



## **Gender and Food: From Production to Consumption and After**

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### **Article information:**

**To cite this document:** Stacy J. Williams . "Subversive Cooking in Liberal Feminism, 1963–1985" *In* Gender and Food: From Production to Consumption and After.

Published online: 25 Aug 2016; 265-286.

Permanent link to this document:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/S1529-21262016000022022>

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# SUBVERSIVE COOKING IN LIBERAL FEMINISM, 1963–1985

Stacy J. Williams

## ABSTRACT

*Purpose – This study examines liberal second-wave feminists' writings about cooking. Most scholarship of liberal feminism has focused on the attempts to integrate women into previously male-dominated public spaces such as higher education, the professions, and political office. Less attention has been paid to how these feminists politicized feminized spaces such as the home. A longstanding tension between the housewife role and feminist identities has led many to theorize that feminists avoid or resent domestic tasks. However, I argue that some liberal feminists in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s suggested engaging with cooking in subversive ways that challenged patriarchal institutions and supported their political goals.*

*Methodology/approach – I analyze 148 articles about cooking in Ms. magazine between 1972 and 1985. I also analyze the copy and recipes within four community cookbooks published by liberal feminist organizations.*

*Findings – I find that liberal feminists suggested utilizing time- and labor-saving cooking methods, encouraged men to cook, and proposed*

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**Gender and Food: From Production to Consumption and After**  
**Advances in Gender Research, Volume 22, 265–286**  
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ISSN: 1529-2126/doi:10.1108/S1529-212620160000022022

*that women make money from cooking. These three techniques challenged the traditional division of domestic labor, supported women's involvement in the paid workplace, and increased women's control of economic resources.*

*Originality/value – This study turns the opposition between feminism and feminized tasks on its head, showing that rather than avoiding cooking, some liberal feminists proposed ways of cooking that challenged patriarchal institutions. I show how subordinate populations can develop ways of subversively engaging with tasks that are typically seen as oppressive, using them in an attempt to advance their social position.*

**Keywords:** Feminism; gender; cooking; food; cookbooks; feminist methodologies

Liberal feminists of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s generally viewed women's lack of economic resources as the root of gender inequality (Rosen, 2000). Liberal feminists are best known for their attempts to advance women into previously male-dominated spaces such as higher education, the paid workforce, and government (Friedan, 1963; Whelehan, 1995). Less attention has been paid to how these feminists have politicized feminized spaces within the home. The few scholars who examine this issue usually conclude that feminists avoid or minimize the domestic work that has traditionally fallen to women (Brunsdon, 2006; Giles, 2004; Hollows, 2007).

This study examines how liberal second-wave feminists wrote about cooking, one of the central actions in the home that was (and continues to be) culturally defined as women's work (Charles & Kerr, 1988). Cooking within the home invokes widespread cultural beliefs about femininity and caring (DeVault, 1991). Feminist identities have long been defined in opposition to the housewife role (Brunsdon, 2006; Giles, 2004; Hollows, 2007; Johnson & Lloyd, 2004). These past studies would predict that feminists avoided the topic of cooking, discussed it with hostility, or used it in protests or art to symbolize the traditional housewife role that feminists rejected (Forster, 2010; Friedan, 1976; Rosen, 2000). These predictions describe how some feminists approached cooking. However, my analysis of liberal feminist cookbooks and magazine articles about cooking also reveals a different phenomenon. I find that some liberal feminists discussed *engaging with* the home kitchen. These feminists proposed cooking in ways

that disrupted patterns of action and cultural beliefs that had contributed to women's oppression. They suggested ways of cooking that they thought would help women accumulate money and economic power, which would in turn bring about a more gender-equal world.

Below, I summarize the ideas and goals of liberal feminism, and I explain how previous scholars have discussed the relationship between feminism and domestic tasks. Subsequently, I introduce the social mechanism that I discover in feminist writings about cooking. I argue that these activists discussed engaging subversively in an action that had previously contributed to women's oppression. They did so by suggesting new courses of culinary action that could dismantle what they saw as cooking's most exploitative elements. This helps us understand the dynamics of gendered power struggles. This mechanism also demonstrates how everyday actions serve more than "cultural" functions for social movements – everyday actions can also be the means by which social movements challenge systems of authority and work toward their political goals. After a discussion of my methods, I explain the three subversive techniques of cooking suggested by feminists. I conclude by reiterating the mechanism of subversive engagement that I highlight in this study, and I suggest it can be extended beyond gender struggles to also describe how people of subordinate sexualities, races, or social classes subversively engage in actions that previously contributed to their oppression.

## LIBERAL SECOND-WAVE FEMINISM

Friedan's (1963) *Feminine Mystique* encapsulates the grievances and ideas of the liberal second-wave feminist movement (Coontz, 2011; Meyer & Rohlinger, 2012). Friedan (1963) investigates the cause of "the problem that has no name," or housewives' desperation and depression. Friedan argues that this problem stems from housewives' lack of self-identity, since their main purpose is to serve their children and husbands. At the root of this identity crisis is the Feminine Mystique, a cultural doctrine that maintains that women should find fulfillment only in "sexual passivity, male domination, and nurturing maternal love" (Friedan, 1963, p. 43). To become fully satisfied and regain a sense of self, Friedan suggests that women stop being housewives and enter more fulfilling, paid careers.

Friedan's argument is typical of liberal second-wave feminism, which adapts liberal ideology to the struggle for gender equality. Liberalism

maintains that all individuals have natural rights, and therefore, everyone must be guaranteed equal political rights. Therefore, liberal feminists, including early woman's suffragists, have argued that women and men have the same natural rights and thus deserve equal standing as citizens (DuBois, 1998; Marilley, 1996; Whelehan, 1995).

Liberal second-wave feminists aimed to advance gender equality by increasing women's access to economic resources, which they viewed as the foundation of broader power and independence (Rosen, 2000). They worked to give women access to spaces in the public sphere, such as higher education, the paid workforce, and politics (Friedan, 1963; Rosen, 2000; Whelehan, 1995). Most studies of liberal second-wave feminists focus on how activists and organizations such as the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the National Women's Political Caucus worked through the existing political and legal system to achieve favorable laws and rulings that would increase women's rights and ability to control economic resources (Rosen, 2000; Whelehan, 1995). Liberalism trusts the power of democracy and meritocracy, so it makes sense that these feminists would work through established political and legal channels (Whelehan, 1995). However, these actions do not cover the full extent of liberal feminist activism, as evidenced by my findings that these feminists suggested methods of cooking that they hoped would produce a more gender-equal world.

## FEMINISM AND FEMINIZED TASKS

The handful of scholars who discuss the role of feminized activities in feminism offer a few suggestions for how liberal feminists might have approached cooking. First, these feminists might have ignored cooking or refused to do it. Many scholars typify second-wave feminists as rejecting the housewife role and the actions that accompany it (Brunsdon, 2006; Giles, 2004; Hollows, 2007). This was certainly a large strand of feminist thought. Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* was part of a larger trend of critiquing the housewife role as an unfulfilling position that leads women to depression and dependence on men. Texts like these create a second-wave feminist narrative about fleeing the home and the housewife role to find liberation (Giles, 2004). Feminists' refusal to be confined to the housewife role has led to an enduring cultural conflict between the identities of feminist and housewife (Brunsdon, 2006; Crossley, 2010; Hollows, 2007). In sum, these scholars maintain that second-wave feminists showed hostility toward cooking and thus avoided it or minimized this task.

This frustration led some feminist artists and protesters to use cooking as a symbol of women's lives and struggles (Brunsdon, 2006; Forster, 2010; Friedan, 1976; Rosen, 2000). This phenomenon is perhaps best typified by feminist artist Martha Rosler's, (1975) short film, *Semiotics of the Kitchen*. Rosler uses kitchen tools to teach the alphabet ("A is for Apron, B is for Bowl, C is for Chopper," etc.), but she wields these tools with increasing fury. As Rosler makes stabbing motions with a butcher knife and uses a variety of ladles and spoons to mime forcefully tossing food out the window, she embodies the anger that some feminists felt toward the monotonous domestic actions that were culturally designated as women's work (Brunsdon, 2006; Rosler, 1975). In 1968, feminists dumped a trash pile of aprons in front of the White House to protest domestic tasks (Friedan, 1976). Similarly, at the 1970 Women's Strike for Equality in New York City, a protester held a sign emblazoned with "Don't Cook Dinner – Starve a Rat Tonight!" This poster spoofed an anti-littering campaign that New York City was waging during the same summer as the protest (Rosen, 2000). In these events or artworks, feminists used cooking to symbolize the traditional housewife role and call attention to how it stifles women.

In contrast, Forster (2010) argues that some feminists may not have critiqued cooking at all. In her analysis of recipes in the British women's liberation magazine, *Spare Rib*, Forster (2010, p. 159) finds that early second-wave feminists included recipes that she categorizes as contributing to the "trap of the domestic" rather than addressing women's oppression. For example, Forster (2010, p. 157) argues that a September 1972 column on picnic foods "falls short of addressing, indeed deliberately ignores, the feminist outlooks on freedom and education." Forster offers a similar critique for *Spare Rib*'s December 1972 recipes for homemade Christmas presents. She interprets these recipes as serving "only to reinforce the nineteenth-century chains of the domestic angel" and argues that there is "little consciousness of the oppression and sense of duty many women suffer in order to provide the perfect 'home-made' Christmas" (Forster, 2010, p. 158). Forster's critiques seem to be informed by her own assumption that there is a cultural antagonism between cooking and feminism, and she lambasts these feminists for not recognizing this tension. Forster claims that these recipes could appear in any women's magazine. She proposes the possibility of cognitive dissonance between feminists' politics and their culinary ideals. Thus, mainstream cultural ideals about cooking may have penetrated the feminist ranks as activists failed to extend their critique of patriarchy to the kitchen.

## SUBVERSIVE COOKING

Each of the above themes (hostility, symbolism, and cognitive dissonance) explains how some feminists approached cooking. However, they ignore a major way in which feminists have politicized cooking. In my research of liberal feminist discourse about cooking, I find that some feminists approached cooking without hostility, and they proposed cooking techniques that were consistent with their political goals. These feminists suggested cooking in ways that were meant to increase women's control of economic resources, which would in turn bring about a more gender-equal world. By attempting to replace common ways of cooking with new courses of action, these feminists aimed to dismantle the most exploitative dimensions of this domestic task. Thus, I highlight a social process in which feminists suggested engaging subversively in an action that had previously contributed to their oppression. This mechanism adds to our understanding of the many ways in which women have vied for power throughout the history of feminism.

This subversive mechanism also helps us understand how social movements more generally attempt to achieve their political goals. For the past 30 years, the dominant view within the social movements literature has been that movements work toward their goals by engaging in episodic public action that targets the state (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001; Tarrow, 2013). Of course, movements also engage in actions that are not situated in the public sphere, or ones that do not challenge the state. For example, feminists have built alternative institutions of women's health clinics, bookstores, credit unions, record labels, and publishing houses (Echols, 1989). Social movements also politicize everyday actions; for example, anarchists often practice "anti-consumption" and eat vegan diets (Portwood-Stacer, 2013). Scholars usually treat these actions as "cultural," "symbolic," or sustaining the commitment of activists (Staggenborg, 2001; Staggenborg & Taylor, 2005; Taylor & Rupp, 1993). While some scholars mention that these actions resist oppression or are alternative courses of action, they are generally not analyzed as the means by which activists achieve their political goals.<sup>1</sup>

Taylor and Whittier's (1992) concept of "negotiation" is one example of this tendency in the social movements literature. Taylor and Whittier define negotiation as the process by which activists use symbols and everyday actions to resist systems of domination. Taylor and Whittier (1992) focus on negotiation's role in building a collective identity for a social movement. While Taylor and Whittier make an excellent point about the role that

negotiation plays in collective identity, they do not complete an in-depth analysis of how these actions challenge systems of authority and advance activists' goals. I argue that activists can use daily actions such as cooking to challenge powerful institutions and work toward their political goals. In this study, I show how liberal feminists attempted to eliminate sources of women's oppression and increase women's control of economic resources by proposing subversive methods of cooking.

## METHODS

In studies of liberal feminism, scholars have focused on activities that resemble conventional, male-dominated forms of politics – such as lobbying legislators or working through the courts. Discussions of feminized activities such as cooking have been discounted and overlooked. Just as feminist historians have questioned the male-dominated historical record and uncovered women's histories, I reveal a subject – cooking – that has been overlooked within histories of feminism (Friedman, 1995, p. 20).

To accomplish this task, I analyze discourse about cooking in liberal feminist materials that were created between 1963 and 1985. To search for feminist articles about cooking, I scanned every issue of *Ms.* magazine from its beginnings in 1972 to my cutoff date of 1985. *Ms.* magazine is the most widely circulated liberal second-wave feminist periodical. The 300,000 copies of the first issue of *Ms.* sold out in 8 days; throughout the 1970s and 1980s, circulation was in the 400,000–500,000 range (Thom, 1997). I collected any article or letter to the editor that discussed cooking. Often, this included articles that featured cooking in addition to other kinds of housework. In all, I collected 148 articles from *Ms.* magazine.

I also analyze four community cookbooks that compiled recipes from women within liberal feminist organizations. This sample includes all cookbooks in WorldCat that were published by a liberal feminist organization and were available to researchers in US libraries in 2013. At the Radcliffe Institute's Schlesinger Library, I accessed *Pots and Politics* from the Washington State Women's Political Caucus (Kaplan, 1976), *Cookies (and Punch Too!)* (National Association for Girls and Women in Sport, 1977), and *NOW We're Cooking* (NOW Greater Champaign Area Chapter, 1979). Additionally, through a search of online booksellers that lasted several years, I acquired *The First Virginia Feminist Cookbook* from the Virginia chapter of NOW (Gill & Stevens, 1983).

None of these data can tell us how feminists *actually* cooked. Discourse about cooking is nonetheless important, for it reveals how feminists assigned meanings to this domestic task and debated the best ways of completing it. In their recipes, feminists direct readers to cook in a particular way. By examining feminists' writings about cooking, I analyze their explanations for how cooking could be subversive by helping feminists achieve their goals of increasing women's economic power.

## FINDINGS

Liberal second-wave feminists proposed three main culinary techniques that challenged the gender hierarchy and attempted to increase women's control of economic resources. Liberal feminists proposed cooking fast, simple meals that allowed women more time to pursue careers and become involved in politics. They also encouraged men to cook half of the time at home, which would redefine the gendered nature of domestic work. Finally, liberal feminists encouraged women to make money from cooking, either for political fundraising or personal advancement.

### *Fast, Simple Meals*

Liberal feminists encouraged cooking fast and simple meals, which gave women more time to pursue careers and political involvement. In this discourse, feminists situated women's careers as vitally important, and they presented their methods of cooking as ones that allow women to continue their commitment to their jobs. For example, in *Pots and Politics*, the cookbook by the Washington State Women's Political Caucus, the recipes are labeled "Recipes for the Busy Political Worker, Elected Official, or Candidate" (Kaplan, 1976). This situates the recipes as tools that facilitate women's involvement in politics.

All four of the cookbooks I analyzed emphasized recipes that could be made quickly and without much effort. Ideally, these recipes could give women the time and energy to pursue a career. Shirlie Kaplan, the editor of *Pots and Politics*, explains that the cookbook was about "speed cooking," and described how cooking fit into the busy lives of many feminists:

What does the family prepare for the wife and/or mother coming home at odd hours, exhausted? What does a woman or a man alone knock together between 5:30 or 6 P.M.

fall-into-the-house and the 7:00 P.M. meeting, hearing or rally? There is no time for careful shopping or preparation. (Kaplan, 1976, p. 8)

Although she is presenting a cookbook, Kaplan makes clear that cooking should not be women's main life priority. Instead, cooking is something to be completed quickly, in the small pockets of time in women's busy schedules.

These liberal second-wave feminists valued quick cooking, but easy cooking was equally important. Just as women's time was deemed a finite resource, so was women's creative energy. Kaplan (1976, p. 8) explains that women are "apt to fix a meal while solving other problems," and that recipes should be simple enough to allow for this. Similarly, she encourages women to save their inspiration for political campaigns and not waste their brilliant ideas on food. In explaining the short and simple collection of recipes in *Pots and Politics*, Kaplan (1976, p. 8) notes "what we ended up with was an abbreviated chapter and some points of view, none of them profound. We saved our profundities for politics, naturally."

The requirement for fast and simple cooking resulted in recipes that relied heavily on convenience products and technology. The slow cooker was a liberal feminist favorite, as it cooked while women worked during the day. *Pots and Politics* includes a chili recipe that encapsulates the reasons why liberal second-wave feminists found slow cookers so attractive. This recipe claims that even "a single person who is too busy to bother with cooking" could manage to make herself a hearty meal with a slow cooker:

#### **SLOW-COOKED CHILI AND OTHER COMBINATIONS**

"As a single person who is too busy to bother with cooking, I find my 'slow-cooker' invaluable, particularly for hearty soups and stews."

Chili:

1 lb. hamburger

1 can stewed tomatoes

1 can kidney beans

1 package of chili sauce (powdered kind)

Toss into slow-cooker on Friday evening, and after a day-long conference on Saturday, come home to a hot, delicious meal. (It will work for other days of the week, too.)

"Slow-cooking makes hamburger taste good. One pound of hamburger plus cans of any vegetables makes a home-made tasting soup."

Prepare tomorrow's meal while doing the dishes tonight. And, that's what to do with that odd slice of roast beef!

—Thea Moisiso-Saeger, Seattle.  
(Kaplan, 1976, p. 50)

The most laborious task required in this recipe involves opening the cans of beans and tomatoes, so that women's time is liberated for attending professional conferences. Further, when the recipe directs feminists to "prepare tomorrow's meal while doing the dishes tonight," it makes the labor for tomorrow's meal nearly vanish.

Feminists also used pressure cookers to reduce the time and energy they spent in the kitchen. While the slow cooker produced one-pot meals that required preparation the night or morning before, liberal second-wave feminists used the pressure cooker in nearly the opposite scenario — to cook one-pot meals in a matter of minutes. For example, *NOW We're Cooking* included a pressure-cooker recipe for Vichyssoise. It called for cooking leeks, Oleo, potatoes, chicken broth, and half and half in a pressure cooker for 3 minutes before blending and serving (*NOW Greater Champaign Area Chapter*, 1979, pp. 4–5).

In addition to convenience products, liberal second-wave feminists achieved quick and easy cooking by using a small number of ingredients. Recipes that use few ingredients are often faster and simpler; they require less preparation and coordination. These four- or five-ingredient recipes could be made even easier if they included canned or pre-sliced food. The recipe for "Alice's Soup" in *Pots and Politics* exemplifies this element of fast and easy cooking:

#### ALICE'S SOUP

From a 79-year old woman who says she does not like to cook.

Mix 2 cans mushroom soup, 1 can creamed corn, 1 can tuna fish. Heat and eat.

Optional: cheddar cheese slices or pieces and browned onions. Or stick piece of cheese in bowl.

— Norma Fried, Seattle.  
(Kaplan, 1976, p. 50)

This recipe indicates that its creator hated to cook. This fits with previous scholars' argument that cooking and other tasks of the housewife role were at odds with a feminist identity, leading liberal second-wave feminists to despise the task of preparing food (Brunsdon, 2006; Giles, 2004;

Hollows, 2007). However, this distaste for cooking is not the end of the story. Rather than avoiding the activity altogether, this woman developed a means of cooking that took very little time and energy. This difference is significant; rather than avoiding the issue, these feminists engaged with it in ways that challenged the status quo.

*NOW We're Cooking* also includes many fast and simple recipes that require only a handful of ingredients. For example, “Broccoli Casserole” uses only five ingredients, all canned or processed:

#### **BROCCOLI CASSEROLE**

10 oz. box frozen chopped broccoli

1 C. cooked Minute Rice

10½ oz. can cream of mushroom soup

8 oz. jar Cheese Whiz

5 oz. can water chestnuts, drained and sliced

Thaw broccoli and drain. Add rice, soup, Cheese Whiz and water chestnuts. Mix thoroughly. Pour into a 1½ qt. greased casserole dish. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes. Freeze well.

– Susan Hurst

(*NOW Greater Champaign Area Chapter*, 1979, p. 20)

The emphasis in this recipe is not on using fresh food, nor producing a healthy meal; the point is to turn out food quickly and without much effort. Similarly, Kaplan argues that women should not feel pressured to produce elaborate meals, “nor does a photographer come every day to snap your table for a magazine cover” (Kaplan, 1976, p. 8). She encourages women to break out of social expectations about the quality and presentation of the food. Instead, Kaplan encourages women to cook whatever is fastest and easiest, even if it does not look (or taste) like a Michelin-starred plate.

By arguing that women should spend less time and energy cooking, liberal second-wave feminists considered how cooking could help support their goals of increasing women’s economic power. Through quick and simple cooking, feminists proposed an approach to housework that did not take over women’s lives. Instead, the top priority remained women’s work outside the home. These feminists hoped that these methods of cooking would give women more time and energy to pursue careers or political involvement, undermining men’s dominance in those areas.

*Men in the Kitchen*

As long as women were expected to complete all the domestic work, men could devote their undivided attention to retaining control over the workforce and politics. Therefore, liberal feminists also implored men to take on an equal share of the cooking. This was a tall order to fill. In 1965, American women spent nearly nine times as many hours in the kitchen as men (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, & Robinson, 2000). While men's time in the kitchen doubled between 1965 and 1985, this did not result in gender-equitable kitchens. In 1985, women still spent more than three times as many hours cooking as men (Bianchi et al., 2000). Even in families in which both spouses work paid jobs, women were more likely to face a "second shift" of housework and childcare when they came home (Hochschild, 1989).

Liberal second-wave feminists attempted to integrate men into the previously female-dominated household and kitchen, just as they attempted to integrate women into the previously male-dominated professional workplace. Liberal feminists believed that there were no essential gender differences that made men or women better at any given task, and they applied this line of thought to the household. They argued that women were not inherently better at housework, and that men could complete this work just as well as women. This discourse about cooking fit into a larger discussion in which liberal second-wave feminists encouraged men to share in all kinds of housework. By arguing that men and women are equally capable of cooking and should both contribute to this household chore, liberal feminists called for divorcing this task from femininity.

Apron-clad men graced the pages of *Ms.* magazine. Liberal feminists praised "househusbands," or men who stayed home to care for children and take care of the household duties while their wives worked outside the home. For example, Betty Holcomb wrote an article that celebrated five men who were trying to "succeed as dads in a mom's world" (Holcomb, 1982, p. 39). In articles like these, *Ms.* also took the opportunity to highlight the emotional travails of the caretaker role. In Holcomb's article, one husband explains how isolated he feels, while another realizes his personal ambitions had vanished: "My biggest personal problem – my biggest emotional letdown – was when I realized I had completely supplanted my own career goals with my wife's. When she put on her white coat, it was great for her, but there was not a whole lot there for me. I felt empty" (Holcomb, 1982, p. 40). For this man, a lack of personal fulfillment led to the same emptiness reported by housewives all over the country (Friedan, 1963). In

a different article, househusband Joel Roache reports experiencing “the problem that has no name,” including the depression and lack of satisfaction that accompanied the monotonous, selfless, and thankless work (Friedan, 1963; Roache, 1972). Thus, in articles about househusbands, feminists not only advanced the idea of integrating the gendered spheres of work; they also used this opportunity to highlight the physical and emotional labor required to serve as the family’s caretaker. Renewed concern about the problems of the caretaker role reinforces the idea that this work should be shared between men and women.

*Ms.* magazine also highlighted “egalitarian marriages.” In 1972, *Ms.* included an interview of an egalitarian couple, who explained how such a marriage works (Servan-Schreiber, 1972, p. 92). Sandra Lipsitz and Daryl Bem reported that they participated equally in the workplace and the home. They made no distinction between each other’s abilities – they claimed they were equally skilled at various household tasks. When asked, “Who is the better cook?” Bem replied, “We both cook moderately well. We know how to follow recipes and are willing to risk an occasional disaster by experimenting. But most of the time we are a dietitian’s horror. We rarely eat salad and fresh vegetables. Our usual menu consists of things like rice and chicken and frozen vegetables” (Servan-Schreiber, 1972, p. 92). Mainstream society might think Lipsitz, as a woman, would be “naturally” better at cooking. However, *Ms.* presents the idea that both Lipsitz and Bem are equally capable in the kitchen.

Liberal feminists also argued that their cookbooks were not meant only for women. The women of the Washington State Women’s Political Caucus introduced *Pots and Politics* with a statement that encouraged men to cook the recipes in the book. The introduction explains that cooking should not be considered a feminine task: “People of both sexes eat; people of both sexes cook ... The recipes in this book may be recreated by members of either sex” (Kaplan, 1976, p. 5).

Liberal feminist cookbooks led by example, for they included recipes contributed by both women and men. For members of the Virginia chapter of NOW, the inclusion of men’s recipes was so important that they considered it a selling point of *The First Virginia Feminist Cookbook*. An article in the chapter newsletter announced that the cookbook was on sale and featured recipes from both men and women: “Feminists of both sexes are lively, active, creatively intelligent, and individualistic people. Their favorite recipes reflect those qualities” (Anonymous, 1983). In addition to advertising the mixed-gender nature of this cookbook, this article

signals that culinary skill does not require feminine or masculine traits; instead, the article lists several gender-neutral traits that make one a good cook.

While the majority of recipes in liberal feminist cookbooks are attributed to women, men's recipes make an appearance. Across all four books, men contributed 44 recipes, approximately 12% of the total.<sup>2</sup> While this is not half of the recipes, this is significant progress toward a world where community cookbooks are no longer feminized. These recipes displayed small success stories about the gender-integration of kitchens. For example, Paul Roscoe contributed the following recipe to *The First Virginia Feminist Cookbook*:

**FRIED EGG ROLLS**

18 egg rolls

Combine:

¾ cup Chinese cabbage, chopped

¼ cup bean sprouts, drained

1 can bamboo shoots, drained

2 8-oz. bags salad shrimp

Make ready for filling:

18 egg roll wrappers

*Place wrapper as you would a diaper for folding.* Spoon mixture onto wrapper just below an imaginary line from right corner. Fold these tips over mixture; then roll from the bottom to the top corner. Moisten and seal.

Heat in a wok or frying pan:

3 cups vegetable oil

Fry egg rolls until they are brown.

Paul Roscoe

Friend of Charlottesville NOW

(Gill & Stevens, 1983, p. 3, emphasis added)

This recipe sends a clear message that men can cook and complete other domestic tasks that are traditionally feminized. By instructing the reader to fold the egg roll wrappers like you would fold diapers, Roscoe reveals that he not only has knowledge of cooking – but he also has experience with the least glamorous job that comes with raising young children. This

demonstrates that it is indeed possible for men to successfully complete domestic tasks.

By encouraging men to cook on a regular basis and celebrating those who already did so, these feminists suggested a subversive way of completing the typically feminized domestic task. Incorporating men into cooking challenged the gendered division of work and the cultural understandings about women and men that accompanied these patterns of work. Thus, liberal feminists attempted to divorce cooking from femininity and make it a gender-neutral action. Indirectly, bringing men into the kitchen would also help level the playing field for women in the workforce, for this action would chip away at women's "second shift" of domestic work (Hochschild, 1989).

### *Make Money from Cooking*

Liberal second-wave feminists also considered how cooking could directly increase women's economic power. They proposed two ways of doing this: first, using one's home kitchen to raise funds for political campaigns or personal use; and, second, encouraging women to become professional chefs.

Using cooking to fundraise is a longstanding tradition for women's groups. American women began selling community cookbooks in the late nineteenth century to raise money for churches, communities, women's clubs, and even woman's suffrage organizations (Longone, 1997; Williams, 2016). Liberal feminist cookbooks follow that fundraising tradition, but these feminists also recommend selling food to raise money. These cookbooks included recipes that they suggested serving to contributors to a political campaign. For example:

#### **SHRIMP AND PINEAPPLE SALAD TO SERVE TO THOSE WHO CONTRIBUTE BIG TO THE CAMPAIGN**

Per 6 servings:

1 cup quick cooking brown rice

fresh little Alaska shrimp

1 can (8¾ oz.) pineapple tidbits

½ cup chopped celery

½ cup chopped cabbage, green

¼ cup chopped pimiento

2 Tbsp. lemon juice

2 Tbsp. (about) parsley

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup mayonnaise

salt and pepper

Cook the rice and cool it. In a large bowl, mix all the ingredients with care, in order not to macerate the shrimp. Chill, pile on lettuce leaves. Looks beautiful, is filling, and tastes \$50 a plate minimum.

(Kaplan, 1976, p. 52)

Rather than advising feminists to abandon the kitchen in pursuit of political office, recipes like this argue for using cooking to support feminists' political goals. This recipe directs feminists to engage in the feminized action of cooking, but the end goal is to raise money. The idea of cooking food to support a political campaign is not limited to the cookbook published by the Women's Political Caucus; in Virginia NOW's cookbook, the recipe for "Cheddar Cheese Balls" explains, "These make a good contribution to a fundraising party, softening up the potential contributor" (Gill & Stevens, 1983, p. 2). While these recipes contribute to a political campaign, they also help achieve liberal feminists' central goal of increasing women's control of economic resources. Interestingly, although "Shrimp and Pineapple Salad" is not a necessarily complicated recipe, it requires more ingredients, time, and energy than most of the other recipes in *Pots and Politics*. This sends the message that more elaborate forms of cooking are acceptable, as long as women receive compensation for their food.

Other feminists noted the irony behind using cooking, a feminized action, to raise money for women's advancement into male-dominated spheres. In their cookbook, *Cookies (and Punch, Too!)*, the National Association for Girls and Women in Sport (1977, p. 1) offers "a fond and public farewell ... to the tradition of selling 'cookies and punch' to support sport and athletic programs for girls and women." They present their cookbook and the fundraising event that accompanied it as "The Last Great Cookie Sale." These feminists present a parody of women's traditional ways of raising money. The National Association for Girls and Women in Sport (1977, p. 1) admits that their cookbook is "essentially humorous," and they explain that they are "attempting to combine a 'Bow to the Past' with a celebration of the changing nature and emerging role of girls and women in sport." These feminists use the cookbook and a cookie sale to raise money, but they justify these actions by framing them as satire. In contrast to the recipes in *Pots and Politics* and *The First Virginia Feminist*

*Cookbook*, NAGWS sends the message that using cooking to raise money is only acceptable as long as it is “tongue-in-cheek.”

Satirical fundraising did not make an appearance in *Ms.* magazine. Instead, *Ms.* celebrated women who started small businesses by selling the food they made in their own homes. In a 1985 article titled “Cooking Up a Fortune,” Fabricant (1985) encourages women to start their own food-related businesses, which could be as simple as cooking a large batch of strawberry jam and bringing it to a local gourmet grocery store. The discussion quickly turns from overrunning one’s kitchen with jam and smoking fish in the backyard to the logistics of running a business. The article concludes with a “how-to” list of directions for starting a culinary career from one’s home. In discussions like these, a love for cooking is justified within the context of building a profitable career.

Taking this argument one step further, liberal second-wave feminists also encouraged women to open restaurants and become professional chefs. While these discussions of cooking are no longer situated in the domestic sphere, I offer a brief discussion of feminists’ thoughts on this issue, as they argue for subverting the nature of cooking itself, shifting it from a subservient act to one of independence. For example, in a *Ms.* magazine article, Schoch (1977) focuses on the potential for a restaurant to make women financially self-sufficient. Schoch teaches women the financial principles of running a restaurant. Situated within a liberal feminist magazine, this article becomes more than a simple business lesson. It also teaches its women readers how to control more economic resources – the movement’s central goal. Accordingly, Schoch emphasizes that running a profitable restaurant can make women independent. She cites Jill Ward, co-owner of the feminist restaurant *Mother Courage* in New York City: “For me, the biggest incentive [to run a restaurant] is to be independent” (Schoch, 1977, p. 109).

Liberal second-wave feminists also encouraged women to make money from cooking by becoming professional chefs. In 1973, *Ms.* magazine founder and feminist leader Gloria Steinem complained about the gender inequality within professional kitchens. In the early 1970s, prominent women chefs were virtually non-existent. Steinem’s frustration over this inequality is palpable: “we can’t achieve greatness even on our own turf: why are most of the great couturiers men? and the great chefs?” (Steinem, 1973, p. 37). Liberal second-wave feminists rallied around this call for more women to become professional chefs. In a 1979 *Ms.* article, Carol Eisen Rinzler portrayed women professional chefs as courageous warriors in a field where women were underrepresented. By profiling successful women who made their living as chefs and introducing Les Dames d’Escoffier, a

professional organization for women in culinary professions, Rinzler encouraged readers to consider this a legitimate career path for women (Rinzler, 1979). This article is titled “Their Place is in the Kitchen,” a phrase that usually is meant to confine women to the dependency and subservience of the domestic sphere. However, this article turns the phrase on its head, arguing that women belong in professional kitchens, where they can achieve financial success, prestige, and equality with men.

These discussions disrupted the traditional gender power relations that pervaded the kitchen. By encouraging women to make money from their cooking, liberal feminists transformed cooking from an act of subservience to a source of personal achievement. Further, feminists argued that the financial rewards gained through cooking could help women become independent. In these discussions, cooking becomes an avenue by which liberal feminists could achieve their central goal: increasing women’s control of economic resources.

## CONCLUSION

These three techniques – fast and simple cooking, convincing men to cook, and making money by cooking – are ways of preparing food that facilitate women’s advancement in the gender hierarchy. These three techniques supported, rather than undermined, women’s quest for a career and financial self-sufficiency. Further, by encouraging men to cook, these feminists attempted to divorce cooking from femininity and make it a gender-neutral practice. If people cooked in these three ways, feminists believed women would amass more economic resources, which would result in a more gender-equal world. Therefore, with these methods of cooking, feminists challenged patriarchal gender relations and worked toward gender equality. This study contributes to social movement scholarship by demonstrating how everyday actions do more than contribute to a movement’s collective identity or culture; they also are a means by which activists challenge authority and try to achieve their political goals.

Women have attempted to subversively engage in other actions that contribute to their oppression. For example, some twenty-first-century women participate in burlesque and display a femininity that includes assertive sexuality. These performances challenge the dominant understanding of women as sexually passive (Ferreday, 2008; Klein, 2014; Wilson, 2008). However, there are key differences between the subversion in burlesque and in liberal feminist cooking. In burlesque, women engage with feminized

practices to challenge some dimensions of femininity, but *they do not challenge the oppressive dimension that is most closely associated with these practices in particular*. Burlesque runs the risk of presenting women as objects of the male gaze, even if twenty-first-century burlesque audiences have large numbers of women and gay men. As Wilson (2008, p. 179) argues, “women’s show of flesh and their sexual displays of ‘femininity’ have always reflected male fantasy, so using the very same language is playing a dangerous game.” Therefore, burlesque performers challenge the ideals of passive and effortless femininity, but they leave intact the sexual objectification of women.

In contrast, liberal feminists challenged the dimensions of cooking that contributed to women’s oppression. Further, by convincing men to cook, liberal feminists suggested culinary methods that would divorce cooking from femininity. Burlesque performers do not remove burlesque from femininity; instead, they use burlesque to present new ideals of femininity. In sum, liberal feminists’ subversive methods of cooking are essentially the opposite of reclaiming a practice; instead, these feminists worked to disassociate cooking from femininity and dismantle cooking’s most exploitative elements.

Feminists may have used this mechanism of subversive engagement when considering how to accomplish other feminized tasks. For instance, feminists may have suggested ways of raising children that attempted to make this a gender-neutral practice that was less oppressive. This process may also explain how other subordinated groups of people subversively engage in actions that are typically considered oppressive not due to their feminization, but because of their role in the sexuality, race, or class hierarchies. Thus, this social process can help us better understand the means by which subordinated groups work toward equality in the course of their everyday actions.

## NOTES

1. An exception is the literature on political consumerism, in which scholars acknowledge that consumers engage in boycotts or “buycotts” as a means by which to achieve change (Micheletti, 2003; Micheletti, Follesdal, & Stolle, 2004; Shah, Friedland, Wells, Kim, & Rojas, 2012).

2. I determined the gender of recipe contributors by the name they gave. I recognize that this measure is not ideal, as people of any gender may take any name, and many names are given to both women and men. However, names are the only pieces of information I have to determine the gender of the recipe contributors. To

determine the number of recipes contributed by men, I only counted names that are most often given to men (e.g., John, Tom, and Paul) and did not include names that are common for both men and women (e.g., Pat).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Mary Blair-Loy, Elizabeth Borland, Laura Rogers, Jennifer Nations, and my writing groups in both New York City and San Diego for their feedback on drafts of this chapter. This research was completed with the assistance of a dissertation grant from the Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study.

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