Housework is, without question, the most important social units in human society. They are interactive social units whose primary concern is the day-to-day well being of their kith and kin. Households reproduce themselves and provide their members with the economic, psychological, and social resources necessary to live their lives. Although households vary enormously in size and organization, they are the fundamental social settings in which families are defined and cultural values are transmitted through a range of domestic activities and rituals. Despite their many functions, it is the range and productivity of their economic activities that determine the success, survival and well being of their members. Households are the primary production and consumption units in society and provide the vehicle through which resources are pooled, stored, and distributed to their members. Survival and reproduction is their business and the work they do determines their success.

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Kenneth Hirth is a Professor of Anthropology at Penn State University. His primary research interest is in the development of socio-economic complexity, markets and craft production in ancient society. He has conducted long term field investigations at the site of Xochicalco, Mexico in addition to archaeological explorations in Honduras, Peru, and Turkey. He is currently investigating the structure of merchant commerce in prehispanic Mesoamerica.
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