

# New Psychology Today Column Cites the Invisible & Underappreciated Labor of Hosting Thanksgiving

*Janelle E. Wells, Ph.D., & Doreen MacAulay, Ph.D., authors of Our (In)visible Work, say hosting Thanksgiving requires unpaid work that often goes unacknowledged*

TAMPA, FL, UNITED STATES, November 25, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On

Thanksgiving, families across America

will gather around tables loaded with turkey, mashed potatoes, and apple pies, eagerly catching up with loved ones and celebrating the season's warmth. However, Thanksgiving brings a less pleasurable experience for the host behind these festivities: lots of work and little recognition for the heavy lifting required to make these gatherings a festive success.



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*Drs. Janelle Wells & Doreen MacAulay*

[A new Psychology Today column](#) by authors, academics, and workplace experts Janelle E. Wells, Ph.D., and Doreen MacAulay, Ph.D., explores the link between family Thanksgiving gatherings and invisible work. They recently published a new book, *Our (In)visible Work*, which examines the causes and dangers of invisible work, offering practical solutions and strategies to address these issues. Their extensive research and expertise explain how unseen labor often forces people to undertake chores,

duties, and responsibilities without recognition or compensation. *Our (In)visible Work* is available [HERE](#).

In the *Psychology Today* column, Dr. Wells and Dr. MacAulay write that hosting Thanksgiving is not just about cooking the perfect turkey or setting a beautiful table. It's about the often unnoticed labor of preparation, coordination, and care that's rarely acknowledged.

"Popularized by sociologist Arlene Kaplan Daniels, the concept of invisible work argued that unpaid domestic work, especially emotional and relational labor, often goes unrecognized due to



gendered expectations around caregiving,” they write. “At gatherings like Thanksgiving, hosts typically take on extensive planning, cooking, cleaning, and emotional regulation to ensure a smooth event.”

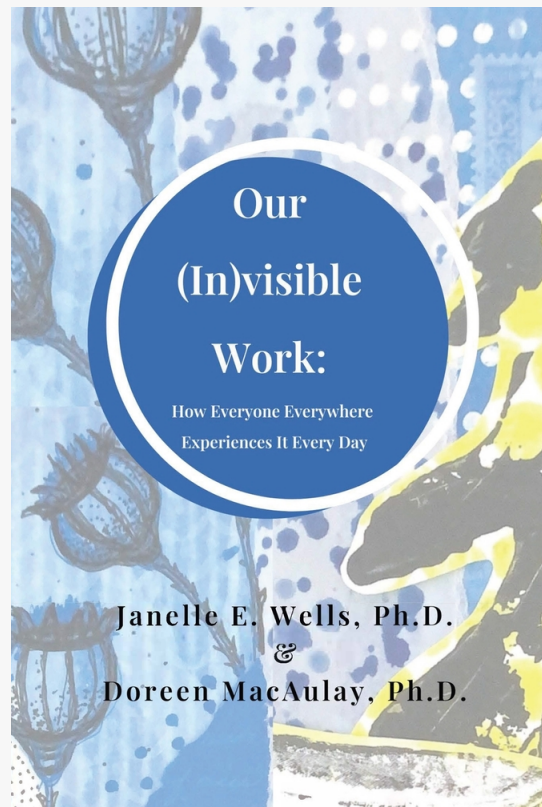
The Psychology Today column cites [a study](#) by the American Sociological Review finding that women continue to bear most household responsibilities, especially in hosting family gatherings. “They often do so without acknowledgment, as family members and guests primarily focus on enjoying the holiday, rather than the work required to create the experience,” write Dr. Wells and Dr. MacAulay.

Furthermore, Dr. Wells and Dr. MacAulay note that much of the financial burden also falls on the host. According to the American Farm Bureau Federation and LendingTree, the cost of a traditional Thanksgiving meal has risen 25 percent over the last five years, and some hosts have even gone into debt to cover the costs associated with the meal. This financial strain is seldom discussed but highlights the economic implications of invisible labor for holiday hosts.

Understanding and being considerate of this financial strain is crucial for fostering a more supportive and equitable holiday environment.

“Weeks ahead of Thanksgiving, when the group texts and discussions begin, hosts often work to create a pleasant atmosphere and manage family dynamics, carefully steering conversations, minimizing conflicts, and ensuring everyone feels welcome,” the authors write. “This emotional labor is a critical but often unacknowledged part of Thanksgiving gatherings, as people, particularly families, bring complex interpersonal histories to the table. Gatherings tend to place unique emotional demands on hosts, who often bear responsibility for managing tensions to create an enjoyable experience for all.”

The cleanup phase represents yet another layer of invisible labor. After guests depart, hosts often face hours of washing dishes, storing leftovers, and tidying up. A study by sociologist



Dr. Janelle Wells and Dr. Doreen MacAulay

Allison Daminger emphasizes that cleanup after social gatherings disproportionately falls to women, even when male partners or family members are present.

Dr. Wells and Dr. MacAulay underscore that Thanksgiving hosting is just one example of how invisible labor—spanning financial, physical, and emotional domains—is deeply embedded in cultural rituals. “Recognizing and valuing this labor challenges traditional assumptions about caregiving and domestic work, fostering a more equitable and appreciative approach to holiday gatherings,” they write. “Acknowledging this labor, offering help, or sharing the costs are simple but impactful ways to support those who make these celebrations possible.”

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Dr. Wells and Dr. MacAulay The authors have created a groundbreaking interactive web space, [wellsquest.com/ourinvisiblework](https://wellsquest.com/ourinvisiblework), as a platform designed with empathy to foster a sense of community and understanding among those who endure invisible work.

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For broadcast or print interviews with Dr. Wells and Dr. MacAulay regarding their new book, *Our (In)visible Work*, please contact Michael Frisby at [Mike@frisbyassociates.com](mailto:Mike@frisbyassociates.com) or 202-625-4328. Digital copies are available now for reviews.

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