secure the responses of a sample of mothers to the following questions: (1) What were their preferences concerning family-shared mealtime? (2) What housing features and furnishings did they perceive as related to family-shared mealtime? (3) What housing features and furnishings appeared to be associated with mothers' preferences regarding family-shared mealtime?

Thirty respondents were selected randomly from a population of 80 mothers who had children attending the Michigan State University Laboratory Preschool. This nursery school provided the interviewer with access to families with young children who are members of a professional class.

An interview schedule was designed to determine the mothers' preferences for shared mealtime, which housing features and furnishings were perceived by the mothers to aid or impede family-shared mealtime, and which housing features and furnishings perceived to aid or impede family-shared mealtime were associated with mothers' preferences.

Data indicated that 28 of the 30 respondents believed it was important for families to share mealtime. Although two respondents said they did not think family-shared mealtime important all respondents reported

their families did share mealtimes. Neither the frequency of actual shared mealtime nor the number of members present was established because of a misinterpretation of the question by the respondents. Both of the two mothers constituting the deviant cases were among those who had been married from one to ten years, which suggests that years of marriage may be a factor related to shared mealtime preferences. No other demographic information revealed any trends. Data descriptive of housing features and furnishings perceived by mothers to aid or impede family-shared mealtime were not large in number or highly repetitive in kind. Furniture arrangement and an outdoor grill were the only housing features or furnishings mentioned frequently enough by respondents to be considered related to family-shared mealtime.

The only conclusion which could be drawn with any degree of confidence from this study was that almost all mothers in the study population believed it important for families to share mealtimes. The housing features and furnishings which were most clearly perceived to be associated with the occurrence of family-shared mealtime were the outdoor grill and furniture arrangement. Other items were mentioned and more refined investigations may yield findings from which inferences can be drawn. However, no patterns were discernable in this study. Due to the small number of cases in the category of "do not believe it is important to share family mealtime" no conclusions can be stated regarding the relation of housing features and furnishings and mothers' preferences.

The major value to be gained from the results of this investigation is to be found in implications for future studies. A narrower definition of mealtime, to include only the eating period, might clarify the housing features and furnishings perceived by mothers to be related to this family-

shared activity. Data from two matched samples, varying insofar as possible only on their preferences for family-shared mealtime, could yield data from which housing features and furnishings associated with family-shared mealtime might be identified. It is also possible that trained observers with previously established criteria could identify housing features and furnishings conceivably related to a family activity which could then be compared with families having different shared-activity patterns. Lastly, great caution must be exercised to be certain respondents understand and consistently follow the definitions of the term "family-shared."

HOUSING FEATURES AND FURNISHINGS PERCEIVED  
BY MOTHERS TO AID OR IMPEDE  
FAMILY-SHARED MEALTIME

By

Jacquelyn Williams McCray

A THESIS

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Textiles, Clothing and Related Arts

1967

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer is especially indebted to Dr. Gertrude Nygren, who served as academic advisor, for her inspiration, untiring interest and general directions for this study. Special thanks are due Dr. Mary Gephart who offered much encouragement and many suggestions which were of invaluable aid to the writer.

Appreciation is due Drs. Frances Magrabi and Rosalind Mentzer who so graciously agreed to serve on the Academic Committee, and as a result gave much assistance and guidance to the writer.

Gratitude is offered to the administration of the Laboratory Preschool of Michigan State University for their cooperation in obtaining the sample. The writer is deeply appreciative to the respondents who provided the data for this study and to her husband, Parnell, who deserves many thanks for his encouragement and understanding during the preparation of this thesis.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	ii
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Chapter	
I. BACKGROUND FOR THE STUDY.....	3
Summary.....	8
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	9
Definition and Role of Family Solidarity.....	11
Studies of Family Shared Time.....	14
Studies of Family Group Structure.....	15
Summary.....	16
III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	17
Selection of the Sample.....	17
Development of the Instrument.....	18
Pretest of the Instrument.....	18
Administration of the Instrument.....	19
Analysis of the Data.....	20
IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION.....	21
Description of the Sample.....	21
Analysis of Mothers' Preferences.....	22
Factors Relating to Preferences and Mealtime Routines.....	32
Housing Features and Furnishings Perceived to Aid or Impede Family-Shared Mealtime.....	36
Relationship of Mothers' Preferences for Family- Shared Mealtime to Housing Features and Furnishings Perceived to Aid or Impede Family- Shared Mealtime.....	40
Analysis of the Interview Schedule.....	43
Summary.....	44

Chapter	Page
V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....	46
Origin and Importance of the Study.....	46
Restatement of Problem.....	47
Summary of the Findings.....	47
Conclusions.....	52
Recommendations for Further Study.....	53
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	55
APPENDIX A.....	59
APPENDIX B.....	61
APPENDIX C.....	66
APPENDIX D.....	73



## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Distribution of Years Married According to Mothers' Preferences.....	24
2. Distribution of Number of Years of Instruction in Home Economics According to Mothers' Preferences.....	25
3. Distribution of the Amount of Assistance Received in Preparing Family Meals According to Mothers' Preferences.....	26
4. Distribution of the Frequency of Meals Not Attended by Spouse According to Mothers' Preferences.....	27
5. Distribution of Family Members Who Eat Together According to Mothers' Preferences.....	29
6. Distribution of Amount of Reported Time Shared Immediately After Eating, According to Mothers' Preferences.....	31
7. Distribution of the Response to the Amount of Satisfaction Received from Assistance in Pre-meal Preparation According to Mothers' Preferences.....	31
8. Distribution of Reasons Given for Present Mealtime Routine According to Mothers' Preferences.....	33
9. Distribution of Responses to Shared Morning and Afternoon Snack Periods According to Mothers' Preferences.....	34
10. Distribution of Responses to Presence of Difficulty in Keeping Family Members Together During Mealtime, According to Mothers' Preferences.....	35
11. Number of Housing Features Perceived to Aid or Impede Family-Shared Mealtime.....	36
12. Distribution of Housing Furnishings Perceived to Aid or Impede Family-Shared Mealtime.....	38
13. Distribution of Housing Features Perceived to Aid or Impede Family-Shared Mealtime, According to Mothers' Preferences.....	40
14. Distribution of Housing Furnishings Perceived to Aid or Impede Family-Shared Mealtime, According to Mothers' Preferences.....	42

## INTRODUCTION

Broad implications for housing forms are suggested when shelter is viewed in relation to family development and individual behavior. There is growing evidence that adequate family life is contingent upon space and facilities providing for physical closeness and social exclusiveness in activities of daily living. Therefore, it would follow that activities of the family may be fostered or prohibited by the nature of its housing.

This study attempted to learn whether housing features and furnishings were perceived by mothers to be related to one family activity, eating together, as a step in the process of learning if family interaction was in any demonstrable way dependent upon housing.

The major purposes of this pilot study were to answer the following questions for the selected population of mothers: (1) What were their preferences concerning family-shared mealtime? (2) What housing features and furnishings were perceived as being related to family-shared mealtime? and (3) What housing features and furnishings appeared to be associated with their preferences regarding family-shared mealtime?

### Operational Definitions

Housing features - Structural parts and relatively fixed items  
and their arrangement in the home.

Housing furnishings - Moveable items and their arrangement in  
the home.

Family-shared mealtime - Time shared by all family members physically and mentally able to participate in joint eating activities. This includes:

Preparation time - when any members of the family share time.

Eating time - when all members of the family share time.

Post-meal period - when all members of the family share time.

## CHAPTER I

### BACKGROUND FOR THE STUDY

Living patterns respond to social change, and conversely, as living patterns change, shifts are required of the social system. As a result of this reciprocal process, individuals and social units are in a constant process of evolution. Yet, the arena of the societal system is not prone to change as rapidly as the performers within the system. Houses in the past have usually been designed to last at least half a century.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the fixed nature of these structures suggests a need to study their effect on the more yielding human being.

Hobart said that these significant changes in living patterns resulted from the increase of personal mobility: decline of status ascription and increase in status achievement and loss of function and ascendancy of materialistic values.<sup>2</sup> Bell and Vogel mentioned several demographic changes which influenced living patterns: an increased rate of divorce and remarriages, a rise in birth rate and decline in death rate, and a lower median age for any given stage in the family life cycle.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Svend Riemer, "Architecture for Family Living," American Journal of Social Issues, VII, Part II (1951), 145.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Hobart, "Commitment, Value Conflict and the Future of the American Family," Marriage and Family Living, XXV, No. 4 (1963), 405-406.

<sup>3</sup>Norman W. Bell and Ezra F. Vogel, A Modern Introduction to the Family (Glencoe, Ill: The Free Press, 1960), pp. 94, 108.

Duvall cited the following changes which have effected the American family: (1) increased mobility of the American society, (2) more men and women marrying and at a younger age, (3) more families having three or four children, (4) more persons living to complete their family life cycle, and (5) more women working outside the home.<sup>1</sup> In addition, families have increased resources, more leisure and more education; parental roles have become less distinct, and family instability has increased.<sup>2</sup>

Considering the force of so many challenges to the basis for the present family structure, not all authorities believed the family would survive. Moore said in 1960 that the family was obsolete and barbaric; the obligation to give affection as a duty to a particular set of persons on account of the accident of birth will cause the family as we know it to be eliminated from this society.<sup>3</sup> In a more supportive tone, Hobart admitted that the family was undergoing changes, both within itself and in relation to the rest of society, which tended to significantly weaken its ability to function in the traditional manner.<sup>4</sup> He did not accept these changes as evidence that the institutional family was being eliminated. He viewed changes in family patterns as a result of urbanization and he predicted changes in the functions of the family, but saw no indication of deteriorating family stability or solidarity. Because of conflicting viewpoints, as exemplified by these authorities, and the appearance of variation among

---

<sup>1</sup>Evelyn Millis Duvall, Family Development (New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1962), p. 67.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Barrington Moore, "Thoughts on the Future of the Family," Identify and Anxiety, ed. Arthur J. Vidich and David M. White (Glencoe, Ill: The Free Press, 1960), pp. 393-394.

<sup>4</sup>Hobart, op. cit.

families, it seemed wise not to assume that all families value or strive for strong social units.

Evelyn Duvall said that shifts in present patterns of living have caused changes in the function of the family.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, in today's society, the family functions as the institution responsible for the social and psychological development of its members. This function, said Duvall, was just as important as the traditional family functions in enabling family members to cope with the outside world.<sup>2</sup>

Winch concluded that today's family is a multi-purpose group serving economic, political, socio-economic and religious functions, as well as certain functions of replacement, position conferring and emotional gratification.<sup>3</sup> According to Broom and Seltniz, the family is crucial in keeping society's members in working condition - by asserting a sense of belonging and providing a needed response relationship to help sustain the individual in his social participation.<sup>4</sup> These authors viewed today's family as performing two major functions: societal maintenance and individual gratification.

Whether the family system will survive future changes in our society does not seem vital for present purposes, since authorities in both family life and sociology have generally agreed that the family functions in today's society. Based upon this premise, it seemed to be of current importance to

---

<sup>1</sup>Duvall, op. cit., p. 60.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Robert F. Winch, The Modern Family (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 81.

<sup>4</sup>Leonard Broom and Philip Seltniz, Sociology (Evanston, Ill: Row Peterson & Co., 1958), p. 372.

study how the physical environment affects the family as well as individual development.

Research in human ecology could be helpful to all persons who are responsible for the design of today's homes. Such persons may be planners, members of lending institutions, architects, prefabricators, administrators of federal governmental agencies and housing authorities. Secondly, this type of research is needed by the consuming public who could, if informed, demand houses constructed according to predetermined patterns of living.

Schorr wrote, "A conception has yet to be developed that considers man in relation to his physical environment."<sup>1</sup> Since housing is a segment of man's physical environment, a growing impression of the significance of the home living environment, in determining human behavior, is prompting a variety of persons to look for objective evidence as a basis for planning and constructing housing.

Reimer referred to the consequences of housing deficiencies when he said housing and family customs were composed of stubborn materials.<sup>2</sup> Thus families suffer from conflicts between house forms, family values, and customs because the walls of houses are not prone to give way nor is a house design amenable to change.

Even though in 1960, according to Beyer, one-fourth of all existing dwellings in the United States had been constructed since 1950, the writer discovered no basis for ascribing more humanly oriented design to that

---

<sup>1</sup>Alvin L. Schorr, Slums and Social Insecurity, U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare Research Bulletin No. 1 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office), pp. 32-33.

<sup>2</sup>Reimer, op. cit.

period than to the previous ten-year span.<sup>1</sup>

Kelly concluded that despite all the technological advances in the home building industry, designs used by the average builder were not adequately supported by research.<sup>2</sup>

Fisher wrote, "Today there is no science of housing; there are only opinions, convictions, and prejudices about it."<sup>3</sup> Beyer said, "If family functions were to be implemented, a conceptual framework must be developed for determining what shelter should do to improve living conditions."<sup>4</sup>

Justification for the present study is based upon the one characteristic of the family which Bell and Vogel said was responsible for the family's ability to cope with change, grief, and other stressful situations without disintegration - family solidarity.<sup>5</sup>

Situations found by Bell and Vogel to be highly responsible for family solidarity were those allowing family interaction.<sup>6</sup> To some extent the mere process of interaction, even when frustrating to the individuals involved, was related to solidarity. Furthermore, there were certain activities particularly significant for family interaction, such as the mealtime activity, in which the family united as a whole.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Glenn Beyer, Housing and Society (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1964), p. 196.

<sup>2</sup>Burnham Kelly and Associates, Design and the Production of Houses (New York: McGraw-Hill Co., 1959), p. 43.

<sup>3</sup>Ernest M. Fisher, "The Role of the University in Housing Research," An address of the Conference of the Housing Committee of the Social Science Research Council held at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan; January 27 through January 29, 1949.

<sup>4</sup>Beyer, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Bell and Vogel, op. cit.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.



Acceptance of the family as a functional unit in our present society and the belief that family solidarity is related to family interaction lead to the conclusion that a study of housing and family activities permitting interaction would contribute to a conceptual framework relating man to his physical environment.

### Summary

Despite conflicting views on the future survival of the family, today's family does have a function. Housing appears to be related to the family's ability to fulfill this function by allowing joint activities which provide the necessary response relationship which leads to family solidarity. The extent to which man's physical housing affects the family's ability to function is not known, but there is need for a systematized study to learn how man is related to his physical environment.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Much of the research relating housing and human behavior has been focused on relationships between housing and physical health, while studies in housing and its effect upon the social behavior of its occupants have been slow to develop. Wilner<sup>1</sup> summarized forty research projects, from both Europe and America, that were concerned with the effects of housing on man's health and performance. Although his sample was not exhaustive, these studies were chosen because they represented work since World War II, and they presented original data analysis. In general, the findings of these studies showed a marked positive association between housing and health: poor housing was correlated with poor health and better housing with better health. Of the twenty-four studies that involved physical morbidity, fifteen showed positive relationships, seven seemed ambiguous or showed no relationship between housing and health, and two indicated negative results. Of the sixteen studies that dealt with some aspect of social adjustment, eleven found a positive relationship to housing, four gave ambiguous or null results, and one was negative. Research which associated housing with the incidences of tuberculosis, respiratory infections, skin diseases, acute dyspepsia, anemia, rickets, prematurity, and congenital malformations occupied the major portion of research into housing and physical health, while poor

---

<sup>1</sup>Daniel M. Wilner, et al. The Housing Environment and Family Life (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), pp. 1-40.

school performance, mental illnesses, and juvenile delinquency had been the focus of the research into the social and psychological effects of housing.<sup>1</sup>

In summarizing these forty research projects, Wilner showed empirical evidences of the relationship between housing and physical health and some evidence of the role housing played in deviant behavior. The authors of the studies summarized by Wilner attempted to identify casual relationships between housing and human health and behavior after certain problems occurred.<sup>2</sup>

The present study attempted to identify housing features and furnishings related to family-shared mealtime as a step in the quest to learn the possible instrumental value of housing to family development. Assuming that family solidarity is necessary if the family is to perform one of its present functions, as stated by Duvall,<sup>3</sup> Winch,<sup>4</sup> and Broom and Seltniz,<sup>5</sup> that of the social and psychological development of its members; that family-shared mealtime is important for family solidarity because it allows family interaction, and furthermore that mothers are instrumental in directing family-shared activities.

Literature that related (1) family solidarity to social behavior, (2) family-shared mealtime to family interaction, and (3) family group structure to family-shared mealtime will be discussed in this chapter in an attempt to describe more explicitly the basis upon which this study was developed.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Wilner, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Duvall, op. cit.

<sup>4</sup> Winch, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Broom and Seltniz, op. cit., p. 200.

### Definition and Role of Family Solidarity

Cousins defined solidarity as:

. . . the relative preponderance of favorable over hostile effects, and a similar balance of moral respect among the co-participants in the concrete group acting out the system. As a resultant of interaction, solidarity is a reflection of the common orientation of the actors in the social system . . .

Broom and Seltniz considered solidarity as a contributor to morale building and concluded that emotional solidarity was closely related to feelings of antagonism toward out-groups.<sup>2</sup> Solidarity contributed to in-groups morale by creating a common mood of self-sacrifice, of shared danger, or of devotion to a cause. "Consciousness of belonging together or being 'of the same kind' prevades the group, breaking down personal reserve and releasing feelings of affection and sympathy."<sup>3</sup> Under such conditions, mutual inspiration is possible and individuals may rise to great heights of courage and effort.

Winch considered family solidarity as composed of both passive and active elements. The first part of Winch's definition of family solidarity was the element of passive solidarity, defined as:

. . . the responsibility of one family to another if the second should suffer an injury because of some crime committed by a member of the first family. This collective responsibility might well involve contributions from all members of the criminal's family to compensate the injured family. . .

---

<sup>1</sup> Albert N. Cousins, "The Failure of Solidarity," The Family, ed. Bell and Vogel (Glencoe, Ill: The Free Press, 1960), pp. 403-416.

<sup>2</sup> Broom and Seltniz, op. cit., p. 260.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Winch, op. cit., pp. 108-109.

Active solidarity, on the other hand, is described as a characteristic of the family whereby members are expected to assist in securing revenge for wrongs done a kinsman by an outsider. Specific characteristics of active solidarity, as given by Burgess and Lock, are:

(1) the feeling on the part of all members that they belong pre-eminently to the family group and that all other persons are outsiders; (2) complete integration of individual activities for the achievement of family objectives; (3) the assumption that land, money, and other material goods are family property, involving obligations to support individual members and give them assistance when they are in need; (4) willingness of all other members to rally to the support of another member if attacked by outsiders; and (5) concern for the perpetuation of the family as evidenced by helping an adult child in beginning and continuing an economic activity in line with family expectations, and in setting up a new household.

Earle, in an investigation of marital conflict and family unity within a randomly-selected group of North Carolina families, showed that homes which were high in cohesiveness, were among other qualities, more frequently characterized by joint participation, happy members, equalitarianism, and consensus among members. In families where solidarity was high, adolescents more often respected their parents, and parental influence and control were more probable.<sup>2</sup>

Bell and Vogel said that for a group to maintain close relationships between members over a long period of time required some commitment and feelings of solidarity. Solidarity gave members the motivation to abide by the norms of the group. If there was little solidarity within the family, the obligations imposed by the group seemed oppressive, but when there was a great deal of solidarity, the obligations were accepted as natural and were not felt as obligations. In addition, feelings of solidarity were very

---

<sup>1</sup>Ernest W. Burgess and Harvey J. Locke, The Family: From Institution to Companionship (New York: American Book, 1953), p. 60.

<sup>2</sup>John Rochester Earle, "Marital Conflict and Family Unity," (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1963), pp. 102-107.

important in dealing with individual tensions and personality problems.<sup>1</sup>

In this reference, solidarity was defined as: favorable effects and a balance of moral respect among coparticipants in a concrete group; reflection of common orientation; out-group antagonism and in-group inspiration; a feeling of belonging; and complete integration for the achievement of family objectives. Such phrases as "complete integration for the achievement of family objectives," "in-group inspiration," "common orientation" and "coparticipants in a concrete group" indicated an active element of solidarity, obligating the individual family members to work toward implementing over-all family functions. The degree of obligatory acceptance depended upon the degree of solidarity within the group.

According to Homans, group solidarity was dependent upon shared activities. A decrease in the shared activities of any group led to a decrease in the number of sentiments which group members had for one another. This decrease in the number of sentiments had a cyclic effect, which resulted in still less desire for solidarity, with still fewer shared activities. Conversely, when shared activities formed the basis for the development of emotional ties, as more activities were shared, the solidarity was greater among family members. Family members felt more affection for one another and sought further solidarity through the medium of more shared activities.<sup>2</sup>

The next portion of this chapter will present studies of family shared time.

---

<sup>1</sup>Bell and Vogel, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>George C. Homans, The Human Group (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1950), pp. 259-262.

### Studies of Family Shared Time

Thurrow stated that autobiographies of 200 college students revealed that there appeared to be less tension and higher satisfaction in homes where activities were shared and in which families ate and celebrated holidays together. Thurrow further indicated that the most commonly shared family activity was eating.<sup>1</sup>

Thorpe's study of family interaction patterns of forty-four town and forty-five farm families in Southern Michigan revealed that the farm families spent more than fifty per cent of the total time shared in eating together, while the town families spent approximately twenty-four per cent of the total time shared in eating together. This was the greatest percentage of total time shared by these families.<sup>2</sup>

A similar study was conducted by Snow<sup>3</sup> in 1950. Although the objectives of the research were not to determine patterns of interaction, but rather to develop a technique for determining the number and types of activities which family members shared, findings from the analysis of her data were similar to those of Thorpe. Snow's sample of rural Georgia revealed families spent over forty per cent of their shared activities time in eating.

---

<sup>1</sup>Mildred Thurrow, A Study of Selected Factors in Family Life as Described in Autobiographies (Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station Memoir 171, 1935), pp. 5-8.

<sup>2</sup>Alice C. Thorpe, "Patterns of Family Interaction Within the Home" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Michigan State University, 1956), pp. 51-70.

<sup>3</sup>Carolyn B. Snow, "A Study in the Development of a Technique for Determining the Amount and Types of Activities which Family Members Share" (unpublished Master's thesis, The University of Georgia, 1950), pp. 43-57.

Studies of Family Group Structure

Snow's research also indicated that the amount of shared time of these families was inversely related to the amount of time spent by the mother outside the home.<sup>1</sup> This finding was important only to the extent that it gave indications of the vital force the mother exerted in the one aspect of family life, with which the present study is concerned. Findings by Beers, in a study of family relationships in a group of New York farm families, supported the findings by Snow. He found that fathers and sons and mothers and daughters shared more work than recreational activities, and that the amount of shared home activities was associated negatively with the extent of the wife's leadership role in extra-family groups.<sup>2</sup>

A study giving concrete evidence of the relationship between family position and patterns of social interaction in the home was conducted by Scott. Three-generation families living in the Detroit area were interviewed, and the interaction processes of these families of three, four, and five persons were analyzed with respect to (1) the relation of family position to rates of initiated interaction and of family position and interaction rates to patterns of support in the family; (2) median rates of support for members occupying each family position (e.g. husband, wife, aged person), and for members of different rank orders of initiated interaction; and (3) the frequencies with which various support patterns occurred between family positions.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Howard W. Beers, "Measurements of Family Relationships in Farm Families of Central New York," Memoir 183 (Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station, Ithaca, New York, 1935), pp. 5-12.

<sup>3</sup> F. G. Scott, "Family Group Structure and Patterns of Social Interaction," American Journal of Sociology, LXIII (July, 1962-May, 1963), p. 24.



Scott concluded that power, as measured by indicators derived from group interaction, was not found to be related to the authority structure but, on the contrary, the wife was in a more advantageous power position than other family members because of her high rate of support from the other members of the family.<sup>1</sup>

### Summary

The role of family solidarity in the execution of family functions was discussed by three authors and empirical evidences given by another. The relationship of the family activity of eating to family solidarity was studied by one research writer and supported by another. Further, some indication of the dominant role of the mother in directing family interaction in three-generation families was given by one author of research, and the mother's dominant role in directing family activities was given by two other investigators. In summary, some evidences of the nature of several social aspects of family living were cited, but no research was located that identified the relation of housing to the situation or activity.

Reliance upon the studies of Thorpe,<sup>2</sup> Snow,<sup>3</sup> Thurow,<sup>4</sup> and Beers,<sup>5</sup> for current patterns of activity was limited because these studies were from ten to thirty years old and dealt primarily with rural families. Therefore, the present investigation should reveal current practices in the area of the eating activity for urban families.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Thorpe, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Snow, op. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Thurow, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Beers, op. cit.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methods employed in the (1) selection of the sample, (2) development of the interview schedule, (3) pretest of the instrument, (4) administration of the instrument, and (5) analysis of the data.

#### Selection of the Sample

Thirty mothers were randomly selected from a population of eighty mothers with children attending the Michigan State University Laboratory Preschool to be interviewed for this study. The nursery school administrators provided the interviewer with access to families with young children and to what was believed to be a homogeneous socio-economic level.

Because there was some variation among authorities on the indices of social class, the researcher accepted the emergent values as given by Kahl to be the foundation for establishing homogeneity of life style. Kahl described career-orientation as the emergent value of the upper-middle socio-economic level and concluded that career-orientation described the life style of professionals, managers, and business executives.<sup>1</sup> Because all thirty of the respondents were spouses of professional workers, the term "professional" was used to refer to the sample described.

Respondents were randomly selected from a listing provided by the administrators of the Laboratory Preschool. From the original sample of

---

<sup>1</sup>Joseph A. Kahl, The American Class Structure (New York, New York: Rinehart and Company, 1960), pp. 193-201.

thirty mothers, thirteen were discarded because eight were leaving town, four could not be located, and one refused to cooperate with the study. Another random sample of thirteen was drawn to replace the mothers who were unavailable. Thirty respondents were selected for study because it appeared that thirty was the largest number that could be successfully handled by the interviewer in the allotted time, and thirty was considered to be a sufficient number from which to identify trends.

### Development of the Instrument

Since there was no instrument available to meet the demands of this study, an interview schedule was developed. Methods for developing the interview schedule, as given by Goode and Hatt,<sup>1</sup> guided the construction of fifty-eight questions (see Appendix B, p.61). Fourteen questions dealt with personal data about the families, twelve with the mothers' preferences for sharing mealtime, twenty-four with present mealtime routines and eight dealt with specific features and furnishings perceived to be associated with mealtime.

### Pretest of the Instrument

The first draft of the interview schedule was administered to two professional home economists, who were also mothers of young children, in an attempt to obtain suggestions for improving the instrument, provide experience for the investigator, and establish the length of time required for the interview. These trial interviews revealed weaknesses, especially in the areas dealing with features and furnishings. One mother failed to respond to many questions

---

<sup>1</sup>William J. Goode and Paul K. Hatt, Methods in Social Research (New York, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952), pp. 184-208.

and required considerable explanation in order to obtain the type of responses expected.

The interview schedule was revised. The second schedule contained seventy-two questions, nineteen dealing with personal data on the families, twelve with the mothers' preferences for sharing mealtime, twenty-seven with present routines of mealtime and fourteen with specific features and furnishings perceived to influence family mealtime (see Appendix C, p. 66). The second schedule was then administered to a mother with four children ranging in age from one to fifteen. The second schedule appeared to be greatly improved with respect to the number of concrete responses gained when the questions relating housing features and furnishings to shared mealtime were asked.

#### Administration of the Instrument

After a brief explanatory letter (see Appendix A, p. 59) had been sent to the selected respondents, each mother was contacted by telephone to ascertain if she would be willing to cooperate and to determine when she would be available for an interview. Appointments for the interview were made within a two-week period. The interviews were conducted in the homes of the families during June, 1966.

The initial section of the schedule dealt with demographic questions which concerned the children and which were designed to gain rapport with the respondents. Questions dealing with frequency of shared mealtime and mothers' preferences for sharing mealtime preceded questions about housing features and furnishings. Questions attempting to determine which housing features and furnishings were perceived by mothers to aid or impede family-shared mealtime appeared near the end of the schedule to allow the mothers

to become familiar with the type of interview to be conducted. The interviews were concluded with questions which attempted to determine possible causes for the previous answers dealing with preferences, routines, and housing features and furnishings.

Within a week after the interviews had been administered, the respondents were sent letters (see Appendix D, p. 73) thanking them for their assistance and cooperation.

### Analysis of the Data

Analysis of Contingency Tables (ACT) were used as a basis for interpreting responses. It was hoped that the findings from this pilot study would suggest a hypothesis and appropriate methodology for future studies.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### Description of the Sample

Thirty mothers were drawn from a population of eighty mothers who had a child attending the Michigan State University Laboratory Preschool. A minimum of one pre-school child was the controlling variable.

All of the respondents lived in suburbs of Lansing, Michigan. There were twenty-six from East Lansing, three from Okemos and one from Haslett. The researcher assumed that families in the other suburbs would be similar to those in East Lansing based on previous knowledge regarding families who sent children to the University Laboratory Preschool.

Thirty mothers had a total of seventy-eight children; forty-nine were male children and twenty-nine were female. The mean number of children was 2.6 and the most common age range of children was from five to ten years.

Age categories of mothers revealed that fifty-three percent were in the thirty-one to forty age group, forty percent were in the forty-one to fifty age group, and the remaining (one case each) fell into the twenty-one to thirty age range and the over-fifty category. The average age of husbands was slightly higher than the average age of the wives.

The respondents and spouses had obtained education above that of the average resident of East Lansing and the state of Michigan.\*

	Respondent	Spouse	East Lansing*	Michigan*
Years of Schooling	16.7	19.06	15.8	10.8

All of the thirty spouses of the respondents were engaged in professional occupations. This finding supported the writer's assumption that the sample would represent a homogeneous socio-economic level, based on Kahl's<sup>1</sup> occupational foundation as representative of life style.

Two of the thirty respondents were professionally employed, while the remaining twenty-eight did not work outside the home.

In addition to occupation of spouses, the number of years spent in educational endeavors by both the respondents and the spouses, and the number of non-working mothers indicated that there was considerable homogeneity in the group.

#### Analysis of Mothers' Preferences

The respondents were asked (1) "Do you feel that it is important for family members to share meals?" and (2) "Does your family frequently share meals?" The responses to the question "Do you feel that it is important for family members to share meals?" were recorded as a preference measure for family-shared mealtime, and the responses to the question "Does your family frequently share meals?" were recorded as an actual practice

---

<sup>1</sup>Kahl, op. cit.

\*Taken from the U. S. Bureau of Census, Michigan General Population Characteristics 1960 (Washington, D. C.).

measure. Twenty-eight of the thirty respondents said they thought it was important to share meals and that their families did share mealtimes. These respondents will be referred to as the "Yes-Do" respondents in all following analyses. Though the remaining two respondents said that they did not think it important to share meals, they said that their families did share mealtimes. These respondents will be referred to as the "No-Do" respondents in all subsequent descriptions of the data.

Although there were only two deviant cases in mothers' preferences for eating together, some effort was made to locate patterns of responses for mothers' preferences because consistencies in responses could suggest areas worthy of study in future research.

Mothers' preferences were compared with the demographic data in an attempt to determine whether or not demographic factors seemed to be associated with preferences. Age and sex of children, age of respondent and spouse, and occupation did not seem to be associated with preference responses.

Mileage traveled to work by spouse did not appear to be associated with respondents' preferences for sharing mealtime, even though the number of miles traveled differed greatly for some spouses. The shortest distance traveled was three-tenths of one mile and the longest distance traveled was twelve and one-half miles.

No relationship between amount of weekend work performed by the spouse and the mothers' preferences could be established, since all respondents reported that their husbands' jobs consumed some weekend time.

The number of years married showed some patterning in the responses (see Table 1),



Table 1.--Distribution of years married according to mothers' preferences

Years Married	Preference Response					
	Yes - Do (N = 28)		No - Do (N = 2)		Total (N = 30)	
	No.	%*	No.	%*	No.	%*
1 - 5	1	3.6	1	50.0	2	6.7
6 - 10	11	39.3	1	50.0	12	40.0
11 - 20	14	50.0	--	--	14	46.7
Over 20	2	7.1	--	--	2	6.7

\*Percentages may not equal 100 because second place decimals have been dropped.

The two mothers in the "No-Do" category had been married under ten years, while slightly more than half of the mothers who responded "Yes-Do" had been married over ten years. The trend, however, was not distinct enough for further consideration of the data.

Biographical differences of the respondents yielded little patterning in relation to mothers' preferences. Observations were then made to determine whether such factors as amount of education in home economics, amount of aid received in preparing, serving and clearing away of shared meals, and frequency of meals missed by spouse were associated with stated preferences.

The amount of education in home economics appeared to have no bearing on the respondents' stated preferences (see Table 2).

Table 2.--Distribution of number of years of instruction in home economics according to mothers' preferences

Years of Instruction in Home Economics	Preference Response					
	Yes - Do (N = 28)		No - Do (N = 2)		Total (N = 30)	
	No.	%*	No.	%*	No.	%*
1	11	39.3	1	50.0	12	40.0
2	5	17.8	--	--	5	16.6
3	6	21.4	1	50.0	7	23.3
4	6	21.4	--	--	6	20.0

\*Percentages may not equal 100 because the second place decimals have been dropped.

The largest single number of mothers reported one to two years of education in home economics. The observation that all mothers, including the two "No-Do" respondents, had received education in home economics was noted.

Differences between the "Yes-Do" and the "No-Do" respondents with reference to the amount of time shared during pre-meal preparation were not apparent (see Table 3).

Table 3.--Distribution of the amount of assistance received in preparing family meals according to mothers' preferences

Amount of Assistance	Preference Response		
	Yes - Do (N = 28)	No - Do (N = 2)	Total (N = 30)
	No.	No.	No.
Morning			
Great deal	8	1	9
Some	10	1	11
None	10	--	10
Mid-Day			
Great deal	7	--	7
Some	18	2	20
None	3	--	3
Evening			
Great deal	11	1	12
Some	15	1	16
None	2	--	2

The two "No-Do" respondents received help in preparing all three meals. Ten of the "Yes-Do" respondents received no help in preparing breakfast; three received no help in preparing the mid-day meal; and two received no help in preparing the evening meal. Outstanding here is the observation that the "No-Do" respondents shared pre-meal preparation with family members, even though they did not consider family-shared mealtime important. Perhaps the amount of help received in pre-meal preparation was due to the young age of the children in some of the families. No attempt was made to determine why the respondents obtained or did not obtain help in pre-meal preparation. Because this study did not attempt to determine none-housing factors relating to the frequency of shared time during pre-meal preparation, it was sufficient to establish only whether or

not any members shared pre-meal preparation time. The respondents appeared to share time regardless of expressed preferences.

The frequency of meals not attended by spouse and the enumeration of which family members usually shared meals suggested the amount of time shared during the mealtime activity.

Slight trends were discernible between the "Yes-Do" and the "No-Do" respondents according to meals frequently, occasionally and never missed by spouse (see Table 4).

Table 4.--Distribution of the frequency of meals not attended by spouse according to mothers' preferences

	Preference Response		
	Yes - Do (N = 28)	No - Do (N = 2)	Total (N = 30)
Meals not Attended by Spouse	No.	No.	No.
Morning			
Frequently	2	--	2
Occasionally	6	--	6
Never	20	2	22
Mid-Day			
Frequently	14	--	14
Occasionally	9	1	10
Never	5	1	6
Evening			
Frequently	18	2	20
Occasionally	--	--	--
Never	10	--	10

Both "No-Do" respondents reported that their husbands never missed breakfast, one reported that her husband never missed the mid-day meal, one reported that her husband occasionally missed the mid-day meal, and both

reported that their husbands frequently missed the evening meal. Two of the "Yes-Do" respondents reported that their husbands frequently missed breakfast, six said that their husbands occasionally missed breakfast, and twenty said that their husbands never missed breakfast. Fourteen of the "Yes-Do" respondents reported that their husbands frequently missed the mid-day meal, five reported that their husbands occasionally missed the mid-day meal, and five said that their husbands never missed the mid-day meal. Eighteen of the "Yes-Do" respondents reported that their husbands frequently missed the evening meal, and the remaining ten reported that their husbands never missed the evening meal.

The number of meals missed by the spouse was apparently unrelated to the expressed preferences. The high frequency of reported family-shared mealtimes was inconsistent with the responses to the number of meals attended by husbands. The discrepancies apparently arose from the lack of clearly established categories denoting the number of meals shared. A more precise means of defining "frequently" and "occasionally" could have yielded more meaningful responses in this area.

Inconsistencies in responses were also discovered when the estimated frequency of meals shared was at great variance with the responses indicating which family members usually shared meals (see Table 5).

Table 5.--Distribution of family members who eat together according to mothers' preferences

	Preference Response		
	Yes - Do (N = 28)	No - Do (N = 2)	Total (N = 30)
	No.	No.	No.
Morning			
All	2	--	2
All children	8	--	8
All children and mother	7	--	7
Mother and father	11	2	13
Mid-Day			
All	1	--	1
All children	13	--	13
All children and mother	6	--	6
Mother and father	8	--	8
Individually	--	2	2
Evening			
All	1	--	1
All children and mother	17	--	17
Mother and father	--	1	1
Individually	10	1	11

The observations that only two respondents reported sharing breakfast with all family members and that one respondent reported sharing the mid-day and evening meal with all family members indicated that mothers must have defined family-shared mealtime as a time when any of the family members were together, and not when the total family was assembled. Apparently the term "family-shared mealtime" was not explicit or was not repeated frequently enough to convey the meaning which was intended. Subsequent research also revealed this difficulty as other interviewers said they found it necessary to stress "all family members" or mothers tended to consider any grouping of family members as "the family."

The mothers classified in the "Yes-Do" category tended to share more meals with the children, while the ones in the "No-Do" category shared larger percentages of the meals with their spouses only. Because of the small number of cases in the latter group, it is possible only to say that future studies might find it useful to study the factor of husbands' preferences.

Responses to the amount of time shared immediately following the actual meal were also analyzed in the same manner. When the data of the "Yes-Do" respondents was compared with those of the "No-Do" respondents, it was found that for the morning and mid-day meals the majority spent less than five minutes together following eating, whereas the majority spent more than five minutes together after the evening meal. It was noted that all the periods of over thirty minutes of family-shared time following eating were reported by mothers in the "Yes-Do" category (see Table 6). Two of the "Yes-Do" respondents shared over thirty minutes of the breakfast post-meal period with their families, three shared over thirty minutes following lunch, and seven shared thirty minutes or more after the evening meal (see Table 6).

No differences were discernible between the "Yes-Do" and the "No-Do" respondents according to the amount of satisfaction received from assistance in pre-meal preparation (see Table 7).

Although the writer observed slight variations in preferences and wide variations in the amount of aid received during pre-meal preparation, the responses relating degree of satisfaction to the amount of aid received remained constant for the three meal periods.

Table 6.--Distribution of amount of reported time shared immediately after eating, according to mothers' preferences

	Preference Response		
	Yes - Do (N = 28)	No - Do (N = 2)	Total (N = 30)
Time Shared Immediately After Eating	No.	No.	No.
Morning			
0- 5 min.	19	1	20
5-15 min.	4	1	5
15-30 min.	3	--	3
over 30 min.	2	--	2
Mid-Day			
0- 5 min.	18	1	19
5-15 min.	4	--	4
15-30 min.	3	1	4
over 30 min.	3	--	3
Evening			
0- 5 min.	10	1	11
5-15 min.	7	--	7
15-30 min.	4	1	5
over 30 min.	7	--	7

Table 7.--Distribution of the response to the amount of satisfaction received from assistance in pre-meal preparation according to mothers' preferences

	Preference Response		
	Yes - Do (N = 28)	No - Do (N = 2)	Total (N = 30)
Degree of Satisfaction	No.	No.	No.
Pleased	20	1	21
Satisfied	7	1	8
Dissatisfied	1	--	1



The degree of satisfaction expressed may be related to the amount of aid received during pre-meal preparation, for the respondents who did not implement their preferences were pleased or satisfied, and these respondents also received aid with pre-meal preparation for all three meals (see Table 3).

The preferences apparently were unrelated to degree of satisfaction received from shared preparation time, since the two respondents who did not implement their preferences were pleased and satisfied, while the mother who was dissatisfied did implement her preference. Research locating factors which influence the degree of mothers' satisfaction in pre-meal preparation may be worthy of further study.

No questions which attempted to determine the degree of respondents' satisfaction with mealtime and post-meal routines were asked. The researcher feels that such questions might have been meaningful for the present study and suggests that future research deal with the respondents' satisfaction for all three time periods of family-shared mealtime.

#### Factors Relating to Preferences and Mealtime Routines

Although little variation in preferences was expressed by the mothers, some attempt was made to determine whether or not the routines were planned, or whether they were determined by other factors (see Table 8).

When reasons for present meal routines were considered, differences were apparent between the "Yes-Do" respondents and "No-Do" respondents. The reasons most frequently given by the "No-Do" respondents were "occupation" and "other activities of the family."

Among the "Yes-Do" respondents, the most frequently given reason for breakfast and mid-day meal routines was "occupation," while for the evening meal routines, the response, "planned," increased substantially.

"Occupation" remained about the same, and "children's activities" dropped in frequency of mention.

Table 8.--Distribution of reasons given for present mealtime routine according to mothers' preferences

Reasons for Mealtime Routines	Preference Response		
	Yes - Do (N = 28)	No - Do (N = 2)	Total (N = 30)
	No.	No.	No.
Morning			
Occupation	14	--	14
Children's activities	8	1	9
Planned	3	--	3
Just happened	7	1	8
Mid-Day			
Occupation	15	1	16
Children's activities	9	1	10
Planned	3	--	3
Just happened	6	--	6
Evening			
Occupation	10	--	10
Children's activities	2	2	4
Planned	11	--	11
Just happened	10	--	10

A large percentage of the "Yes-Do" respondents also reported that they shared other eating situations, while the "No-Do" respondents reported that they did not share between-meal eating, although they did eat meals together (see Table 9). These data suggested that outside factors, such as husbands' preferences, a lack of suitable eating facilities, or the convenience of preparation may have established a shared mealtime pattern for the "No-Do" respondents. Snack time may have been a time when family members could eat independently and at random.

Table 9.--Distribution of responses to shared morning and afternoon snack periods according to mothers' preferences

	Preference Response		
	Yes - Do (N = 28)	No - Do (N = 2)	Total (N = 30)
Shared Snacks	No.	No.	No.
Morning	18	--	18
Afternoon	26	--	26

Because the mothers' preferences for sharing mealtime may have been related to certain housing or non-housing factors, a question that attempted to determine which factors made family-shared mealtime difficult or not difficult was asked (see Table 10). Three responses were given by the respondents: "Activities of family members," "Interest of family members," and "Inadequate or adequate housing features and furnishings provided in the home for family-shared mealtime."

Particularly important for this study is the fact that nineteen of the "Yes-Do" respondents said "inadequate housing features and furnishings provided in the home for family-shared mealtime" made sharing mealtime difficult. Fifteen of the "Yes-Do" respondents also said "interest of family members" made family-shared mealtime difficult. The respondents indicated thirty-seven causes of difficulty in keeping family members together for family-shared mealtime, as opposed to twenty reasons why keeping family members together for family-shared mealtime was not difficult. These findings suggested that these mothers experienced some difficulty in keeping family members together during the full mealtime period. Both mothers

in the "No-Do" category indicated no difficulties were encountered in keeping family members together.

Table 10.--Distribution of responses to presence of difficulty in keeping family members together during mealtime, according to mothers' preferences

Degree and Cause of Difficulty	Preference Response		
	Yes - Do (N = 28)	No - Do (N = 2)	Total (N = 30)
	No.	No.	No.
Difficult			
Activities of family members	3	--	3
Interest of family members	15	--	15
Inadequate housing features and furnishings provided in the home for family-shared mealtime	19	--	19
Not Difficult			
Activities of family members	4	1	5
Interest of family members	5	1	6
Adequate housing features and furnishings provided in the home for family-shared mealtime	7	2	9

An attempt was made to determine whether or not the location of space provided for eating was associated with mothers' preferences. In this instance the two "No-Do" respondents said they ate in the family room and on a porch. The respondents who did prefer to eat together said they also ate in these spaces, but they mentioned the additional areas of the kitchen, breakfast bar, dining room and living room. The majority of all families ate all three meals in the kitchen. Since there were so many more cases in the "Yes-Do" category, no comparison of the number of different places mentioned for eating were made.

Housing Features and Furnishings Perceived to  
Aid or Impede Family-Shared Mealtime

When asked, "Which housing features are present in your home that you feel aid or impede the preparing, serving and clearing away of family meals?", five physical features were mentioned by the respondents. However, these five features were mentioned only 42 out of a possible 150 times (see Table II).

Table II.--Number of housing features perceived to aid or impede family-shared mealtime

	Shelves	Rugs	2-Way Cabinets	Furniture Arrangement	Dining Room	Total
Aids family- shared mealtime	8	3	1	12	3	27
Impedes family- shared mealtime	--	2	1	12	--	15

An attempt was made to determine whether or not data from the biographical information of the families were related to the evaluation of housing features. Age of the parents, age and sex of the children, and the number of years of marriage were compared with the mothers' perceptions. No distinct patterns were observed.

The respondents appeared to be more conscious of those features aiding family-shared mealtime than of those which impeded it. Furniture arrangement was the most frequently mentioned item, with the number of respondents perceiving their furniture arrangement as an aid equal to those perceiving it as an impediment. Since twenty-four of the thirty respondents

mentioned furniture arrangement, it was by far the most frequently perceived feature related to family-shared mealtime for the respondents of this sample.

When the respondents were asked, "Are there housing furnishings present in your home that make the preparing, serving and clearing away of family-shared mealtime easier or more difficult?", thirteen items were mentioned 53 out of a possible 190 times. After the responses were coded, the thirteen items were classified as mechanical, semi-mechanical and non-mechanical for clarity. Findings will be discussed in terms of these classifications (see Table 12).

Five of the thirteen housing furnishings mentioned were mechanical items, one was semi-mechanical, and seven were non-mechanical.

Features and furnishings perceived to interfere with family-shared mealtime totaled nineteen. The respondents' perceptions of which housing features and furnishings affected the preparing, serving and clearing away of family-shared meals were varied. Mothers perceived features as impediments to family-shared meals more often than they did furnishings. Although housing features were mentioned fewer times than furnishings items--forty-two as compared to fifty-three times--fifteen respondents reported difficulty with features, while only four respondents attributed difficulty to household furnishings.

Either mothers were less aware of features that impeded family-shared meals than they were of furnishings which impeded family-shared mealtime, or they had few furnishing items which did interfere with family-shared mealtime.

The outdoor grill was mentioned twenty times as an aid but was never mentioned as an impediment, making it the furnishing item with the largest number of total mentions. Because the interview schedules were

Table 12.--Distribution of housing furnishings perceived to aid or impede family-shared mealtime

Housing Furnishings		(N = 30 for each possible response)						
Mechanical:	Oven Timer	Electric Stove	Disposal	Dish- washer	Freezer			
Aids family- shared mealtime	5	1	2	4	1			
Impedes family- shared mealtime	--	1	2	--	--			
Semi-Mechanical:								
	Outdoor Grills							
Aids family- shared mealtime	20							
Impedes family- shared mealtime	--							
Non-Mechanical:								
	Chopping Block	Butt	Tea Cart	Dining Table	Trays	Dishes	Aluminum Sink	
Aids family- shared mealtime	4	4	1	1	1	4	1	
Impedes family- shared mealtime	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	
							Total	
							49	Aids family-shared mealtime
							4	Impedes family-shared mealtime
							<u>53</u>	

administered during mid-June, the investigator feels that a seasonal factor might have been responsible for the large number of respondents indicating the outdoor grill as an aid to family-shared mealtime.

Other items mentioned from two to five times were the oven timer, chopping block, buffet, disposal, dishwasher and dishes. These furnishings which were classified as mechanical, semi-mechanical and non-mechanical apparently included the items the children made use of in giving assistance in meal preparation.

In summary, the number of housing features perceived as related to shared family mealtimes was limited. Furniture arrangement emerged clearly as both an aid and impediment. Shelves were also mentioned as an aid. House furnishings mentions were varied, except for the outdoor grill, making interpretation somewhat difficult. The high number of mentions of the outdoor grill holds implications for studying the extent to which an informal activity and one that might contain cooperative effort fosters family-shared activity. The investigator observed that several respondents found the concept of housing features and furnishings aiding or impeding family activities to be a somewhat new perspective. It is conceivable that the question required a period of time for thinking in order to elicit the most complete responses the mothers were capable of giving.

A comprehensive listing of items mentioned as aids or impediments to the implementation of the stated preferences could not be made because of discrepancies in the frequency of shared mealtime data.

Perhaps the time period allowed for administration of the instrument was too short for the respondents to think and respond to a question of this unusual nature. The need for another method to determine which housing features and furnishings are related to family-shared mealtime might be indicated.



Relationship of Mothers' Preferences for Family-Shared  
Mealtime to Housing Features and Furnishings  
Perceived to Aid or Impede Family-  
Shared Mealtime

Although only two respondents reported deviant preferences for sharing family mealtime, the preferences were compared to the housing features and furnishings perceived to aid or impede family-shared mealtime in an attempt to note trends (see Table 13).

Table 13.--Distribution of housing features perceived to aid or impede family-shared mealtime, according to mothers' preferences

	Preference Response		
	Yes - Do (N = 28)	No - Do (N = 2)	Total (N = 30)
Housing Features Perceived to Aid or Impede	No.	No.	No.
Rugs			
Aid	3	--	3
Impede	2	--	2
2-Way Cabinets			
Aid	1	--	1
Impede	1	--	1
Furniture Arrangement			
Aid	11	1	12
Impede	11	1	12
Dining Room			
Aid	3	--	3
Impede	--	--	--
Shelves			
Aid	8	--	8
Impede	--	--	--

The attempt to identify differences in responses relating housing features to stated preferences proved almost fruitless because there was little

variation in preferences.

Mothers who preferred the family-shared mealtime activity perceived more features than those who did not. Mothers in the "Yes-Do" category perceived features as aids or impediments nearly one-half again as often as mothers in the "No-Do" category.

Mothers' preferences were also compared to the housing furnishings perceived to aid or impede family-shared mealtime (see Table 14). Slight patterning was discernible from these data. The average number of furnishings mentioned by the mothers classified as the "Yes-Do" respondents was 1.76 while the mothers classified as the "No-Do" respondents each gave two responses which were the outdoor grill and the disposal. The latter answers were also indicated as aids, therefore, no furnishing items were perceived as impediments by these mothers. Since both mothers classified in the "No-Do" category and eighteen of the mothers in the "Yes-Do" category mentioned the outdoor grill as an aid, there was considerable agreement on the perception of mothers toward this furnishing.

In contrast, both mothers in the "No-Do" category perceived the disposal as an aid while the same number in the "Yes-Do" category mentioned the disposal as an impediment. Mention has been made of these findings only to suggest interesting observations, but no conclusions can be derived from these data.

Although variations in preferences were slight for this sample, and few housing features and furnishings were perceived as aids or impediments to family-shared mealtime, the mere indication that mothers perceived some housing features and furnishings as aids or impediments to family-shared mealtime gave support for future research, seeking an objective base from which to study housing.

Table 14.--Distribution of housing furnishings perceived to aid or impede family-shared mealtime, according to mothers' preferences

	Preference Response		
	Yes - Do (N = 28)	No - Do (N = 2)	Total (N = 30)
Housing Furnishings Perceived to Aid or Impede Family- Shared Mealtime	No.	No.	No.
Outdoor Grill			
Aid	18	2	20
Impede	--	--	--
Oven Timer			
Aid	5	--	5
Impede	--	--	--
Chopping Block			
Aid	4	--	4
Impede	--	--	--
Electric Stove			
Aid	1	--	1
Impede	1	--	1
Disposal			
Aid	--	2	2
Impede	2	--	2
Dishwasher			
Aid	4	--	4
Impede	--	--	--
Aluminum Sink			
Aid	1	--	1
Impede	--	--	--
Tea Cart			
Aid	1	--	1
Impede	--	--	--
Dining Table			
Aid	1	--	1
Impede	1	--	1
Buffet			
Aid	4	--	4
Impede	--	--	--
Trays			
Aid	1	--	1
Impede	--	--	--
Dishes			
Aid	4	--	4
Impede	--	--	--
Freezer			
Aid	1	--	1
Impede	--	--	--

### Analysis of the Interview Schedule

Methods for developing an interview schedule as given by Goode and Hatt<sup>1</sup> were used in the construction of this interview schedule (see Appendices B and C, pp. 61 and 66). An unstructured interview schedule was developed in the belief that it gave the mothers the best opportunity to freely analyze their preferences and perceptions of housing features and furnishings according to which aided or impeded family-shared mealtime. The schedule contained seventy-two questions. Nineteen dealt with personal data on the families, twelve with the mothers' preferences, twenty-seven with present routines of mealtime, and fourteen with housing features and furnishings perceived to aid or impede family-shared mealtime.

The instrument could not be analyzed in the area which attempted to learn if a relationship between the mothers' preferences and their perception of housing features and furnishings as aids or impediments to family-shared mealtime existed. The variation in the expressed preferences was too small. This was, however, not an inherent weakness of the instrument.

Many ideas for a more refined future study were identified from the analysis of the data.

1. An analysis of responses indicated the need for a more precise preference measure. Wide variances were detected in the definition of family-shared mealtime indicating that perhaps the mothers' preferences did not include full family membership at mealtime.
2. Discrepancies in the reported frequency of family-shared mealtime and the enumeration of which family members usually shared

---

<sup>1</sup>Goode and Hatt, op. cit.

mealtime suggested the need to classify the frequency of family-shared mealtimes.

3. Responses relating the mothers' perceptions of housing features and furnishings which aided or were said to impede family-shared mealtime indicated that the mothers found the questions difficult to answer at least in the allotted amount of time. This finding suggested that another means for determining which housing features and furnishings aided or acted to impede family-shared mealtime be attempted or that a period of deliberation be incorporated in the research.
4. Because this interview schedule solicited only a listing of housing features and furnishings perceived to aid or impede family-shared mealtime, it was impossible to ascertain why some items were mentioned as both aids and impediments. For this reason, an adequacy rating of housing features and furnishings might prove helpful in future research.

### Summary

The responses of a group of randomly selected mothers living in the Lansing, Michigan area has been reported. The respondents were mothers of at least one pre-school child and wives of professional workers. Questioning was designed to determine (1) the mothers' preferences for family-shared mealtime, (2) housing features and furnishings perceived as related to family-shared mealtime, and (3) housing features and furnishings which were perceived by the respondents as aids or impediments to family-shared mealtime.

Analysis of the instrument indicated three possibilities: (1) there were few, if any, housing features and furnishings in these homes of professionally

employed fathers that made family-shared mealtime highly difficult, or (2) the mothers' perceptions of the relation of housing features and furnishings to family-shared mealtimes is not readily comprehended. The third possibility is that a more structured schedule and one in which the interviewer judges the housing features and furnishings might reveal patterns which could then be interpreted with confidence.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Origin and Importance of the Study

The changing role and functions of the family system indicate changing living patterns. Advances in communication, transportation, and mass production are a few of the modern technological changes effecting family living patterns. Social changes evident today include increased education, money, and leisure time for the masses of people, while changes characterizing differences in the physical form of the family include rise in birth rate, decline in death rate, lower median age for beginning stages of the family life cycle, and a reduction in the average number of siblings per family. In spite of technological, social and physical changes, all of which appear to change family living patterns, current housing forms are basically much the same as they were fifty years ago.

Research indicating the effect of man's living environment on his social behavior is minimal. Therefore, consumers and builders made decisions without even the opportunity to know how to construct housing in the human dimension.

This study was undertaken in an attempt to learn more about the relation of physical housing to the implementation of family functions. The relationship of family solidarity to family interaction, and family interaction to family-shared activities, formed the research base for choosing to investigate the mealtime period.

### Restatement of Problem

The major purposes of this pilot study were to answer the following questions for the selected population of mothers: (1) What were their preferences concerning family-shared mealtime? (2) What housing features and furnishings were perceived as being related to family-shared mealtime? and (3) What housing features and furnishings appeared to be associated with their preferences regarding family-shared mealtime?

### Summary of the Findings

Thirty mothers were randomly selected to be interviewed for this study. They were from a population of eighty mothers with children attending the Michigan State University Laboratory Preschool. All of the respondents lived in suburbs of Lansing, Michigan. The sample of thirty mothers had a mean number of 2.6 children in an age range from five to ten years. The age range of respondents was from twenty-one to over fifty, with 93 percent falling in the range of thirty-one to fifty years.

All thirty spouses of the respondents were professionally employed; two of the respondents were also professionally employed; and the remaining twenty-eight respondents did not work outside of the home. The respondents had a mean of 16.7 years of schooling and the spouses had a mean of 19.6 years of schooling as compared to 10.8 for the state of Michigan. The occupational status of the spouses, the number of years spent in educational endeavors by the respondents and spouses, and the number of working mothers within the sample indicated considerable homogeneity in the group.

Twenty-eight out of thirty mothers stated preferences for sharing family mealtime and said that they frequently shared mealtime. These



respondents were referred to as the "Yes-Do" respondents. The remaining two respondents reported that they did not prefer to share mealtime even though their families did share mealtime. The latter respondents were referred to as the "No-Do" respondents.

The number of respondents who indicated that their families did share mealtime supported the findings of Snow<sup>1</sup> and Thorpe.<sup>2</sup> These studies, though both are over ten years old, revealed that the samples studied spent more time together while eating than they did during any other family activity. Although determining patterns of shared time was not the primary objective of the present study, the findings indicated that family-shared mealtime was held as a value by most of the mothers.

The small number of cases in the "No-Do" category made it impossible to draw conclusions but trends were noted. In observing the demographic data according to preference of mothers for family-shared mealtime, only one factor differentiated between the two categories. Mothers classified as the "No-Do" respondents had both been married under ten years while slightly more than half of the "Yes-Do" respondents had been married over ten years.

The amount of time shared in pre-meal preparation appeared to have been related to the degree of the mothers' satisfaction for their pre-meal routines. The "No-Do" respondents were "pleased" and "satisfied" with their pre-meal routines and these same respondents also received assistance during the pre-meal preparation for all three meals. The "Yes-Do" respondents reported varying degrees of satisfaction with pre-meal preparation, ranging from "pleased" to "dissatisfied." Notable here is the observation that these respondents did not receive as much assistance with pre-meal preparation time

---

<sup>1</sup> Snow, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Thorpe, op. cit.

as the "No-Do" respondents, indicating that perhaps the "Yes-Do" respondents were not as pleased with pre-meal routines because they did not share preparation time.

Inconsistencies were observed between the reported frequency of family-shared mealtime and the number of family members who usually shared mealtime. All thirty respondents reported that their families usually shared mealtime. However, only two respondents reported that all of their family members usually ate breakfast together; only one respondent reported that all her family members usually ate the mid-day meal together and only one respondent reported that all of her family members usually ate the evening meal together, which means there were only four cases reported where the family ate at least one meal per day together. The only satisfactory explanation for these differences appears to be that mothers interpreted family-shared mealtime as a time when any number of the family members ate together. Although mothers thought family-shared mealtime was important, no evidence can be cited from this investigation to support the studies of Snow<sup>1</sup> and Thorpe<sup>2</sup> that mealtime continues to be the most frequently shared family activity.

Evidence that there were inconsistencies between the reported frequency of family-shared mealtime and the number of mealtime periods actually shared was supported further when the mothers reported the length of time shared immediately following mealtime. The majority of respondents said their families shared less than five minutes following two mealtime periods and more than five minutes following the evening meal.

Although all thirty respondents reported that their families frequently

---

<sup>1</sup>Snow, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Thorpe, op. cit.

shared mealtime, the amount of time shared by the total family during the pre-meal preparation, the actual eating time, and the post meal period did not appear to support that general response.

Additional factors which may have influenced the shared mealtime routines of these families were considered. "Occupation" and "childrens' activities" were mentioned most often as responsible for establishing the routines of the morning and mid-day meals. While there was a substantial increase in the number of respondents who said they "planned" their routines for the evening meal, an almost equal number attributed their routine to "occupation" or to "just happened."

When mothers were asked whether snacks were eaten together or individually, the "Yes-Do" respondents indicated sharing non-scheduled eating times, as between meal snacks, but again the question was answered without consideration of the total family because it was apparent the fathers were not at home. The "No-Do" respondents said snacks were not shared, which must mean members ate individually in the unscheduled eating times. This interview schedule did not attempt to establish why this practice existed but the finding would suggest that the absence of the father may account for the reason the "No-Do" respondents engaged in a practice contrary to their preference.

The amount of education in home economics as related to family-shared mealtime is a factor which should be studied further. Since all respondents had received education in home economics, and since all respondents said they did share some mealtimes and bearing in mind that twenty-eight mothers said it was important, this type of instruction may influence the mealtime activity.

Difficulties were most often attributed to "interests of family

members" and "inadequate housing features and furnishings provided in the home for family-shared mealtime." Thus housing features and furnishings were perceived by these mothers as related to family-shared mealtime and were mentioned more than twice as often as a cause of difficulty when compared to the number of "not difficult" mentions.

No conclusions could be drawn from the data relating mothers' preferences to the place where meals were eaten. The majority of meals were reported by most mothers to be served in the kitchen.

The feature perceived by the sample of mothers to aid or impede family-shared mealtime most often was furniture arrangement, with an equal number perceiving their furniture arrangement as an aid and as an impediment. In addition to furniture arrangement, four other features were perceived as related to the family mealtime activity. They were: shelves, rugs, two-way cabinets, and dining room.

The outdoor grill was the most frequently mentioned house furnishing item perceived by the respondents to be related to family-shared mealtime. Twelve other furnishings were mentioned by the respondents, but not frequently enough to consider there was any consensus.

Because nineteen mothers indicated they encountered difficulties due to inadequate housing features and furnishings, a greater amount of agreement in the mentions of housing features and furnishings was anticipated. Findings suggested four possible reasons for the lack of clarity in the housing features and furnishings perceived to aid or impede family-shared mealtime: (1) respondents were limited in their awareness of specific housing features and furnishings which aided or acted to impede family-shared mealtime; (2) the definition of family-shared mealtime as a time when the total family is together--before, during, and after the mealtime--was not clearly understood; (3) the families had different housing features or furnishings or different unidentified

circumstances which made the interpretation of a housing aid or impediment seem to vary widely in a small sample; (4) furniture arrangement, which was the one feature mentioned with consistency as a housing aid and impediment, is a broad category and, as such, probably obscured considerable variation in interpretation.

The attempt to determine which housing features and furnishings appeared to be associated with mothers' preferences was not successful. The lack of deviation in the preference responses made comparison of these responses of little value.

Hopefully more precise questions can be built employing the findings of this study as a guide to a clearer understanding of the relationship of man's physical housing to the implementation of family activities.

### Conclusions

Family-shared mealtime was considered important by most of the mothers in this study. Housing features and furnishings perceived to aid or impede family-shared mealtime were generally inconclusive because of the limited agreement on items mentioned, with two exceptions. Furniture arrangement and the outdoor grill were mentioned frequently enough to say these housing features and furnishings were perceived by mothers to aid or impede family-shared mealtime. There was, however, no single, consistently mentioned feature or item of furniture perceived as interfering with or contributing greatly to the family mealtime activity.

A relationship between mothers' preferences for family-shared mealtime and their perception of housing features and furnishings that aided or impeded family-shared mealtime was not established because twenty-eight of the thirty respondents said they believed family-shared mealtime was important

and that they did share this activity frequently. No comparison could be made with any degree of confidence from the two cases who said they did not believe family-shared mealtime important even though they did share mealtime periods.

There was, however, some gain in information as the result of this study. Mothers did express awareness of difficulties in family-shared mealtime due to inadequacies of their housing features and furnishings. The problem lies in identifying the housing variables to which the respondent referred, that may or may not have been suggested here.

#### Recommendations for Further Study

This pilot study was designed in an attempt to (1) locate existing research relating housing to family and individual development, (2) develop methodology for relating housing to family and individual development, and (3) identify those housing features and furnishings which were perceived by respondents of the sample as aiding or impeding family-shared mealtime.

Because the study was made without the benefit of many needed research guides, (1) difficulties occurred which did not appear or were not recognized in the pre-test, and (2) because of limitations in time, the interviews could not be extended to insure that the responses were complete or to learn upon what basis they were given.

It is, therefore, hoped that further research will obtain helpful guidance from the results of this study and the following suggestions:

1. Because of the diversity in responses to the housing features and furnishings section of the research, the amount of confidence which can be placed in the responses is limited. The author, therefore, recommends that a more structured means be attempted whereby the adequacy of features

and furnishings be assessed and related to the frequency of family-shared mealtimes. Such a study would not suggest to mothers that furniture items and features aid or impede family-shared time, or depend entirely on recall for responses.

2. This study was concerned with three time divisions of the family meal: the pre-meal routines, the during-meal routines, and the post-meal routines. With limited time, money, and established methodology, this study attempted to isolate the housing features and furnishings perceived to aid or impede all three time divisions of the family-shared meals. The author suggests, therefore, that an in-depth investigation into each of the time divisions of family-shared mealtime would provide more useful information.

3. A study of a predetermined number of families where the respondents' values or preferences for an activity are known to be different could serve as a basis for a comparison of housing features and furnishings and insure useable numbers for purposes of analysis.

4. This study was concerned with one activity, referred to as the mealtime activity. A possible relationship exists between housing features and furnishings and other activities in the home. The author, therefore, suggests that studies dealing with other activities in the home would provide information useful in determining a basis for the selection of other features and furnishings in the home.

5. Activities or routines within the home vary from one stage in the life cycle to another, and from one socio-economic level to another. The relationship between housing features and furnishings for one population may not hold true for another. The author, therefore, recommends that studies be conducted using respondents from several socio-economic levels and stages in the family life cycle, as well as studies of urban and rural samples.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Books

- Agan, Tesse, and Luchsinger, Elaine. The House: Its Principles, Resources and Dynamics. New York: J. B. Lippincott, Co., 1965.
- Bell, Norman W., and Vogel, Ezra F. A Modern Introduction to the Family. Glencoe: The Free Press, 1960.
- Bendix, Reinhard, and Lipet, Seymour. Class Status and Power. Glencoe: The Free Press, 1960.
- Beyer, Glenn H. Housing and Society. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965.
- Broom, Leonard, and Seltniz, Philip. Sociology. Evanston, Ill: Row Peterson & Co., 1958.
- Burgess, Ernest W., and Looke, Harvey J. The Family: From Institution to Companionship. New York: American Book, 1953.
- Campbell, Catherine McLean. "An Evaluation Study of the Dining Area in Thirty Families." Unpublished Master's thesis, Woman's College of the University of North Carolina, 1950.
- Cousins, Albert N. "The Failure of Solidarity," in A Modern Introduction to the Family, ed. Bell and Vogel. Glencoe, Ill: The Free Press, 1960.
- Duvall, Evelyn Millis. Family Development. New York: J. B. Lippincott, Co., 1962.
- Earle, John R. "Marital Conflict and Family Unity," Summary I. Unpublished Ph. D. thesis, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1963.
- Goode, William J., and Hatt, Paul K. Methods in Social Research. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952.
- Hall, D. M. Dynamics of Group Action. Danville, Ill: Interstate, Inc., 1960.
- Homans, George C. The Human Group. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1950.
- Kahl, Joseph A. The American Class Structure. New York: Rinehart and Co., 1960.

- Kelly, Burnham, and Associates. Design and the Production of Houses. New York: McGraw-Hill Co., 1959.
- Moore, Barrington. "Thoughts on the Future of the Family," in Identity and Anxiety, ed. Arthur J. Vidich and David M. White. Glencoe, Ill: The Free Press, 1960.
- Rose, Arnold M. Human Behavior and Social Processes - An Interactionist Approach. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1964.
- Secord, Paul F., and Backman, Clark W. Social Psychology. New York: McGraw-Hill Publishers, 1964.
- Skinner, B. F. Walden Two. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1949.
- Snow, Carolyn B. "A Study in the Development of a Technique for Determining the Amount and Types of Activities Which Families Share." Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Georgia, 1950.
- Tate, Mildred T., and Glisson, Oris. Family Clothing. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1963.
- Thorpe, Alice C. "Patterns of Family Interaction Within the Home." Unpublished Ph. D. thesis, Michigan State University, 1956.
- Wilner, Daniel M., et. al. The Housing Environment and Family Life. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1962.
- \_\_\_\_\_, and Walkley, Rosabelle P. "Effects of Housing on Health and Performance," in The Urban Condition, ed. Leonard J. Duhi. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1963.
- Winch, Robert F. The Modern Family. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963.

#### Periodicals

- Bales, Robert F. "Interaction Process Analysis," American Sociological Review, Vol. 15 (1950), 146.
- Bossard, James H. S. "Family Modes of Expression," American Sociological Review (April, 1945), 226-236.
- Chappel, Eliot D. "Measuring Human Relationships: An Introduction to the Study of the Interaction of Individuals," Genetic Psychology Monographs, Vol. 22 (1940), 1-100.
- Hobart, Charles. "Commitment, Value Conflict and the Future of the American Family," Marriage and Family Living, Vol. XXV, No. 4 (1963), 405-406.
- Reimer, Svend. "Architecture for Family Living," American Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 11 (1951), 140-151.

Scott, Frances G. "Family Group Structure and Patterns of Social Interaction," American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 68 (July, 1962-May, 1963), 214-228.

### Bulletins

Beers, Howard W. "Measurements of Family Relationships in Farm Families of Central New York," Memoir 183 (Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station: Ithaca, New York, 1935).

Schorr, Alvin L. Slums and Social Insecurity. U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare Research Bulletin No. 1 Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1963.

Thurrow, Mildred B. A Study of Selected Factors in Family Life as Described in Autobiographies. Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station, Memoir 171, 1935.

---

. Northeastern Regional Research Publication, "Household Activity and Space Need Related to Design." Rhode Island Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 315, April, 1963.

### Other Sources

Fisher, Ernest M. "The Role of the University in Housing Research." An address of the Conference of the Housing Committee of the Social Science Research Council held at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan; January 27 through January 29, 1949.

APPENDIX A  
PRECEDING LETTER

June 10, 1966

The College of Home Economics is conducting a research project in Housing designed to learn more about how families today perform the routines of eating. We know very little about furnishings, equipment and space arrangements that are being used for eating. We feel that a knowledge of arrangements made by families for meals will help us define housing needs.

Because we wanted to talk with mothers of young children, your name was selected for a thirty minute interview. Within the next few days you will be contacted by telephone to ask if you would be willing to cooperate and to make arrangements for the interview.

Yours truly,

Jacquelyn Williams, Graduate Student

Gertrude Nygren, Professor

APPENDIX B  
PRETEST SCHEDULE

## PRETEST OF INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. What is your age? What is your husband's age?

	Under 20	
	21 - 30	
	31 - 40	
	41 - 50	
	Over 50	

2. What are the sexes and ages of your children?

	Sex	Age
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		

3. Is there another person living in your home? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (If yes) Please give the sex and age of this/these persons.

1.		
2.		
3.		

4. At the present time are you married? \_\_\_\_\_ Widowed? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Divorced? \_\_\_\_\_ Separated? \_\_\_\_\_ Other? \_\_\_\_\_

5. How many years have you been married? \_\_\_\_\_

6. What is your husband's job or occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Does this prevent his return home for any meals? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (If yes) Which meals? \_\_\_\_\_

8. How far does he travel to work? \_\_\_\_\_

9. What is your job or occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Does this work occupy time on weekends? \_\_\_\_\_

11. How far do you travel to work? \_\_\_\_\_

12. Does this prevent your return home for any meals? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (If yes) Which meals? \_\_\_\_\_

13. What was the last year you finished in school? \_\_\_\_\_

14. What was the last year finished in school by your husband? \_\_\_\_\_

15. Do you feel that it is important for family members to share meals? \_\_\_\_\_
16. Does your family regularly share meal time? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (If mothers report no meals include total family membership) Is there another time when the family does share time? \_\_\_\_\_
17. Did someone prepare breakfast this morning? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (If yes) Who prepared breakfast this morning? \_\_\_\_\_
18. Who generally prepares breakfast for the following mornings?
- |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| Winter         | Summer         |
| Weekdays _____ | Weekdays _____ |
| Weekends _____ | Weekends _____ |
19. How much assistance does this procedure involve? \_\_\_\_\_
20. How pleased or satisfied are you with this arrangement? \_\_\_\_\_
21. Are there things you'd like to change? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (If yes) Which things? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
22. Where was breakfast eaten? \_\_\_\_\_
23. How many family members ate together? \_\_\_\_\_
24. Which family members ate together? \_\_\_\_\_
25. (If people did eat together) How long after the meal did the family members remain together? \_\_\_\_\_
26. In your judgement why has the breakfast routine evolved in this manner?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
27. Is this the usual practice for most weekdays?      Winter      Summer
- |           |       |
|-----------|-------|
| Yes       | _____ |
| No        | _____ |
| weekends? | _____ |
| Yes       | _____ |
| No        | _____ |
28. Did someone prepare the noon meal today? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (If yes) Who prepared the noon meal? \_\_\_\_\_
29. Who generally prepared the noon meal for the following days?
- |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| Winter         | Summer         |
| Weekdays _____ | Weekdays _____ |
| Weekends _____ | Weekends _____ |



30. How much assistance does this procedure involve? \_\_\_\_\_
31. How pleased or satisfied are you with this arrangement? \_\_\_\_\_
32. Are there things you'd like to change? \_\_\_\_\_  
(If yes) Which things? \_\_\_\_\_
33. Where was the noon meal eaten? \_\_\_\_\_
34. How many family members ate together? \_\_\_\_\_
35. Which family members ate together? \_\_\_\_\_
36. (If people did eat together) How long after the meal did the family members remain together? \_\_\_\_\_
37. In your judgement why has the noon meal routine evolved in this manner? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
38. Is this the usual practice for most weekdays?      Winter      Yes      No  
Weekdays \_\_\_\_\_  
Weekends \_\_\_\_\_  
Summer  
Weekdays \_\_\_\_\_
39. Did someone prepare the evening meal yesterday? \_\_\_\_\_  
(If yes) Who prepared the evening meal yesterday? \_\_\_\_\_
40. Who generally prepares the evening meal for the following days?  
Winter      Summer  
Weekdays \_\_\_\_\_ Weekdays \_\_\_\_\_  
Weekends \_\_\_\_\_ Weekends \_\_\_\_\_
41. How much assistance does this procedure involve? \_\_\_\_\_
42. How pleased or satisfied are you with this arrangement? \_\_\_\_\_
43. Are there things you'd like to change? \_\_\_\_\_  
(If yes) Which things? \_\_\_\_\_
44. Where was the evening meal eaten? \_\_\_\_\_
45. How many family members ate together? \_\_\_\_\_
46. Which family members ate together? \_\_\_\_\_
47. (If people did eat together) How long after the meal did the family members remain together? \_\_\_\_\_
48. In your judgement why has the breakfast routine evolved in this manner? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

50. Is this the usual practice for most weekends?                      Winter      Summer

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

51. Do you find it difficult to get all of the family members to the table for meal time?\_\_\_\_\_

53. Do you find it difficult to keep all of the family members at the table during meal time? \_\_\_\_\_

55. Can you think of some physical accomodations that you have that help to get and keep family members at the table for meals? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

Does this arrangement of the two areas tend to keep family members away from the table for meals? (If yes) In what way?

APPENDIX C  
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The Physical Accommodations that Are Perceived by a Sample of Mothers to Influence the Amount and Nature of Family-Shared Meal Time.

Department of Textiles, Clothing and Related Arts  
Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan

This research is designed to determine how families perform the routines of eating. We know very little about what furnishings, equipments and space arrangements have been used to successfully accommodate eating in the past. We feel that a knowledge of arrangements made by families for eating will give us an understanding of present spatial requirements which might help in our attempt to define future housing needs.

1. What are the names, ages and sexes of all of your children?

	Name	Sex	Age
1.	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____

2. Are there additional people living in your home? \_\_\_\_\_  
(If yes) Please give the sex, age, and relation (if any) of this person/persons.

	Relation	Sex	Age
1.	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____

3. Do you feel that it is important for family members to share meals? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Does your family regularly share meal time? \_\_\_\_\_  
(If mothers report no meals, include total family membership)  
Is there another time when the family does share time? \_\_\_\_\_

The following questions refer to this morning.

5. Did someone prepare food this morning? \_\_\_\_\_  
(If yes) Who prepared food this morning? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Who generally prepares food for the following mornings?

	Winter	Summer
Weekdays	_____	_____
Weekends	_____	_____

7. How much help does this procedure require? \_\_\_\_\_

8. How pleased or satisfied are you with this arrangement?  
 Very pleased \_\_\_\_\_  
 Relatively pleased \_\_\_\_\_  
 Satisfied \_\_\_\_\_  
 Relatively dissatisfied \_\_\_\_\_  
 Very dissatisfied \_\_\_\_\_
9. Are there things you'd like to change? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (If yes) Which things? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Where was the food eaten? \_\_\_\_\_
11. How many family members ate together? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Which family members ate together? \_\_\_\_\_
13. (If people did eat together) How long after the meal did the family members remain together? \_\_\_\_\_
14. Is this the usual pattern for most weekdays? winter \_\_\_\_\_ summer \_\_\_\_\_  
 weekends? winter \_\_\_\_\_ summer \_\_\_\_\_
15. In your judgement why has this routine(s) evolved in this manner?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
16. Do you snack or have refreshments with any family members before the mid-day food? \_\_\_\_\_ Which family members? \_\_\_\_\_

The following questions refer to the mid-day food.

17. Did someone prepare the noon food? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (If yes) Who prepared the food? \_\_\_\_\_
18. Who generally prepares the food at mid-day?  
                                     Winter                                      Summer  
 Weekdays \_\_\_\_\_  
 Weekends \_\_\_\_\_
19. How much assistance does this procedure involve? \_\_\_\_\_
20. How pleased or satisfied are you with this arrangement?  
 Very pleased \_\_\_\_\_  
 Relatively pleased \_\_\_\_\_  
 Satisfied \_\_\_\_\_  
 Relatively dissatisfied \_\_\_\_\_  
 Very dissatisfied \_\_\_\_\_
21. Are there things you'd like to change? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (If yes) Which things? \_\_\_\_\_
22. Where was the food eaten? \_\_\_\_\_

23. How many family members ate together? \_\_\_\_\_
24. Which family members ate together? \_\_\_\_\_
25. (If people did eat together) How long after the meal did the family members remain together? \_\_\_\_\_
26. Is this the usual pattern for most weekdays? winter \_\_\_\_\_ summer \_\_\_\_\_  
weekends? winter \_\_\_\_\_ summer \_\_\_\_\_
27. (If this is not the usual pattern) What is the usual pattern for weekdays?  
Winter \_\_\_\_\_  
Summer \_\_\_\_\_  
for weekends? Winter \_\_\_\_\_  
Summer \_\_\_\_\_
28. In your judgement why has this routine evolved in this manner?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
29. Do you snack or have refreshments with any family members before the evening food? \_\_\_\_\_ Which members? \_\_\_\_\_

The following questions refer to last evening.

30. Did someone prepare food last evening? \_\_\_\_\_  
(If yes) Who prepared the food? \_\_\_\_\_
31. Who generally prepares the food in the evening?  
Winter \_\_\_\_\_ Summer \_\_\_\_\_  
Weekdays \_\_\_\_\_  
Weekends \_\_\_\_\_
32. How much assistance does this procedure involve? \_\_\_\_\_
33. How pleased or satisfied are you with this arrangement?  
Very pleased \_\_\_\_\_  
Relatively pleased \_\_\_\_\_  
Satisfied \_\_\_\_\_  
Relatively dissatisfied \_\_\_\_\_  
Very dissatisfied \_\_\_\_\_
34. Are there things you'd like to change? \_\_\_\_\_  
(If yes) Which things? \_\_\_\_\_
35. Where was the food eaten? \_\_\_\_\_
36. How many family members ate together? \_\_\_\_\_
37. Which family members ate together? \_\_\_\_\_
38. (If people did eat together) How long after the meal did the family members remain together? \_\_\_\_\_

39. Is this the usual pattern for most weekdays? winter \_\_\_\_\_ summer \_\_\_\_\_  
weekends? winter \_\_\_\_\_ summer \_\_\_\_\_

40. (If this is not the usual pattern) What is the usual pattern for weekdays?

Winter \_\_\_\_\_

Summer \_\_\_\_\_

Weekends? Winter? \_\_\_\_\_

Summer \_\_\_\_\_

41. In your judgement why has this routine(s) evolved in this manner?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

42. Do you think that the consumer market offers the kind of furnishings or household equipment needed to accommodate shared family meals? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

43. Do you find it difficult to get all of the family members together for meal time? \_\_\_\_\_

44. Why is this difficult/not difficult? \_\_\_\_\_

45. Do you find it difficult to keep all of the family members together for the meal time activity? \_\_\_\_\_

46. Why is this difficult/not difficult? \_\_\_\_\_

47. Can you think of interferences that usually occur during family meals? \_\_\_\_\_

(If yes) What are these interferences? \_\_\_\_\_

48. What furnishings and equipment are present in your home for making the preparations, serving and clearing away of family meals easier or more pleasant?

Rugs	Buffet	_____	_____
Tea Cart	Trays	_____	_____
Dining Table	Dishes	_____	_____
Chairs	Grills	_____	_____
Shelves	Coffee Maker	_____	_____

49. What furnishings and equipment are present in your home that makes the preparation, serving and clearing away of family meals difficult or less pleasant?

Rugs	Trays	_____	_____
Tea Cart	Dishes	_____	_____
Dining Table	Coffee Maker	_____	_____
Chairs	Grills	_____	_____
Shelves	Buffet	_____	_____

50. Can you think of any physical accommodations (furnishings, equipment, etc.) that you do not have but think could aid in the preparing, serving and clearing away of family meals?

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

51. Is there any specific reason that your dining area is arranged as it is?

(If yes) What is this reason? \_\_\_\_\_

52. Does this arrangement tend to help bring and keep family members at the table for meals? \_\_\_\_\_ Why does this arrangement help/not help bring and keep family members at the table for meals? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

53. Does this arrangement tend to keep family members away from the table for meals? \_\_\_\_\_ In what way? \_\_\_\_\_

54. Is there any specific reason that your preparing area is arranged as it is?

(If yes) What is this reason? \_\_\_\_\_

55. Does this arrangement have any effect upon the amount of time spent together by family, before, during and after the meal time? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

56. At the present time are you married? \_\_\_\_\_ Widowed? \_\_\_\_\_ Divorced? \_\_\_\_\_ Separated? \_\_\_\_\_ Other? \_\_\_\_\_

57. How many years have you been married? \_\_\_\_\_ Widowed? \_\_\_\_\_ Divorced? \_\_\_\_\_ Separated? \_\_\_\_\_

58. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_ What is your husband's age? \_\_\_\_\_

_____	Under 20	_____
_____	21 - 30	_____
_____	31 - 40	_____
_____	41 - 50	_____
_____	Over 50	_____

59. What is your husband's job or occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

60. Does this prevent his return home for any meals? \_\_\_\_\_  
(If yes) Which meals? \_\_\_\_\_

61. How far does he travel to work? \_\_\_\_\_

62. Does his work occupy time on weekends? \_\_\_\_\_



63. What is your job or occupation? \_\_\_\_\_
64. Does this prevent your return home for any meals? \_\_\_\_\_  
(If yes) Which meals? \_\_\_\_\_
65. How far do you travel to work? \_\_\_\_\_
66. Does your work occupy time on weekends? \_\_\_\_\_
67. Are you a high school graduate? \_\_\_\_\_
68. Are you a college graduate? \_\_\_\_\_ Other degrees above the bachelor's? \_\_\_\_\_
69. Is your husband a high school graduate? \_\_\_\_\_
70. Is your husband a college graduate? \_\_\_\_\_ Other degrees above the bachelor's? \_\_\_\_\_
71. Approximately how many meals per week does your family eat away from home? \_\_\_\_\_  
Per month? \_\_\_\_\_
72. How many years of formal education in Home Economics have you had? \_\_\_\_\_

Additional responses \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX D  
ACKNOWLEDGMENT LETTER

July 6, 1966

This letter is sent to acknowledge our appreciation to you for your cooperation in the housing research project.

We found that the responses received were very helpful for this project and many of them indicated directions for future research.

It is hoped that this letter will not be the only expression of appreciation that you will receive, but rather that you and your family, as well as consumers in general, will benefit from the findings through the availability of more satisfactory home design, furnishings and equipment in the future.

Yours truly,

Jacquelyn Williams, Graduate Student

Gertrude Nygren, Professor of  
Related Arts

MICHIGAN STATE UNIV. LIBRARIES



31293101387235