



To what extent has digital technology affected the way housework is conducted?

How does it fit into the stereotypical model of the nuclear family?

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Introduction

Over the last 150 years, the way housework has been carried out has completely changed. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, the upper- and middle-classes usually had servants to carry out much of the work that had to be done, but by the end of the second world war, domestic labourers were almost non-existent, and most of their work fell to the housewife. By the time this happened there were many labour-saving devices available to help the housewife with the chores, and the number of appliances has continued to grow to assist the homemaker with the working of the home. In this essay I will explain how the introduction of analogue and digital technology has changed the way the house is taken care of and whether or not it was solely technology and appliances that brought about that change.

In the first chapter, I will be looking into the first few decades of the twentieth century and the class divide that distinguished the rich from the poor. This division was seen in many aspects of society, but this essay will show the particular role it played in the working and running of the home. Many richer families had servants that would carry out the majority of the chores for them. On most occasions this came in the form of a live-in maid who would be up working before the family awoke and still working after they had gone to bed. I will also discuss some of the major technological innovations of the period that meant that everyday life became so much easier for everyone who was fortunate enough to be able to have them as part of their home, and the role that they played in making housework more manageable.

The second chapter will discuss the rise of these devices and how they aided the family during the phasing out of the domestic servants and the rise of the traditional housewife. Around 1910, over a quarter of young women were in domestic service (*Further Back in Time for Dinner: Season 3, Episode 2*, 2017), but by the end of the second world war, they were virtually gone, so technology helped the upper- and middle-class families who had gotten used to servants doing the bulk of the work around the house. The idea of housework was conflicting – women were meant to have reason to take pride in their housework, but it was also seen as degrading, so many wanted to distinguish housework from servant's work and pretend that it was more of a 'craft' than a chore (Forty, 1992:209) and the technological appliances certainly helped with this.

In the third and final chapter, I will be looking into some of the labour-saving devices that came about in the latter half of the twentieth century and how they affected the household, as well as looking at what life is like today and what housework could like in twenty years' time. The 1950s was when the idea of the typical housewife started to emerge. After the servants had left, most of the housework was left to the women, as most men went out to work and children had school. It did make the most sense for them to take on these new responsibilities, but because previous generations had spent their time drumming home that housework was not real work so that they did not feel as degraded, it meant that a lot of housewives felt like their hard work was being overlooked. Over the next decades, other members of the family were taking on more of the household chores and technological advancements meant that machines were doing more and more of the work, this chapter will discuss the extent to which technology took some of the pressure off housewives and how much it was the changes in society itself.

**NO
LONGER**
*tied down
by
housework*



 *Spring-clean with*
ELECTRICITY

Fig. 1 Advertisement for Electricity. In EDA Publicity, 1928

Chapter 1

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, class was of great importance and many, especially the middle-class, would often try and look of greater class than they were. They would employ a servant to carry out all their household chores including the cooking, cleaning, laundry and more, and with the limited supply of technological appliances, this work would take all day. Life was hard for the typical live-in maid who worked long hours six and a half days a week. In Britain, thousands of young girls would leave their own homes to live and work in the service of another family (*Further Back in Time for Dinner: Season 3, Episode 1*, 2017) this was one way that they were able to provide for themselves, even though it meant going into domestic service, for some girls it was the only way they were going to be able to survive.

Domestic service was seen as degrading work (Schwartz-Cowen, 1983:125), many were embarrassed about being a servant and would often try to keep their domestic employment status to themselves. Servants were not introduced to many new technological appliances while they were working for their employer – for a lot of middle-class families, they could afford a servant or labour-saving devices, but not both. To their employers, they were, in effect, the technology, as they completed all the chores asked of them and the family would not have to lift a finger. One piece of technology that was invested in though, that did help out the servant was the gas cooker (*Further Back in Time for Dinner: Season 3, Episode 2*, 2017). Up until its introduction, most homes had a coal fuelled cooker that was large and needed a flue, but the gas cooker did not need to be as big as there was no need for a ‘heavy, cast-iron box’ so there was more room in the kitchen which was very much welcomed by the servant who spent most of their time in there. With the gas cooker also came the ‘invention of reliable heat regulators for controlled oven temperatures’ (Bock, 2021) which meant that cooking meals became much easier and the outcome of meals, much more predictable, which was particularly important as the diet of a middle-class family was extravagant, with complicated recipes and many courses meaning that the maid had a lot of food preparation to do throughout the day along with all the other chores, so the more reliable cooking time made her life a lot less stressful.

Although there were not many appliances to help the servants, some of the best innovations to come out of the early 20th century aided them beyond belief and could be thought of as what we see today as basic necessities. The electric lightbulb totally changed the way the home was lit and eradicated the work that once went into lighting the family home. The main source of light came from the fireplace, which needed regular cleaning and the fuel for it had to be sourced from outside. Oil lamps and candles were also used but the light they gave was very dim and little work could be completed under these conditions. So, when electric lighting came about it was seen as something very desirable to the population and over the course of around 20 years between 1919 and 1939, the number of homes connected to the national grid increased tenfold from just 6% to two thirds (Argand, 2020). Of course, what brought the possibility for electric lighting was electricity itself, and while it started off primarily used for lighting, its uses grew and grew, and many appliances designed to help with housework used electricity.

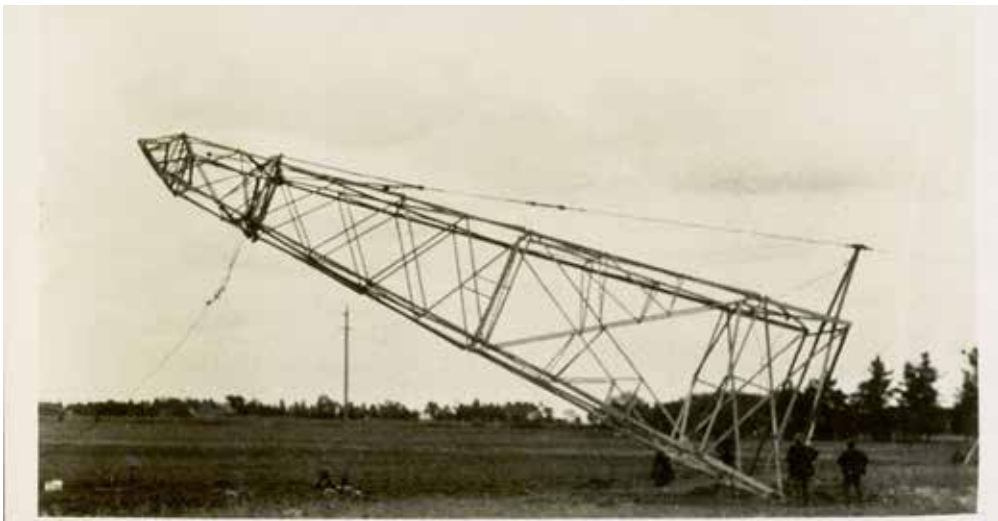


Fig. 2 Electricity pylon being erected, 1920s. Science Museum Group Collection

Although it came later, becoming more widely used in the 1960s, central heating is another technology that we today would find uncomfortable to live without. It completely changed the way that the house was heated, as before it was introduced, the most common way to heat the house was with a wood or coal fuelled fire, and with most homes having only one or two fireplaces it was normal for only those rooms to be heated and the rest of the house to be cold. Electric portable heaters also played a role in heating the homes of the nation; however, they were quite expensive to run so poorer families would usually just stick to the wood burning fire. Central heating put heat in most rooms in the house which meant that doing the housework in those rooms became not so horrible in the colder months of the year. With the equipment available for heating the home, it also became possible for the house to have running hot water, which meant that water no longer had to be collected and heated separately, saving a lot of time when it came to cleaning.

Whenever possible, women would do their best to get out of domestic service and into other employment. During the First World War, many servants were able to leave their post and get to see what life was like outside their employer's home when they were given the opportunity to do some of the jobs that men typically did before they were enlisted for war. This taste of the outside world was a strong incentive to not go back to serve other families, so many looked for jobs elsewhere. Some went into factories, and even though the day was long, it was not as long as a day in service and was better than living and working in someone else's house (Schwartz-Cowen, 1983:124,126). As well as the rise in technology, the aspirations of the servants themselves is what led to fewer and fewer domestic servants. Employers argued that "domestic service is good for a girl's health and for her moral character" and that "it prepares a girl for her ultimate career in the home" (Katzman, 1981 cited in Schwartz-Cowen, 1983:123), they were concerned about the 'servant problem' and that with numbers declining, the housewife would have to start taking on some of the work herself, which is exactly what happened.

Chapter 2

After the First World War, there was a shortage of servants, this is partly because during the war, the servant girls got to see what was available to them outside domestic service and found that working for a family was no longer appealing to them. This resulted in the upper- and middle-classes finding it much more difficult to employ a live-in maid and therefore it was more common for households to hire help only when it was needed. Another reason for the decline in servant employment was the rise in technological appliances. A study carried out by students at Mount Holyoke College, Massachusetts in 1929 showed that families hired less help because they had the appliances that would do much of the work for them (Hewes, 1930:240). Even though this study was performed in the United States of America, the majority of what they discovered applied in Britain too. 194 families saw a change in the amount of help that they hired, 187 of these was a decrease, with 28 saying it was wholly due to the rise in appliances and 159 saying it was partly due to the rise in appliances, the other part likely being the shortage in servants.

Once the servants started leaving the home, it was usually down to the housewife to take on the work that they were doing and fill the void that was left by their absence, but because housework was looked down upon, it really was not something that she wanted to do. Many housewives reported that they were spending many hours a day on housework and childcare, which for those who were used to servants doing the bulk of this work, was a big jump in the expectations of them. One big advantage that she had was the introduction of new household technology that would help her with a lot of the chores; on top of the new appliances, 'the lightening of labour when taps replaced pumps and hot water heaters replaced kettles' (Schwartz-Cowen, 1983:88) was a big win for the housewife as it eliminated the most menial task of household cleaning.



Fig. 3 Universal Home Needs technological solution to the ‘servant problem’

“The ‘labour saving house,’ the cliché of the 1920s, was not only a response to the perceived shortage of servants, the so called ‘servant problem’, but also to the demands of national efficiency”

Adrian Forty, 1992

Here, Adrian Forty explains how the home had to change and become easier to take care of because of the loss of servants. Everyone was trying to find ways to get housework done to the same standard but in less time and using less energy than the servants did, after all it was their home, nobody wanted to work in their own home. People more and more were wanting efficiency and convenience, and the availability of appliances helped stimulate the reorganisation of housework between the housewife, servants, and machines. “The average comfortable housewife before the First World War did some of her housework herself and managed the labour of other people who did the rest of it, [but that same, average comfortable housewife] after the war managed more appliances than people” (Schwartz-Cowen, 1983:174), and there came a time when there were no available people left for her to manage which resulted in her doing the vast majority of the housework by herself.

There was a time when men regularly did household chores, however, 'all the work that once stereotypically fell to men has been mechanised' or it was just no longer needed, 'the advent of washing machines and dishwashers has eliminated the chores that men and children used to do' (Schwartz-Cowen, 1983:201) and the introduction of lighting and heating eliminated the need to collect fuel for fires and clean the open hearth. Men and children had chores that they would complete usually without a fuss, but all the new innovations and appliances that were initially brought in, primarily took away those jobs that they were completing. This meant that the jobs that were left were all stereotypically the women's jobs, and rather than taking on some of the chores to even out the workload, they instead left the women to it as those jobs that were left were seen as "women's work."

A major thing to point out is how housewives were fooled into doing the housework, but most of the time, the people fooling them was themselves. During the nineteenth century, middle-class women were excluded from work, domestic or otherwise. Having their wives and daughters able to participate in any sort of leisure and not work, was a way for husbands to show off their wealth, and they gladly chose to live their leisure time through their family (Forty, 1992:104). The culture at the time 'suggested that having a working wife was a sign of economic distress and social disorganisation' (Schwartz-Cowen, 1983:189). Because of this, middle-class families would hire servants to do all the work around the house as domestic work was seen as demeaning and therefore no

one with high status would want to be seen doing any household work. However, with the shortage of servants, the way the home was run had to change. Without help around the house, wives were going to have to step up and take on some of the chores that were left behind by the servants, however this was not good for status – these belittling tasks were interfering with the class system and the middle-class were not happy about it. In order to combat the demeaning nature of housework, it started to be thought of less as 'work' and more 'showing love and care to your family,' it was one way for housewives to separate their work from servants' work, and it seemed to work for them. These ideas were quickly welcomed by the aspiring middle classes as it 'removed one of the main barriers to social advancement' (Forty, 1992:209), the line between the classes was slowly blurring. As time went on, doing the household chores played a bigger role in how a housewife was perceived to show affection for her family. The idea that housework was no longer work had got almost so out of hand that it was thought that 'the only way for women to achieve fulfilment and recognition as women was by being successful in the role of housewives and mothers' (Forty, 1992:208). This way of thinking would have meant that some women, in particular from the poorer families in society, would have felt very inferior to others as they would not have been able to keep their home as clean or cook as good a meal for their family.

The large rollout of household appliances also made the burden of some household chores easier as many considered these appliances as replacements for their servant. Electrical appliances made certain jobs easier and quicker for those who carried out the housework but the efficiency at which these chores were completed raised the standards of what should be the overall outcome. Because of the faster rate at which housework could be accomplished it meant that even more could be done in the time that was available - 'the time saved was spent on doing the same job, or other jobs, more often or better' (Forty, 1992:210). It was not just because a housewife had the time to do it, but because higher standards were the new normal. 'The coal powered stove for instance, ultimately meant that one dish could (and therefore should) be cooked at once' (Schwartz-Cowen, 1983:84 cited in Graziano and Trogal, 2021:13) and this was the case for many other appliances as well – the washing machine meant that more loads of washing could be done, and other things could be done while the washing machine was on, machines made a way for multitasking without you needing to feel like you were multitasking. Regardless of how many labour-saving appliances were introduced into the home, the truth of the matter is that no appliance could replace a servant – it did not matter how much time they were saving by using the machines, the lady of the household was still working.

YOU CAN AFFORD IT

THE AUTO-MAID is a Cleaner that has been tested, proved and accepted as a necessity by every Modern Housewife. It is very light on current, and the most delicate fabrics can be effectively freed from dirt without injury. Owing to our economies in selling, we are able to offer these new De Luxe Models at a price to suit your pockets.

NEW DE LUXE MODEL
CASH PRICE

£7-7-0 Complete

or Deferred Terms can be arranged. On receipt of £1:1:0 we will forward Machine to your address, when your payments will be seven monthly instalments of £1:1:0 each, making £9:1:0 in all.

A FULL THREE MONTHS WRITTEN GUARANTEE IS GIVEN. RISK FREE HOME TRIAL.

Should any machine malfunction after 30 days, FREE PARTS AND REPAIRS ARE GIVEN.

AUTO MAID
ELECTRIC VACUUM CLEANER

Write Now to:
MOORE & CO.,
51 ST. PAUL'S STREET, LEEDS, YORKS
also 12 CLIVE PLACE, GLASGOW

Fig. 4 Early 20th century advertisement for the 'auto-maid'

"Washing is now the easiest part of all my housework."

Read what Mrs. B. Johnson, of South, N.Y., writes about the wonderful Hoover Washing Machine.

Caroline N., South

"Since I have had my Hoover Washing Machine, my washing is now the easiest part of all my housework. I have found it most efficient with large blankets, sheets and also pocket handkerchiefs. They all pass through the wringer one after the other, and the energy needed in washing compared with the old-fashioned way."

£41'10'

For free home demonstration, see your nearest Authorized Hoover Retailer. No obligation.

HOOVER ELECTRIC WASHING MACHINE

Fig. 5 1950 advertisement for the electric washing machine

Now! the
G.E.C.
 DE LUXE
ELECTRIC VACUUM CLEANER
 MODEL DM370

with the *amazing*
**AUTOMATIC
 ADJUSTING
 CARPET NOZZLE**

The G.E.C. Electric Vacuum Cleaner makes the most of the suction in the motor, regardless of the carpet being cleaned. The automatic feature is an arrangement of springs and a pressure of variable weight maintains a light pressure on the nozzle on the carpet, and ensures that the cleaner is always operated at the most efficient suction irrespective of the thickness of the carpet pile.

Cause célèbre... the most up-to-the-minute Electric Cleaner... British made, guaranteed 12 months, backed by sixty years' manufacturing experience... with every modern labour-saving feature.

As in earlier models, the G.E.C. Cleaner eliminates stooping, and its high-efficiency "Eltan" motor, radio interference suppressor, and powerful suction are features which satisfy discerning taste. With its seven special attachments, the G.E.C. Cleaner is a complete home-cleaning unit!

Call on your nearest distributor of G.E.C. Electric Home Helps for further details. In the absence of a distributor the G.E.C. Department are at your service.

British General Electric Co. Pty. Ltd.
(Sole Australian Representatives of The General Electric Co. Ltd. of England)

SYDNEY NEWCASTLE MELBOURNE ADELAIDE BRISBANE
 PERTH HOBART LAUNCESTON

B.G.E.
 ELECTRIC HOME HELPS

ELECTRIC RANGE

SINK HEATER

TOASTER

STREAMLINED IRON

ELECTRIC JUG

GENALEX "Dapper" RADIO

The Australian Women's Weekly - July 5, 1948

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Fig. 6 1948 advertisement for the electric vacuum cleaner

During this time, however much they did not want it to look even remotely similar, housework was almost identical for members of all classes. “The profound differences between women in levels of education, in families of origin, in annual household income, did not produce equally profound variations in the ways in which the women did their work,” (Schwartz-Cowen, 1983:199). In other words, housework was housework, everyone had to do it, and from surveys that were carried out, all housewives, whether from high income households or lower income households, spent almost the exact same amount of time completing the chores around the house. “In the 1950s (and the 1980s) the housewife of the “professional classes” and the housewife of the “working classes” were assisted only by machines” (Schwartz-Cowen, 1983:199) however, just the name of these classes suggests that those of the professional classes had more disposable income to be able to buy the machines to help with the housework, and with machines doing a lot of the work, they were able to achieve more tasks in the same amount of time as the women from working classes. This suggests that the women from lower income households did not clean their homes to the same standards that the richer families were able to and that “some women had the feeling that cleanliness is a condition only for the rich (Hansen, 1913:435 cited in Schwartz-Cowen, 1983:166). The fact that they did not have the money to afford all these labour-saving gadgets to help them with housework is a perfectly valid reason to not have their home looking in as good a condition as those who were able to buy machines to in some cases do all the work for them and in other cases provide them with a lot of help, but nevertheless, it did not stop the working class housewife from feeling inferior to her middle-class counterpart



Fig. 7 The 1950s housewife

Chapter 3

By the 1950s, barring few, well-off families, all households had spent upwards of a decade without a servant's help around the home, and this is when the idea of what we know today as the 'typical housewife' came into being. While her husband would go out to work and her children to school, a housewife would spend her day at home, doing all the chores that needed to be done, usually feeling quite isolated from her family and very underappreciated. Her day would consist of cleaning and laundry, doing the daily shop, and preparing and cooking all the food for her family which would sometimes take all afternoon. It was what was expected of her, but it was a long day with little rest, so it was normal for a housewife to feel burnout, but with years of society believing that "housework was not real work" women felt like they should not have anything to complain about. Over time, more and more technological appliances were introduced into homes that made the life of a housewife easier, and eventually the change in the mindset of society meant that some of the burden was lifted from the housewife and the line between what men and what women did in the home became more blurred.

Although the electric washing machine had been invented for a while, most homes did not have one until the 1950s, and this "labour-saving device" did just that – saved the housewife a lot of time and a lot of energy. Before, the housewife would have to fetch and heat up the water, clean the clothes by hand in a tub and then put them through a wringer to remove most of the water, but the washing machine did all that for her, saving her hours each week. The introduction of the fridge in the 1960s and the freezer in the 1970s (*Back in Time for Dinner: Season 1, Episode 2+3*, 2015) completely revolutionised food and the food shop. They themselves were not "labour-saving devices," but their presence in the home meant that a big part of the housewife's day was no longer necessary. Without the fridge, women would have to go out every day to buy meat and fresh food as it would go bad in the larder if it was left, but food would keep a lot longer in the fridge. The fridge cut down the shopping yes, but with a freezer, people were also able to cut down on food preparation. After people had gotten over their fears and concerns about the freezer, it was used to store batches of pre-made food that could be defrosted at a later time. For those days when no one felt like cooking, families could just go to the freezer and pick out what they wanted to eat that day. Once the microwave was brought into homes in the 1980s, no-one was ready for how easy cooking was going to become. By this point in time, everything was about convenience, and food manufacturers grabbed hold of this idea with both hands and created ready meals, the meal could be cooked in under five minutes. People were 'putting convenience above price, nutritional value and even taste' (*Back in Time for Dinner: Season 1, Episode 4*, 2015) and this was all made possible by technology and those who were striving to make the lives of housewives easier.

You can see how during the latter half of the 20th century, the new technological innovations meant that the housewife could spend less time on her usual household chores and therefore had more time to do other things. Sometimes this meant leisure activities, but often she would find a job to be able to earn some extra money for her family. As quoted earlier 'older cultural values may have suggested that a working wife was a sign of economic distress' but in this evolving society 'newer cultural values suggested that it was the responsibility of both parents to improve the standard of living for their children; and some women concluded that they could achieve this aim faster and more surely with cash in their pockets than with bread dough on their hands' (Schwartz-Cowen, 1983:189).

When women first started going out to work, the housework became even more of a burden than it was before as they were having to come home and do it of an evening after being at work all day. Husbands and children were so used to the housewife doing all the chores and still expected that she would be doing all the housework despite her new job, especially with all the labour-saving devices in the home to make it easier and quicker, so for a time she was having to do both – have a career and run the home. As society changed, husbands started taking on more responsibility when it came to the running of the house, and the workload became more evenly distributed and more like what it looks like today.

21st century technology has brought about some major changes in the way housework is completed. For starters, one may argue that it is no longer just technological appliances that help complete housework quicker, but also the many services that are now provided by different companies. Supermarkets offer food deliveries, meaning that shoppers do not need to go out to the shops to buy their groceries, but instead can spend a fraction of the time and energy that they were using to go to the supermarket, instead sat at their computer, selecting items and having a shop assistant and a delivery driver do all their hard work. On occasions even doing this is too much work for the delegated chef so there are companies such as 'Hello Fresh' that provide all the ingredients and all that has to be done is cook it. It is a very popular service and in 2021, the company was able to deliver over 116 million meals in the UK (Briggs, 2022). Takeaways are also extremely common where anyone can just get their meal delivered straight to their door; they have become more and more common in recent years and spiked during 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. At the beginning of 2021, there was a huge rise in takeaways orders from one year to the next, with 19.6 million orders in February 2021, an immense increase on the 9.1 million orders in February 2020 (McAllister, 2021). It is not just typical takeaways such as Chinese food or pizza that have benefitted either – with the aid of companies like 'Just Eat' or 'Deliveroo,' restaurants have been able to prepare meals and then someone on a bicycle comes in to take it to the recipient's house. All these services are made possible by technology – on some occasions, customers are able to call and make an order, but in most cases, it is done over the internet and there is extremely little interaction between the customer and the provider. All these services and options in the way food is bought, cooked, or delivered has radically changed the way meals are provided for the family, and meant that the cook of the household is able to have a break from the cooking every once in a while, or this might be a regular occurrence depending on the amount of money that the family is able to spend on these services.

In our homes, we as a society have already started to see the rise of robot helpers in the form of vacuum cleaners and lawn mowers, and AI and drones have also been introduced in many industrial capacities, but over the next twenty or so years, it is predicted that these kinds of machines will start to take over the running of our homes and it is anticipated that that by 2040, 90% of all household chores will be automated. It is expected that household robots and multifunctioning drones will become available and will start to appear in homes in the 2030s and will be able to load and unload the dishwasher, fold the laundry, change the sheets, clean surfaces, water plants, and much more (Pinkstone, 2020.) This will remove almost all the long and tiring tasks that have to be done in the home and life will look completely unrecognisable to what it did fifty years ago, but maybe not totally dissimilar to what it was like for the wealthier households 100 years ago – families will have servants in the form of robots rather than humans, and (certainly to begin with) it will only be the rich who will be able to afford such luxury, like it was with the middle- and upper-classes a century ago. With technology able to accomplish the majority of the housework, the homemaker will have more leisure time and less stress about keeping their house clean and tidy as they will be able to program robots to complete the housework to the standard that they want it done. Technology will well and truly have taken over the burden of housework.



Fig. 8 Prediction of drones and robots in our homes by 2040

Conclusion

Technology has radically changed the way that housework has been carried out, it is clear that with each new innovation, the work that had to be done around the home got that bit easier – whether it was being able to light up a room just by flipping a switch, a machine that could wash your clothes for you, or an appliance that could cook you a meal in three minutes, each decade of the last 100 years has brought new and exciting changes into the family home that have been able to decrease the time spent in one or multiple household tasks. However, some will argue, and rightfully so, that even with all the technology around the house, life is not as easy as it was for the higher classes in the early twentieth century. These families had extremely little to do in terms of housework, as they were able to outsource their chores to a servant. As mentioned in the first chapter, upper- and middle-class families wanted to show off their wealth and hiring a servant or a live-in maid was a great way to do this. They would take over the cooking, cleaning, laundry, and any handywork, to make life as easy for their employers as possible – it was what they were paid to do. However, the work was very demeaning, and the job was looked down upon so, as soon as they could, domestic servants left their service for bigger and better things.

This left a big hole in the dynamic of the household, and the responsibility of all the chores that were being done by the servant had to be divided between the family members. But this was not an equal split – housewives had a lot more spare time than anyone else in the family, so they took on the bulk of the work, and in many cases, actually spent more time working in the home than their respective husbands spent in the office. Due to the way that society viewed housework, housewives felt like the work they were doing was extremely degrading, but in truth, their role was essential to the running of the home. Over time, views changed, and taking care of her home and family in this way was seen as deeply caring and affectionate, and as more and more technological appliances were introduced, the task became easier and, in some cases, more enjoyable. However, the presence of appliances in the home came to hinder the housewife's ability to have a comfortable home life when she eventually wanted to go out to work. Husbands generally saw housework as women's work and felt that with the aid of technology, his wife would still be perfectly able to have a career and run their home, perhaps without its existence in the home, she might have gotten a little more help from her male counterpart.

Nowadays, in a typical household where both partners work outside the home, chores are divided a lot more equally than they used to be. This is a prime example of how changes in society have brought about a change in the dynamic of the family home, but not every family chooses to follow these ideas and decide to stick to more of a traditional view of the family home, but it is important to note that this has now become more of a choice than an expectation like it was 70 years ago. It is important to remember though, that families come in all shapes and sizes, so the way housework is completed in one household could look very different to another. Another reason why housework will look more different between families now than it did a century ago is the ever-growing use of technological appliances in the home. It could be argued that housework is easier now than it has ever been due to the incredible technological advances.

So, to conclude, technology has made a big difference in the running of the household – labour-saving devices, appliances big and small, have all helped cut down the time spent on tasks, meant that more can get done in the same amount of time, and that less energy can be used on the chores, but changes in society have meant that all the work no longer falls to just one person, that is to say, the maid or the housewife, and tasks are typically more fairly divided between members of the household.

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