

Playing House? The Paid Work and Domestic Divisions of Working Class,
Class Straddling, and Middle Class Cohabiting Couples

Dissertation

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Abstract

Over the past few decades the proportion of those who live together without marriage has increased markedly, with the majority of all marriages now preceded by a period of cohabitation. Past research suggests that cohabitators have more egalitarian beliefs than those couples who marry without first living together. However, despite their relatively egalitarian attitudes, as a group, cohabiting women are disadvantaged in that they do much of the work expected of wives but receive few of the benefits that married women gain from their nuptials. Working class cohabiting women may be especially disadvantaged because they are more likely than middle class cohabiting women to be supporting children within their co-residential unions, to have relatively low incomes, and also to be in partnerships where the most traditionally gendered household burdens fall primarily upon their shoulders. While the middle class may be expected to behave in more egalitarian ways, it is unclear what might occur in a relationship if only one partner has completed a 4-year degree; the more educated partner in a “class straddling” relationship may be able to transfer his or her “liberalized” attitudes to the less educated partner.

Here, I use interviews with 61 cohabiting couples (26 working class, 27 middle class, and 8 “class straddling” couples) to draw conclusions about the class-based similarities and differences in gendered enactments of power through examining couples’

work orientations, financial arrangements and control, and divisions of household labor. I also explore how and why couples' divisions of labor have changed or remained stable over time and the changes they anticipate undergoing in the future.

I find that cohabiting couples are doing gender in one of four primary ways. Some are replicating *conventional* divisions of labor in which the male partner pays the majority of the household bills, and, in exchange, his female partner often privileges his job or takes on a larger proportion of the domestic work. Among other couples, at least one partner (generally the female) is *contesting* a traditional division of labor, with middle class and class straddling women having more success than their working class counterparts at getting their partners to share fairly equally in the domestic and financial obligations. Still other couples have *counter conventional* arrangements in which the female partner pays the majority of the household expenses; this division particularly disadvantages working class and class straddling women who also do the majority of the household chores and who view their inequitable divisions of labor as relatively permanent. Finally, a few middle class couples are engaged in *egalitarian* exchanges characterized by an effortless egalitarianism. Results suggest that, despite the growing shares of cohabiting couples, few models exist for creating a division of labor that is somewhere between completely conventional and truly egalitarian. Instead, couples must often constantly negotiate their domestic and financial obligations to maintain a division that each partner feels is equitable enough to maintain their relationships.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Cohabitation is becoming an increasingly normative phenomenon in the United States with more than half of all newly married couples choosing to live together before marrying (Bumpass and Lu 2000). From 1980/84 to 1990/94 alone, cohabitation rates increased fifteen percent (Bumpass and Lu 2000). The proliferation of alternative family forms, including cohabitation, led Cherlin (2004) to conclude that the American family is becoming deinstitutionalized, meaning that social norms about family roles and arrangements are becoming increasingly weaker. This deinstitutionalization may provide an opportunity for a change in traditionally gendered structural constraints, allowing for more egalitarian relationships between men and women in intimate unions (Cherlin 2004).

In fact, those who were in the cohabiting unions that were examined in the late 1980s and early 1990s do appear to be fairly egalitarian both in terms of attitudes and behaviors (Clarkberg et al. 1995; Denmark, Shaw, and Ciali 1985; Kaufman 2000; Sassler and Goldscheider 2004). Those who lived together in informal unions placed a relatively low value on specialized gendered norms in which men are the primary breadwinners and women are responsible for the home and family (Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983; Clarkberg, Stolzenberg, and Waite 1995; Schoen and Weinick 1993). In prior decades, cohabitators were likely to earn similar incomes (Brines and Joyner 1999), which may contribute to cohabiting women maintaining a high level of control

over their personal finances (Elizabeth 2001; Heimdal and Houseknecht 2003). In addition, they did more equal shares of household chores than do married couples (Shelton and John 1993; South and Spitze 1994).

Despite their behavior and attitudinal differences, it must be noted that “more egalitarian” beliefs and behaviors are not the equivalent of “completely egalitarian” beliefs and behaviors. Even though cohabitators are purportedly fairly egalitarian, past work found that cohabiting women still did more housework than did cohabiting men (Shelton and John 1993; South and Spitze 1994), and the man’s earnings still appeared to be important in influencing relationship stability and/or transitions (Brines and Joyner 1999; Gupta 1999; Oppenheimer 2003; Sanchez, Manning, and Smock 1998; Sassler and McNally 2003; Smock and Manning 1997). Although cohabitators may behave in ways that are somewhat egalitarian, their behaviors and attitudes within their unions is far from equal.

Quantitative studies can illuminate large scale social trends, but they cannot reveal the ways in which couples construct gender within their relationships and their feelings about the ways in which their unions are gendered. Further, the majority of our quantitative knowledge about cohabitators comes from data that was collected 15-20 years ago; the experiences of today’s cohabitators may be quite different than the relatively egalitarian experiences of cohabitators a generation ago. In addition, social class (defined here by the education level of both partners) may play a significant role in determining gendered behaviors within intimate unions. Since some research suggests that the working class is more traditional than are their middle class equivalents (Bott 1957; Gans

1962; Rubin 1976; 1994), it could be that couples with more education and more professional occupations are behaving in less conventional ways at home.

If, in fact, the American family is becoming “deinstitutionalized” through the proliferation of alternative family forms such as cohabitation (Cherlin 2004), what impact does this deinstitutionalization have on the lives of those involved in the transformation? Has the change in family form been accompanied by a change in the gendered arrangements of those families? Some more recent work on cohabiting women suggests that at least some are doing the majority of the household labor but, unlike in conventional marital arrangements, not benefiting from their partner’s monetary resources (Elizabeth 2001). Working class cohabiting women, in particular, may be doubly disadvantaged both because they have relatively low incomes themselves and because many of their relationships do not involve financial sharing. It is unclear whether middle class cohabiting women will face the same challenges or will be able to use cohabitation as a site for forming more egalitarian relationships.

In this work, I will compare samples of 27 middle-class cohabiting couples (characterized by both partners having at least a bachelor’s degree), 26 working-class couples (characterized by both partners having less than a bachelor’s-level education), and 8 “class straddling” couples (in which one partner has a bachelor’s degree while the other has less than a bachelor’s level education) to examine the differences in the ways that these couples are “doing gender” (West and Zimmerman 1987). I will focus on three primary research questions: 1. (How) do middle class cohabiting couples construct their gender roles differently than do their working class counterparts? 2. How are “class-straddling” couples enacting gender within their divisions of labor? Are they constructing

relationships that are more similar to those of the middle or those of the working class? 3. How do couples' gendered enactments change over time? Examining the ways in which cohabiting couples are constructing gender based upon their social class positions will add to our understanding of the ways that gender is constructed in this rapidly growing relationship form. Further, the findings will allow me to generate a theory about the gendered nature of romantic relationships in an era marked by the proliferation of "alternative" families.

Though still most common among lower-income, lower-educated couples, cohabitation is increasing among all segments of the population, including working and middle class individuals (Bumpass and Lu 2000). Depending upon the data analyzed, approximately 30-45% of currently cohabiting women and 40% of currently cohabiting men have at least some college experience (Casper and Cohen 2000; Manning 2001; Sassler and McNally 2003). The outcomes for these less and more educated groups are quite distinct. More educated cohabitators are more likely to go on to marry their partners than their less-educated counterparts (Goldscheider and Waite 1986, Lichter et al. 1992, Sassler and Schoen 1999, though see Sassler and McNally 2003 for exception). Further, those women with more education are more likely to wait until marriage before having children and to marry prior to childbirth if they become pregnant while unmarried; in addition they are able to provide greater shares of time and money to their children. In contrast, women with less income and education are delaying or foregoing marriage, but not childbearing (Edin and Kefalas 2005; Ellwood and Jencks 2004; Manning 2001, McLanahan 2004).

Research on alternative family forms and differential family experiences and advantages by social class has traditionally focused either on the most privileged (e.g., Blair-Loy 2003; Hewlett 2002; Mason and Goulden 2004; Risman 1998; Siegel 1995) or the most economically “fragile” (e.g., Anderson 1999; Edin 2000; Edin and Kefalas 2005; Edin, Kefalas and Reed 2004; Gibson, Edin, and McLanahan 2004; Reed 2006) couples and families. Few contemporary studies have examined those families who are not in the margins- those in working and middle class unions (See Bott 1957, Gans 1962, Rainwater, Coleman, and Handel 1959 and Rubin 1976; 1994 for classic examples of studies on working class families). Although both working and middle class couples lie in the median socioeconomic strata of the United States, the differences between the two are large enough to result in discrepant outcomes for those within relationships. As a group, all cohabiting women are disadvantaged in that they do much of the work expected of wives, but receive few of the benefits that married women gain from their nuptials. Cohabiting women increase their shares of housework from their days of living independently upon signing a joint lease, for example (Gupta 1999; Shelton and John 1993; South and Spritze 1994). Co-residential couples are less likely to pool their income, which often results in women paying greater shares of their individual income in an attempt to keep their economic arrangements absolutely “equal” by ensuring that each partner pays exactly 50% of the household expenses (Elizabeth 2001; Heimdal and Houseknecht 2003). Further, cohabiting women are unable to utilize their partners’ economic credit (Weiss 1997), and do not benefit from the enforceable trust deemed unique to marriage (Cherlin 2000; Pollak 1985). Social class does matter. Working class cohabiting women may be especially disadvantaged because they are more likely than

middle class cohabiting women to be both supporting children within their co-residential unions and to have relatively low incomes (Manning 2001) and also to be in partnerships where the most traditionally gendered household burdens fall primarily upon their shoulders.

Working class individuals, especially working class men, have more gender-traditional attitudes than middle class men and women (Aronson 2003; Deutsch 1999; Ellwood and Jencks 2004; McCabe 2005; Rubin 1976; 1994, though see Schnittker, Freese, and Powell 2003 for exception). This may be due in part to the “liberalizing” effect of higher education, one of the distinguishing features of the middle class (Myers and Booth 2002; Petola et al. 2004). The intersection of various features of social class (primarily income, occupational prestige, and education) can be complicated, however, when determining attitudes. Petola et al. (2004), for example, find that both women with lower income and also those with higher education are more likely to identify themselves as subscribing to feminist ideals. It is unclear what might occur in a relationship if only one partner has completed higher education; whether that partner is able to transfer his or her “liberalized” attitudes to the less educated partner remains to be seen.

More egalitarian attitudes do not necessarily translate into less conventional behavior, but some evidence suggests that middle class individuals are more egalitarian in action as well (Goldscheider and Waite 1991). Middle class women generally do a smaller share of the housework and/or outsource the household labor to lower class women (de Ruijter, Treas, and Cohen 2005; Hochschild 1989; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Shelton and John 1993) when at least one member of the couple has a relatively high level of income or education, though some evidence suggests that it is the resources of

the female partner alone that matter (Davis and Greenstein 2004). Women with more education are also more likely than less educated women to out earn their husbands, to spend a greater period of time in the paid labor force, and to remain employed even after the birth of a child rather than taking on more specialized familial roles (England, Garcia-Beaulieu, and Ross 2004; Hynes and Clarkberg 2005; Winslow-Bowe 2006). Still, gender does matter for middle and upper-middle class couples (e.g., Blair-Loy 2003; Mason and Goulden 2004; Tichenor 1999; 2005). Tichenor (1999; 2005) found in her study of primarily middle class couples in which women had higher incomes, occupational statuses, and/or education levels than their male partners that most of the couples did their best to hide or minimize their status and income differences. Further, women did a greater share of housework as a way of maintaining the conventional gender order, at least within the home. Despite having more power than their husbands in the public sphere, within the home women deferred to their husbands' desires, at least in terms of household labor. Whether these gendered expressions of power differ among working and middle class cohabitators remains to be seen.

Theories of Power within Intimate Relationships

I frame this work around two primary theories of the determinants of power within intimate unions. I use relative resources theory and gender theory as alternative explanations for the balance of power within romantic relationships. I then address the ways in which individuals feel about inequalities within their unions using research on equality versus equity within intimate unions. These conceptualizations of power will be critical in examining the gendered nature of power within cohabiting unions.

According to relative resources theory, those individuals who hold a greater share of the “resources” (education, income, occupational prestige, attractiveness, etc.) in a relationship have greater decision-making power within the union (Blumberg and Coleman 1989; Cherlin 2000). According to Blumberg and Coleman (1989), women with more relative resources should have greater decision making power regarding fertility, economics, and domesticity, greater sexual fulfillment, and more equality in housework, childcare, and conflict resolution. They could choose to do less housework, for example, or control a greater share of the household’s disposable income. Some evidence supports this perspective. Married women who have more education than their partners do, or who earn a greater share of the household income, do less housework than women with less education and income (Bianchi et al. 2000; Bittman et al. 2003; Davis and Greenstein 2004). Similarly, Deutsch (1999) found that couples with similar occupational prestige are more likely to share parenting responsibilities more equally.

Although some evidence suggests that relative resources theory determines which member of an intimate, heterosexual couple has more power within the relationship, it cannot explain all findings. Despite their resources, many women still have less power than do men, and their invisible, unpaid labor is less valued than the work that men do in the private sphere (Devault 1991). Couples in which women out earn their partners or have more prestigious careers often choose to continue defining the man as the “primary wage earner” and afford him the privileges of providership, such as avoidance of the most onerous household chores and access to a greater share of disposable income (Potuchek 1992, 1997; Hochschild 1989; Vogler 1998). Other researchers find that women do even more work around the home when they become the primary wage

earners in order to help the man maintain his hegemonic masculine identity (Brines 1994; Tichenor 1999). In these instances, it is gender, and not relative resources, that determines who receives the power and privileges within the household. Gender theory explains these findings by noting that gender is a primary stratifier in society that trumps all other resources (Brines 1994; Ferree 1990; Komter 1989; Lorber 1994; Tichenor 2005). Gender is performed by individuals on a routine basis and reinforced by interactions with others (Ferree 1990; Potuchek 1992; Risman 2004; West and Zimmerman 1987). However, it is not created anew in each interaction nor is it engaged in with absolute agency, but is instead shaped and constrained by the larger social structure (Martin 2004; Risman 2004).

Although the balance of power may be determined by which partner has more relative resources, by the sex of the partners within the relationship, or by some combination of both, relative resources and gender theory tell us little about the ways that couples feel about how power is exercised within individual unions. Despite not sharing exactly equally in their financial and household responsibilities, cohabitators may think that their contributions are equitable or fair because they believe that, across the course of their relationships, they have received as much as they have given. Alternatively, they may think that their relationships are equitable because they view them as “more equal” than the stereotypical images of married couples, even if they do not share their division of labor exactly equally. Previous research supports this observation. Controlling for actual hours of housework, individuals, especially women, feel that household labor is more fair when men do more female-typed housework, the couple argues less about household chores, and housework is perceived as interesting, appreciated, and

manageable (Gager 1998; John, Shelton, and Luschen 1995; Sanchez and Kane 1996).

In fact, couples use a variety of strategies to maintain the appearance of equity even though housework tends to disproportionately tax the female partner. In her study of dual earning, mostly working and middle class married couples, Gager (1998) found that many women who did more of the household labor labeled their housework as enjoyable or a way of caretaking. It allowed them an arena in which to express superiority within the relationship; they used this notion to allow themselves to reframe the inequality. Others justified their greater shares as equitable because of their husband's other positive emotive qualities or higher earnings, or by comparing themselves or their partners to parents or peers (Gager 1998). In terms of housework performance, it appears that perceptions of fairness (equity) are more important than actual contributions (equality). Perceived inequity, especially for women, leads to lower satisfaction within marriages (Frisco and Williams 2003). Further, when couples have very disparate views on what constitutes fairness in sharing the household labor, their relationships are more likely to end (Hohmann-Marriott 2006). This is particularly true for cohabiting couples, whose "looser bonds" allow them to more easily discontinue their relationships and seek out others with whom their views are more compatible.

Measuring Power in Intimate Unions

Following in the footsteps of Blood and Wolfe (1960), numerous family scholars have explored the ways in which men and women enact power in intimate relationships. Much of this focuses on household decision making surrounding which partners' employment is prioritized (e.g., Becker and Moen 1999; Jacobs and Gerson 2004), the division of domestic labor and child care (e.g., Bianchi et al. 2000; Bittman et al. 2003;

Blaisure and Allen 1995; Gershuny, Bittman, and Brice 2005; Hochschild 1989; Klute, Crouter, Sayer, and McHale 2002; Perry-Jenkins and Crowter 1995; Peterson and Gerson 1992; Pyke and Coltrane 1996; Risman 1998), or decision-making about purchases (Lundberg and Pollak 1996; Reiss and Webster 2004; Vogler 1998; Yount 2005) and leisure pursuits (Pyke 1996; Sayer 2005; Walker 1996). The bulk of this research focuses on married couples (e.g., Bianchi et al. 2000; Brines 1994; Pyke and Coltrane 1996; Tichenor 2005) or dating individuals (Bailey 1989; Laner and Ventrone 1998; Ross and Davis 1996), although some studies have begun to explore whether the exercise of power differs between and among cohabiting couples (e.g., Brines and Joyner 1999; Ciabattari 2004; Shelton and John 1993; South and Spitze 1994).

This research on gender, power, and intimate unions highlights the persistence of traditional role expectations for both men and women, despite the growth of egalitarian attitudes. In part because of the fairly egalitarian attitudes of those who live together without marriage, cohabitation as an area of study has recently become more popular. Still, most of the studies on cohabitation only operationalize gendered power along a single dimension: housework or paid labor, but rarely both. Here, I review the literature that is available on cohabitation and gender regarding paid work and household labor.

Paid Work

Despite changing norms that allow women to participate in both the private and public realms (Sayer, Cohen, and Casper 2004), gendered expectations for men remain deeply entrenched and intensely rigid (Blee and Tickamyer 1995; Taylor, Tucker, and Mitchell-Kernan 1999). Women are able to choose to work, although women with children must not allow their work lives to supercede their role as “mothers” (Hays 1996;

Stone and Lovejoy 2004) and experience significantly more work-family conflict than do working men (Blair-Loy and Wharton 2004). Men's options to stay at home with children or as househusbands are not socially supported (Brescoll and Uhlmann 2005). For men, being a "good provider" is a defining hallmark of manhood (Bernard 1981; Martin 2003; Ridgeway 1997; Townsend 2002; Ward 2004), especially among white men (Taylor et al. 1999). Although recent evidence suggests that the definition of "a good provider" has been modified to include providing emotional, as well as financial, support for the family and accepting or even welcoming their partners' financial contributions, these men still expect to receive the privileges of providership, including having a wife who will manage most of the labor at home, having their own careers privileged over their partners', and having greater access to discretionary monies (Hochschild 1989; Orrange 2002, 2003; Press 2004; Townsend 2002; Wilkie 1993). These privileges, which persist regardless of which partner actually earns the bulk of the household income (Brines 1994; Potuchek 1994, 1997; Tichenor 2005; Vogler and Pahl 1994), led Schwartz (1994:111) to conclude that the provider role is, "...the lynchpin of marital inequality..."

Paid work and financial control appear to be a way for cohabitators to "do gender" as well. Cohabitators are distinct from married couples in many ways (cf. Brien, Lillard, and Waite 1995; Schoen and Weinick 1993; Thomson and Collelo 1993), including being less likely to pool their income (Heimdal and Houseknecht 2003; Winkler 1997), with some cohabiting women insisting on maintaining separate funds or complete control over their personal earnings as a way of demonstrating independence (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983; Elizabeth 2001). In addition, cohabitators earn similar shares of money, with women in couples in which both partners are employed earning about 90% of their male partners'

income (Brines and Joyner 1999; Sassler and McNally 2003). Still, a number of cohabitators privilege the male partner's employment and income over the female's. Cohabiting men's demonstrations of their ability to provide (i.e., income and employment), for example, appear to provide a greater capacity to advance a cohabiting union to marriage (though Oppenheimer 2003 and Sassler and McNally 2003 find no relationship between cohabiting men's income and the advancement of the relationship to marriage), or maintain the stability of the relationship in a way that women's abilities to provide do not (Oppenheimer 2003; Manning and Smock 1995; Sassler and McNally 2003; Sassler and Schoen 1999; Smock, Manning, and Porter 2005; Wu and Pollard 2000). Some evidence suggests that women's relatively higher earnings may even be destabilizing to cohabiting unions (Brines and Joyner 1999; Wu and Pollard 2000).

Housework

Housework remains a topic of great interest to gender and family scholars. Even though women have decreased the amount of housework they do over the last few decades and men have slightly increased their amount, closing the gap somewhat, women still do 1.8 times more housework than do men (Bianchi et al. 2000). Time availability and relative resources are able to explain some of the gendered differences in participation in household labor (Bianchi et al. 2000; Bittman et al. 2003; Davis and Greenstein 2004; Gershuny 2005), but other evidence suggests that housework is a readily apparent way in which couples can "do gender"- women by doing the housework and men by avoiding it (Bernard 1981; Brines 1999; Evertson and Nermo 2005; Hochschild 1989; Schwartz 1994; Tichenor 1999). Not all of the blame for the discrepancy can be placed on men, however. Some women assume the lion's share of the

housework or do the dirtiest “indoor” cooking and cleaning tasks as a way of bolstering their femininity and maintaining control over the private domain; others view household labor as a “natural” expression of familial love (Allen and Hawkins 1999; Devault 1991; Greenstein 1994; Gerson 1985; Hochschild 1989, 2003). Household labor becomes an arena in which masculine *and* feminine gendered expectations can be acted upon.

Further, as couples progress through various relationship stages, each successive union transition appears to make the division even more traditional, with men decreasing the amount of housework they do when moving from dating to cohabiting, and decreasing the amount even further if they move from cohabitation to marriage (Gupta 1999).

Cohabiting women still do significantly more household labor than do their male counterparts (Shelton and John 1993; South and Spitze 1994). Some evidence suggests that married couples in which the woman has higher relative resources than her partner do more similar shares of housework, but it is unclear whether this holds for cohabiting couples (Bianchi et al. 2000; Bittman et al. 2003; Davis and Greenstein 2004; Pyke and Coltrane 1996) Ciabatteri (2004) found that cohabiting men who were less committed to their partners did a smaller share of household chores, but women’s shares remained high regardless of their future intentions for the relationship. It is likely that plans for the future of the relationship, as well as relative resources and gendered expectations, influence the household division of labor.

These studies suggest important intersections between gendered expectations in paid work and housework though few studies capture both dimensions. They also provide tantalizing hints regarding the way in which changes might transpire. It remains

to be seen, however, what role social class has on the enactment of gender in these two dimensions among cohabiting couples.

In this study I examine the ways that gender is constructed among working, class-straddling, and middle class cohabiting couples, reflexively searching for similarities and differences, and the meanings that those differences hold. I investigate the ways that these cohabiting couples “do gender” through their work orientation, financial arrangements, control of household finances, and housework. Finally, I explore the ways that their constructions of gender have changed since moving in together and the changes they anticipate undergoing in the future.

Chapter 2: Data and Methods

Qualitative methods are uniquely suited to study the process by which cohabiting couples construct gender within their relationships as they are more able to expose these processes than can survey data (Altheide and Johnson 1998; Berg 1998; Charmaz 1983). These 61 couples (122 individuals) were interviewed as part of a larger line of research. This sample includes 27 middle class, 26 working class, and 8 class straddling couples, all of whom were living in the greater Columbus metropolitan area. In addition to being asked about their experiences with paid work and housework and asked to “tell the story” about the progression of their relationships, couples were also questioned about their future family desires, attitudes about cohabitation and marriage, and experiences within their families of origin.

Recruitment and Screening

The couples were recruited in different ways based upon the desired social class characteristics of the couples. The working class couples were recruited primarily from fliers posted at a local community college and two area street fairs. The middle class couples were recruited primarily through fliers posted in grocery stores, coffee shops, and restaurants as well as a posting on an online community bulletin board. Internet recruitment was done on Craig’s List, an online community-specific forum where everything from employment opportunities to furniture for sale is advertised. Although online recruitment in general may result in a higher income, more educated sample

(Hamilton and Bowers 2006), in this instance (where middle class participants were the desired respondents) it was an effective way of reaching the target sample. Class straddling couples were recruited both at a local community college and from fliers posted in community locations. In five instances, couples were referred to the project by colleagues, friends or family members of the researchers. Although some additional snowball sampling might have taken place (with participants informing their friends about the study), referrals from previous participants were rarely mentioned by participants as the way in which they learned about the study.

Participants were recruited and interviewed between the summers of 2004 and 2006. Fewer than half of those couples who responded to the ad met the screening criteria (income/education/occupation requirements were not listed on the flier). In order to be eligible for interview, couples had to have been living together for at least three months at the time of their interview to ensure that they had had time to become accustomed to their new union states. As a result, the least stable group of cohabitators is not included in the sample (Bracher and Santow 1998). Further, all individuals must have been between 18 and 35 years old at the time they were screened in order to capture a group of individuals who were in their prime family formation years. Purposive sampling (Berg 2004) was employed in order to ensure that participating individuals were members of the “working class” or “middle class”. Social class is typically assessed by some combination of education, income, and occupation. For this group of participants, most of whom are fairly young, occupation and income may be problematic ways of measuring social class as many are just leaving college and/or at the beginning of their occupational trajectories meaning that they may be at relatively low-wage, entry-level jobs. For example, those

who did not attend college and instead entered the workforce directly may actually earn higher incomes in their early 20's than their college-educated counterparts due to their increased years of experience. However, those with more education are able to surpass the working class in terms of income and occupational prestige. Still, we did establish minimum income levels; all couples were required to earn a combined reported income of greater than \$15,000 from a source other than public or familial assistance; reflecting their higher levels of education and slightly older ages, all middle class couples earned a minimum combined income of \$25,000 at the time they were screened. We used education level as the primary screening criteria for determining whether couples were placed in the "working class" or "middle class" sub-samples. Couples in which both partners had less than a bachelor's level education were placed in the working class group, while those couples in which both partners had at least a bachelor's degree were classified as middle class.

Among eight couples, one partner held a bachelor's degree and one partner had less than a bachelor's level education. Reviews of past qualitative, class-based literature failed to determine exactly how other researchers have grouped couples with mixed education levels (e.g., Hochschild 1989; Rubin 1994), classified couples using only one member of the couple if both were employed full time (e.g., Lareau 2003), or explained that social class is difficult to classify deductively due to the complexities of combining traditional markers of social class (income, education, and occupation) with cultural factors such as dress, dialect, hobbies, and attitudes (Gullestad 1984; Lamont 2000; Lareau 1989; Rupp 1997; Stacey 1990). Here, these couples will be discussed as a separate group, neither working nor middle class, but somewhere in-between. Because

social class is somewhat fluid, it is possible that these couples will eventually move to the middle class if the non-degreed partners become credentialed. Two class straddlers with some college education were currently enrolled in college at the time of their interviews; one was in an associate's degree program, and the other was enrolled in a four year university.

Examining these eight couples as a distinct group provides several opportunities. First, although there are other couples who have educational differences (e.g., one partner has a master's degree while the other has a bachelor's), the difference between having a four-year degree and having less than a four-year degree is associated with a variety of life outcomes that influence family processes and union transitions. Men who do not have college degrees are experiencing a decline in their wages, cohabiting men with college educations are more likely to marry and less likely to separate, and college-educated white women are much less likely to have out-of-wedlock births than their non college educated peers (Ellwood and Jencks 2004; Sayer, Cohen, and Casper 2004; Smock and Manning 1997). By examining those couples in which one partner has a bachelor's degree and the other does not, I will be able to see if having a college degree confers greater power upon one partner to direct the division of labor in the relationship in the way he/she prefers.

Second, a college education has a liberalizing effect on gender role attitudes (Aronson 2003; McCabe 2005; Myers and Booth 2002; Petola, Milkie, and Presser 2004, though see Schnittker, Freese, and Powell 2003 for exception). However, it is unclear if the "liberalized" attitudes of one college educated partner are sufficient to lead to more egalitarian behaviors within a relationship or whether both partners must have university

degrees in order to ensure a more equal division of labor. By examining the feelings these eight couples have about their divisions of labor, I may be able to determine if the degreed member of a couple is able to pass his/her attitudes about desired gendered behaviors on to their less educated partners.

Finally, since two men and six women have college degrees while their partners do not, I can examine which factor confers the most power to these couples- sex or a higher education. If, for example, those women with higher levels of education are more advantaged in their divisions of labor than their less educated counterparts, it may be possible to conclude that, for these cohabitators, women who have degrees have more power to get their partners to share in the housework. If, however, these women are actually doing more of the housework in order to “make up” for their higher educations (e.g., Brines 1994; Tichenor 2005) or are unable to get their male partners to take on an equitable share of the division of labor, their higher educations may not grant them any more status within their unions than their less-educated female counterparts.

Sample Information

Descriptive results of the entire sample are presented in Appendix A1. The men in this sample are, on average, 2.5 years older than their partners (the mean age is 27.3 years for men and 24.8 years for women). For the majority of couples (73% of the working class, 50% of the class straddlers, and 63% of the middle class couples) both partners' ages are within four years of one another. Forty-two percent of the working class, 63% of the class straddlers, and 78% of the middle class couples are white; 15% of the working class, 13% of the class straddlers, and 4% of the middle class are black; and one middle class and one working class couple are Hispanic. Thirty-eight percent of the working

class, 25% of the class straddlers, and 15% of the middle class couples are interracial.

Appendix A2 details the pairings of these interracial couples.

Among 20 working class, 8 class straddling, and 22 middle class couples, neither partner has ever been married; in the remaining couples, one partner was divorced. Most couples, particularly among the class straddling and middle class couples, have no children.

The modal level of education among the working class couples is some college for each partner (77%) and among middle class couples is a bachelor's degree for each partner (54%). In order to make more accurate comparisons, income was standardized to 2005 equivalents. The average yearly income for working class couples was \$37,447, This is somewhat lower than the state mean earnings of \$43,371 (U.S. Census Bureau 2008). Among the middle class, mean household earnings of \$67,405 was somewhat higher than the state average. The mean household income of the class straddling couples was \$54,051. Couple-level incomes for the working class range from \$18,610 to \$89,534 and \$24,219 per year to \$169,532 per year among the middle class. The highest earning couple among the working class includes a postman and a waitress. The lowest earning middle class couple is one in which the female partner had recently given birth to the couple's second child and was staying at home with the children while her male partner finished graduate school. Class straddling couples earned between \$35,152 and \$72,000 per year. Among 46% of working class, 44% of middle class couples and 38% of class straddling, the male earns at least 61% of the household income. In 35% of working class, 44% of middle class, and 50% of class straddling couples each partner earns within 40-60% of the household income, and in the remaining 19% working class, 11% middle

class, and 13% of class straddling couples the female partner earns at least 61% of the household income. Occupations for those in the working class sample included such jobs as telemarketer, wait staff, and computer repairperson. Middle class occupations included architect, computer network/systems analyst, teacher, and respiratory therapist. Although some class straddling individuals had college educations, none of them were employed in positions that required a bachelor's degree. Of the working class sample, fewer than half of the individuals were attending school and, of them, very few were attending full time and all but one was also working. Eight of the 54 middle class individuals were currently attending school as well as working; all were graduate or second-degree students. Two class straddling individuals were pursuing degrees (one associate's and one bachelor's). Appendices A3, A4, and A5 provide further information about the working class, middle class, and class straddling couples respectively. Overall, this sample of working class, middle class, and class straddling couples in the Columbus, Ohio, metropolitan area differs from a nationally representative sample of same-age working and middle class cohabiting women and their partners [from the National Survey of Family Growth, 2002] in that the Columbus sample has slightly higher incomes and are somewhat more educated than the nationally representative sample, includes a smaller percentage of women who are more educated than their male partners, and is composed of a slightly greater share of couples in which both partners are white. Appendix B further details these differences.

Analytic Approach

Interviews with each individual lasted between one and three hours. Each partner was interviewed at the same time in order to ensure that they were not able to discuss the

questions or their answers with one another before being interviewed. The interviews took place in separate rooms, however, using two interviewers per couple. Interviewers alternated between interviewing the male and female members of each couple. Each individual was informed that interviews were confidential and it was further clarified that their answers would never be released to their partners. Audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim, and then the recordings were erased. All names and identifying features have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the respondents. For ease of reading, repeated words and phrases and filler words such as “um” and “you know” were removed from the quotes used in this work (see Lareau 2003).

Although individuals were interviewed separately, the unit of analysis for this project is the couple. Therefore, following the interviews, couples’ transcripts were placed together for comparison. Middle class transcripts were coded in ATLAS.ti to facilitate data management, with coding schemes determined both from past research (deductively) and emerging from repeated readings of the transcripts (inductively). A modified version of Burawoy’s (1998) extended case method served as the model for the overall analysis. Burawoy’s extended case method acknowledges that the researcher has preconceptions that will necessarily influence the interpretation of the data. In this method a particular theory (here, gender theory (Ferree 1990) in which gender is constructed by each individual through their interactions with other people and with social institutions) is used to frame the examination of the data. Relative resources theory was also used in the axial coding stage. Though Burawoy advocates its use with case studies, I have extended it here to analyze semi-structured interviews.

The final version of the questionnaire used is included in Appendix C. “Probes” indicate prompts which were asked only when the answers did not emerge spontaneously throughout the interviews. Questions in italics were not originally asked during the first round of data collection but were added following the first 28 working and class straddling interviews as it became apparent that the additional questions could yield valuable information about couples’ attitudes toward reproductive labor and work orientations.

Based primarily upon questions that asked individuals about their financial arrangements, employment histories and plans, and divisions of household labor, open coding was originally used to generate a number of themes (Strauss and Corbin 1998). These included financial control, arrangements of tasks, feelings about housework, and financial contributions. Based upon these themes, a number of categories emerged from the narratives (Strauss and Corbin 1998), such as “counter-conventional” in which the female partner was primarily responsible for providing economically for her partner, or “conventional” in which the male partner was credited with providing the majority of the household income while the female partner performed most of the household tasks. The responses of both partners were used to construct couple-level categories, which then were used in a qualitative content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon 2005; Sandelowski 2000). Following initial coding and analysis, axial coding was used to examine the linkages within and between topics (such as respondents’ divisions of labor in light of their plans for the future of their relationships).

In this work, the ways in which working, middle, and class straddling cohabiting couples construct gender within their relationships through housework and paid work are

explored. An extensive comparison among the three class-based samples is presented in order to examine the similarities and differences among the two central socioeconomic segments of the population. Finally, the ways that these couples' gendered enactments of housework, work orientation, financial control, and financial arrangements have changed over time, and the ways that they intend to change their divisions of labor in the future are discussed.

Chapter 3: Summary of Findings

The 61 working class, class straddling, and middle class couples in this sample fell into one of four patterns: conventional, contesting, equalitarian, and counter-conventional. Appendix D provides a visual depiction of the typologies of couples by social class. Here, I will preview the distinguishing characteristics of each of these four typologies in terms of couples' gendered behaviors. In addition, I will address other social and demographic characteristics that set these four groups apart before detailing the work orientations, financial arrangements, financial control, and domestic divisions of labor of the groups in the next three chapters.

Conventional Couples

The hallmark of the conventional couples is that the man is credited with paying a greater share of the household expenses and having a higher status occupation than his female partner. A total of 22 couples (nine working class, five class straddling and eight middle class) have conventional divisions of labor. In addition to the couples' financial arrangements and occupation, there are other features that many of these couples have in common. A large number privilege the man's occupation over the woman's and have given the male partner control over the household finances. Many of their female partners are doing a larger share of the household labor, in part to "make up for" paying a smaller share of the household bills. Most of these couples are satisfied with their current arrangements, even if they did not intentionally set out to have a conventional division of labor. A number of them have seen their unions get more or less conventional over time

due to changes in one partner's employment or schooling, a pregnancy, or middle and class-straddling men's recognitions of inequality within their division of labor; couples differ on whether they expect their divisions of labor to change in the future.

These 22 couples differ from the other three groups in terms of some of their demographic and social characteristics, as well. Compared to all of the working class couples, the working class conventional couples were among the most stable couples interviewed. They had been together longer than any other type of couple and were most likely to have plans for marriage. On the whole, they were racially homogamous, and, while about half had children, most were not living with their progeny because the children were often from the male partners' prior relationships. The amount of time these men saw their children ranged from weekly to less than once per year. In addition, these working class conventional couples were least likely to have previously cohabited or been married. Their personal attributes and hegemonic division of labor shared by these couples may have led to their greater sense of stability within their unions.

Some of the same distinguishing characteristics are true among the middle class and class straddling conventional couples. The conventional couples were most likely among the middle class and class straddling couples to agree that they plan to marry in the future, which may, in part, be a characteristic of their life stages as the mean age for both the men and women in this group were slightly older than the other groups. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of the men in this group out earn their partners, but most of the middle class couples have the same level of education and two of the five class straddling women are more educated than their partners. Therefore, it may be that relative earnings are more important than relative education for middle class and class straddling

cohabitators in encouraging specialized roles. The stability these couples exhibit as well as their satisfaction with the way in which they have constructed gender may result from the amount of time they have lived together; nearly 90% of the middle class conventional couples have lived together for more than one year. The more common scenario for their class straddling counterparts was to live together for a very short period of time upon being interviewed.

Contesting Couples

Contesting couples are those in which least one partner (generally the female) is actively challenging traditional gender norms in work orientation, financial control, or domestic labor, with housework being the most commonly contested arena. Most of these couples also share their financial obligations equally, but because couples in other groups do this as well, simply splitting the bills does not make a couple “contesting” unless at least one partner is also challenging conventional norms in another arena of the relationship. Twenty-five couples (11 of whom are working class, two of whom are class straddling, and 12 of whom are middle class couples) are contesting conventional gender norms. The contesting women have had various degrees of success with their demands. Working class women have been least successful at getting their male partners to take on more equal shares of the housework, but their middle class and class straddling counterparts have gotten their male partners to do a larger share of the housework than they originally did. Nonetheless, they must use a variety of strategies and a great deal of vigilance to maintain that equality. Of note is that, contrary to the idea that cohabitation is a “new”, more egalitarian kind of relationship, very few couples are actively working together to intentionally create an egalitarian union on all dimensions. Those few couples

who are doing so are all among the middle class. A class-based difference also exists in satisfaction with these unions. Working class women are often less satisfied with their unions than middle class and class straddling women, in part because they must exert a great deal of effort in constantly negotiating their divisions of labor; in contrast, class straddling and middle class couples are more satisfied within their relationships. Since they have been together, a significant number of these couples have experienced changes in their divisions of labor due to employment, schooling, or (middle class and class straddling) women's insistence on greater equality; a sizeable number expect their unions to get more conventional should they have children with their partners, however.

Continually challenging hegemonic gender norms can be quite destabilizing for a relationship (Brines and Joyner 1999). The working class contesting couples, in particular, have other characteristics that might also be destabilizing. These couples are all heterogamous in terms of the ways that they wish to adhere to gendered norms. In addition, this group is characterized by large age disparities between partners, racially mixed pairings, and a lack of agreement regarding having children and the future of their relationships. These differences may result in part from the fact that these couples had the most rapid transitions from dating to move-in, which may have given them less time to assess compatibility.

Among the middle class, contesting couples are more homogenous than their working-class counterparts. Most of the middle class contesting couples are of similar ages and, like most of the middle class sample, are the same races/ethnicities. While their levels of education vary, half earn near equal amounts of the household income. If, in fact, income determines equality for the middle class, this explains why most members of

this group are sharing financial and domestic obligations fairly equally. Middle class testers appear to be more stable than working class testing couples. This may be because over half of the middle class testing group waited at least 12 months before moving in together, which gave them more time to determine whether or not they would be well-suited. The fact that many have lived together for less than a year may explain why their plans for the futures of their relationships are less clear than for some other middle class groups. The relatively brief durations of cohabitation may also explain why they are testing their roles within their relationships; with time, each partner may find a balance that he or she finds equitable.

Because there are only two class straddling testing couples, it is difficult to draw conclusions about their social and demographic characteristics. Like most of the middle class, both couples are racially homogamous and have lived together for a relatively short period of time. However, they are similar to their working class counterparts in that both couples have large age disparities.

Equalitarian Couples

Three middle class couples are different from the testing couples because, rather than at least one partner having to struggle to try to achieve equality in terms of work orientation, financial divisions, financial control, or housework, both partners simply assume that equality should be the ruling variable in their divisions of labor and act accordingly. Termed “equalitarian” couples, these partners have always shared financial obligations and housework fairly without any resistance from either partner. In addition, partners have similar work orientations and each partner controls his or her own income. It is possible that these couples naturally assume that their divisions of labor

should be equal because they view their unions as similar to roommate situations. Since all finished college recently, this is possible. Alternatively, these couples may be the first generation that has internalized egalitarian gender norms so much that they assume that equality will be the ruling variable within their relationships.

Equalitarian couples (those who are sharing housework and financial obligations fairly equally without having to struggle to achieve that equality) do not appear among the working class or class straddling sample. However, the three middle class couples in this group share several common traits. These couples are, by far, the lowest earning middle class couples in the sample. In addition, all of these couples are similarly matched in terms of age, race/ethnicity, and level of education, and most earn similar amounts of money. Most of these couples did wait between one and two years to move in together, which may mean that they had more time to assess whether or not they had similar views about sharing financial and domestic responsibilities. Still, they often disagree about the futures of their relationships. Perhaps some are waiting until their individual careers are more stable to make decisions about the permanence of their unions

Counter-Conventional Couples

The final type of couples that emerged based upon their gendered divisions of labor is the counter-conventional couples. Six working class, one class straddling, and four middle class couples have counter-conventional arrangements. These couples are set apart from the others because the female partner pays the majority of the household expenses. Most of the women in this group are also doing the vast majority of the domestic labor. Many of these men and women are uncertain about their occupational paths. In most couples, each partner controls his or her own income, but a few female

partners have greater control over the household income. Still, despite the fact that the women are able to limit their partners' spending money and determine their household budgets, the men are often contributing very little to the common pool. Therefore, in some cases, the women are actually providing allowances to their partners from their own earnings. Couples differ in their satisfaction with this arrangement based upon social class. Working and class straddling women are dissatisfied with their arrangements, in part because their male partners are unrepentant about or minimize their lack of contributions. Middle class women are satisfied with their arrangements because they view the situations as temporary and their male partners are apologetic about their temporary dependence. A few of these couples have experienced changes in their divisions of labor due to employment, school, or (middle class) women's insistence, and most expect that their unions will become more conventional over time

The working class counter-conventionals were the most likely working class subsample to be living with children. There is a bifurcation among this group based upon parental status. Of the three fathers in the group, the men have an average age of 30, but have yet to reach their educational or occupational goals; still, all are bringing in at least some income, which may be what leads to their partners being fairly happy within their relationships. The other three couples in the working class, counter conventional sample are quite young (their average age is 21); the women in these couples and the class straddling woman are quite dissatisfied in their relationships and hope their male partners will soon change their ways and become more fiscally responsible.

Although only four middle class couples are classified as counter-conventional, the greater satisfaction of the middle class counter-conventional women than their

working class counterparts may be due, in part, to the similarity of the partners. Most couples have equal levels of education and, while the women currently out earn their partners, in three of the four middle class couples each partner earns at least 40% of the household income. These relationships have all been relatively short, with couples moving in together fairly rapidly. In addition, three of the four have lived together for less than a year. The brief duration of their relationships, in addition to the men's lack of financial stability, may be why these couples are less certain about their futures together than either the conventional or contesting middle class couples. It is also possible that these counter-conventional couples are a rarity among the middle class; others in their situation may never choose to co-reside or their unions may dissolve shortly after move-in. These couples, like the working class counter-conventionals, do have a few other potentially destabilizing factors; middle class counter-conventionals are likely to be previously married; in addition, one of the two middle class men who has a child from a previous relationship was a member of this group.

In the next four chapters, I will further delineate the experiences of these couples and describe, in depth, their relative work orientations, financial contributions, financial control, and domestic responsibilities beginning with the conventionals, then moving to the contesting and equalitarian couples and concluding with the counter-conventional couples. For each group, I will further explain the ways that their divisions of labor have evolved during the time that they have been living together and the ways that couples expect their relative financial and domestic responsibilities to change in the future. Finally, I will conclude by summarizing my findings in light of what they mean for the

changing roles of working and middle class men and women in the American family
given the rise of less institutionalized relationship forms, like cohabitation.

Chapter 4: Conventional Couples

Juliana (23) had been friends with Evan (27) for several years before their relationship became romantic. Evan was her friend's older brother, and while they often ran in the same social circle, they were never single at the same time. Finally, after the two were the only ones who showed up at a baseball game that several of their friends were supposed to attend, they realized that they had a connection that went beyond friendship. After a year of dating, the two moved in together. Two months later, they were engaged.

Before moving in together, Evan and Juliana came to agreements on how they would divide their financial and housework responsibilities. Evan knew that Juliana's job as a graduate assistant did not pay well and was happy to pay the majority of the bills. Juliana felt that it was only fair that she do the majority of the household chores in return, but asked that Evan be responsible for the "outdoor" chores. Since Evan, a marketing graduate has more earning potential than Juliana, an athletic trainer, she is happy to play a supporting role in his career. She proudly refers to him as the "breadwinner." Evan is happy to take on this role since he has what he refers to as his "dream job" as an account executive for a major motorcycle company and is satisfied with his and Juliana's current relationship.

Though their lives recently have been consumed with talk of venues and color schemes and bridal parties, Juliana and Evan have also been discussing their future plans for a family. Both plan on having Juliana stay home, at least part time, once they have children, though she says she'd consider returning to work once her children are in kindergarten. With their future before them, it appears that Evan and Juliana's relationship will become even more conventional over time

Juliana and Evan, along with 21 other couples, were classified as having "conventional" divisions of labor. Couples were classified as conventional if the male partners were credited with paying a greater share of the household expenses and having higher status occupations than their female partners. A total of nine working class, five class straddlers and eight middle class couples had conventional divisions of labor.

Among conventional couples, male partners (particularly middle class men) had clearer occupational paths than their female counterparts. In addition, these couples

usually privileged the male partners' work, with women often offering to move for the men's careers or downplaying their own accomplishments to highlight those of their partners. Men generally paid more of the couples' financial obligations, with arrangements ranging from men paying all of the bills to sharing rent and utilities evenly but men covering the grocery or entertainment expenses. Most couples (particularly among the middle class) are not attempting to control one another's income, but among those who are, class differences prevail. Some men have been given or have taken greater control over the household income even if partners' bank accounts are separate, with middle class men attempting to limit their partners' spending while working class and class straddling men apportion a greater share of the couples' discretionary income to themselves. Conventional couples also abide by particular household divisions of labor, most of which disproportionately disadvantage women, particularly those who are working class. Still, most couples are happy with their arrangements, viewing them as equitable because of the men's higher incomes or willingness to occasionally "help" with household chores. Although some of these couples have become more or less conventional over time due to a variety of structural, couple-level, and individual reasons, few anticipate that their divisions of labor will change in the future, at least until they have children. Here, I will detail the paid work orientations, financial arrangements, systems of financial control, and domestic work arrangements of the working, class-straddling, and middle class couples, then examine the ways that their divisions of labor have changed over time and are likely to change in the future.

Work Orientation

During their interviews, individuals were asked to detail their occupational histories and discuss their future plans for education and work. For the conventional couples, a number of themes emerged in terms of their work orientations. Both the male and female partners took a great deal of pride in the man's chosen career and most men (especially middle class men) planned to continue advancing through the occupational ranks. While most conventional women were steady workers, few expressed a desire to move up in their occupations. The future work orientations of the working class women were less clear than those of the middle class, whose education provided the majority of them with specific career trajectories. One theme that emerged regardless of gender and class was the desire for autonomous jobs; however, attaining those jobs only seemed possible for class straddlers and the middle class. Finally, regardless of social class, the men's employment was clearly privileged over the women's: a feature that emerged only among conventional couples.

Pride in Men's Jobs and Plans for Advancement

One common expression of the greater importance placed upon the man's job was the enthusiastic way in which couples touted the men's occupational successes and future prospects. Conventional couples often discussed the prestige of the men's occupations, their earning potential, or the quality of their work. The majority of these men plan to advance within their careers; some of the middle class men have already begun moving upward within their professions, and continued upward mobility is most likely for those with at least a four-year college degree (McMurrer and Sawhill 1998) A few of the class straddling and working class men remain uncertain of their future occupational paths, but

their jobs are still the most prestigious and most central within their relationships.

Choosing a solid career path is a top priority for most of these men.

After proudly listing nearly 20 types of insurance that he was now certified to sell, Jorge, an extremely garrulous 22 year old, excitedly explained a recent job offer he received from a company in his hometown.

I've talked to them since I got my insurance license I've talked to them and I told them that I was in insurance and that my operations manager, she was telling me, "When you come back, give us a call." I mean, right there I could maybe could be making X amount, making 3 or 4 times more than what I'm making [now]!

Jorge was pleased with the work that he did and the fact that his earning potential was growing. Similarly, Keisha (30) was happy to tell the interviewer about the changes she had seen in her partner, Stan. Stan, 31, obtained a job as an orderly after a prolonged period of unemployment. Keisha explained, "He started working at [the hospital] and he started taking care of business. And he'll come home, bring me the paychecks... I'm looking at him like-wait a minute, what happened? You take some pill or something to change you? (laughs)." She added, "He's been working all this time too."

Like these working class couples, employment for the middle class conventional men is more central to the couple, and their occupational plans for upward mobility are clearer than those of their female partners. They, too, demonstrated pride in their ability to achieve in the workplace. Matthew, 30, for example, explained that, because of his abilities, his professors strongly encouraged him to attend graduate school. He said,

I just really excelled in the program and all of my professors were like, "Okay, you're finally starting to wake up, now you can realize that there's way more to this than what we've taught you here, and you can go and work and be ho-hum but, you really oughta think about what's beyond this." So I said, "Okay, what

the hell, I'm just gonna pick three graduate programs that I think are the best and if one of them accepts me, I'll go."

After completing a prestigious graduate program, he received multiple job offers from companies, explaining that he took his current job because the pay was substantially better than his other offers. Evan, an account executive for a well-known motorcycle company, explained that it was not the money, but the prestige of his job that he relished. "When I tell my friends that I work for Harley, they're like, 'Oh wow!' So it's very, it gives me a lot of pride to be able to tell people what I do. Whereas before they were like, 'What?' And you have to sit there and explain it. And now it's like automatic, 'Oh really, you do that?'" He laughingly added, "It gives me an ego." Evan's partner, Juliana, added that her career as an athletic trainer would be secondary to his because, "Evan has a lot more earning potential than I do." Both Evan and Matthew plan to advance within their careers.

Along with the pride they take in the jobs they already have, most of these men plan to continue advancing within their fields. Max, a 29 year old working class man, originally cut his college career short in order to pursue his dreams of becoming a professional football player. Several years later, he is back in school and is finishing his associate's degree in education while working as an administrative assistant and coach at a middle school. He plans to teach on a provisional license after finishing his associate's degree so that the public school system will continue financing his education. Asked about his goals, he noted, "I know right now I'm aiming at the bachelors. Eventually I would love to probably go ahead and go get a masters degree in education and then basically I'll have my choice of which direction I want to go and what I want to do."

Jake, a 26 year old class straddling man, also stopped going to college after spending three years as a theater major. Following a long string of odd jobs, he obtained a position as a systems administrator, where he seems to have found his calling. He noted that he planned to pursue more education and certifications in the field and that “Eventually I would like to get into programming and maybe do, I mean there’s a million fields that you can get into in computers and I’m not entirely certain what I want to end up doing but I’m thinking maybe integrated web programming might be a good thing to do.”

If Max and Jake finish their degrees and continue to move up in their fields, they can enter the ranks of the middle class (McMurrer and Sawhill 1998) Still, their pathways to mobility are not as far along as those of their middle-class counterparts, the majority of whom have already begun the process of advancing within their fields rather than merely preparing to advance. Twenty-four year old Jack, for example, began interning for his financial planning firm while he was still completing his undergraduate degree. Two years later, he is still with the same company working as a financial services associate and studying for his professional certification exams. He noted that in 10 years he would like to be teaching business classes and

...be what they call a senior planner, one of the more planners that actually have a lot more recommendations, a lot more planning of investment issues and making the plan and discussing it and working with clients a lot more intimately than I am now.

Travis, 29, has also worked as an accountant for the same firm for eight years. He explained that, after passing his CPA exam, he began being promoted through the ranks. “I started out as a Staff [Accountant], I’m a Senior Accountant now which is essentially two levels higher. There’re two people between me and the President.” The on-time

college completions of the middle class men allowed them to begin their careers in higher positions, at younger ages, and gave them some of the credentials needed to advance. The working class and class straddling conventional men without degrees who have plans for substantial advancement recognize that finishing college degrees in their fields will likely be a necessary step for occupational mobility. Still, they may find themselves continually behind the curve within their cohorts since they did not obtain their credentials “on time” (in their early 20s). Those who delay entry to college are more likely to complete a two year or vocational degree, rather than a four-year degree, and are less likely to finish school than their counterparts who entered college immediately following high school (Coley 2000; Horn and Nevill 2006), particularly if they are only attending part time (Taniguchi and Kaufman 2005).

Although most have clear career goals, several of the working class and class straddling conventional men are uncertain about their future occupational pathways. Their work is more central for the couple and their current occupations are more prestigious than those of their partners, but they are unclear what their futures hold for them in terms of work. Twenty-eight year old Vic had been attending college intermittently and living off of a dwindling inheritance and what he called “little bum jobs like gas station clerk” when he discovered that his 18-year old partner, Carly, was pregnant. At the time of his interview, Vic was taking greater strides to finish his degree and obtained a steady job at the University press. Still, he was unsure whether he wanted to be a grant-writer or work for a nonprofit company or for an environmental PAC when he completed his degree. Like Vic, Artie, also 28, discussed his desire to find an occupational path that suited him. Artie got a bachelor’s degree in theater studies

immediately following high school, making him the “degreed” partner in his and 24 year old Brandi’s class-straddling relationship. Still, his degree did not seem to play a major role in his working life. Although he has consistently been employed, generally in the computer field, he has never spent more than six months at a company because of his self-labeled “bad attitude.” What asked what he saw himself doing for work in the future, he noted,

That’s a good question. I think about that a lot, and I’m really trying to come up with what I really want to do. IT [Information Technology] is what’s really paying the bills for me but would I like to do something else? Yes. Do I know what that is? No. If I could do whatever I wanted, I think I’d probably like to start a brewery and then somehow find a way to do some acting and stuff like that, maybe some film work but still stay in Ohio but it doesn’t always work out.

When he was asked about his top priority, Artie noted that it was, “Finding out what I want to do career-wise; instead of having just a job I’d like to have a career.” Still, it was unclear how Artie planned to go about establishing himself in a career. In contrast, only one of the 8 middle class conventional men has yet to establish himself in his field with a full time position; he works full time in property management while taking part time and seasonal jobs in his field of interest, art installation design, in an attempt to build enough experience to get a full time job in art. The lower certainty of the working class and class straddling men concerning their future occupational paths may result from the fact that most have less education than the middle class men. Although two of the class straddling conventional men do have bachelor’s degrees, their majors (fine arts and theater studies) do not easily lend themselves toward many specific jobs. Without more schooling, the working class and these two class straddling conventional men’s options for careers, regardless of their desires, will remain somewhat limited.

Autonomous Jobs/Dreams of Autonomy

Although most of these men have taken traditional routes in their occupations by working for various companies, some men were not content with working under such close supervision. One theme that emerged among a substantial number of the conventional men and women was a desire for autonomy---a goal more easily obtained by the class straddling and middle class. Still, a sizable number of the working class men hope to complete a college degree that will allow them to pursue a more autonomous career. Those three middle class women who are self-employed note that they have been able to do so only because their male partners' relatively high incomes allow them to pursue their occupational goals.

Jonathan, 28, a class-straddling independent computer consultant and author of a book on specialized business models, said that he went in to business for himself because he was dissatisfied with corporate life, "I don't get along with authority very well. I really don't do well in the whole corporate type structured hierarchy." He went on to detail the irony of making a living off of chronicling and advising for the same corporate environment that he himself hated working in.

I'm an author so I write books about the development cycle and open source development. And I write for people who are working in those environments, but nobody needs to know that I absolutely abhor it...it's ironic that I write about things that I hate, but, at the same time I get paid for it so I don't care

Class straddling Greg, 35, spent six years in the military before leaving because he felt that the environment was "too political". For the past six years, he has owned a successful construction company. He explained that he began his own business because,

I'm not big on politics so working for The Man, so to speak, so with my innovation and my discipline, I figured why not take my trade, my ability

to communicate with people isn't very personable, so it's easier to do that and be on the front line with somebody rather than being behind a company making them money when I can make myself that money, so that's why I went out on my own.

Although neither Jonathan nor Greg completed their college degrees, each has some college experience (Jonathan spent three years at a very prestigious liberal arts college and Greg completed one and a half years at a state university.) Still, they were able to use their educational experiences and contacts to start their own businesses by gaining experience working for others before venturing out into more autonomous positions. Jonathan, for example, explained that he began his own business by networking at his current job and then freelancing in the evenings with clients.

I actually did a lot of moonlighting when I was at ComputerCorp so I had a sort of built-in client base of people that I'd worked with. So on the weekends, at night, that needed work done when I was still working for ComputerCorp, so I had those contacts and when I left ComputerCorp I just said, "Look, I'm just gonna get, have a go at it."

Derek, 28, who has a degree in English from an ivy-league college, chose a completely different occupational path after graduation. Derek worked for a large computer corporation for eight years to prove his abilities before he was able to take a more autonomous position as a C-programmer at a place where, "My friend who got me the job and myself were able to essentially work on the projects that we wanna work on and sort of set our own schedules and just get things done." Their background experiences, combined with their desires to be autonomous workers, helped all three men become successful in their careers.

The goal of being an autonomous worker is not exclusive to the class straddling or middle class men. In fact, several of the working class conventional men share the same

goal, which is not surprising since Gans (1988) noted that a desire for control is one of the hallmarks of “Middle America”. Ron, 33, a bank employee and part-time disc jockey proudly explained that he wanted to own his own brokerage firm because, “I just do too well at it not to, I mean I could do it on my own instead a splitting the money with anybody.” In contrast to their middle-class counterparts, though, the working class men who dream of autonomy have less clear concepts of how they will actually achieve their aims. Ray, a bookkeeper noted that he would like to own his own business someday. When asked what kind of business he would like to open 31 year old Ray noted, “I’m not exactly sure yet. I just want to be able to work for myself and not have to answer to anybody, make money on my own and not have to worry about paying the other people and just do it myself and that sense of accomplishment along with that.” At the present time, it is unlikely that the working class men will be able to achieve their aspirations since most lack the specialized skills necessary for opening successful businesses.

Approximately half of the working class and several of the class-straddling conventional men hope to return to college, some for the purpose of being able to pursue more autonomous careers. However, none of these men is certain of the type of schooling they ultimately plan to pursue. Instead, like Ray, who wanted to get a bachelor’s degree but who was unclear what he would major in, or 27 year old Jerry, who already has a bachelor’s degree in fine arts but whose partner did not finish college, and noted that in terms of school, “I would like to go farther but I’m just not sure”, these men’s educational goals are quite vague. In addition, their ages may put them at a disadvantage if they do return to college. Although universities are seeking older students, the ability to

return to college becomes more complicated as individuals get older and the requirements of daily life (like the necessity to work full time, demands of children, etc.) intercede.

Like their male counterparts, two class straddling women and one middle class conventional woman have managed to launch their own successful businesses. In contrast to the conventional men who are self-employed, though, none of the women's careers are directly related to their educations; instead, all three have parlayed what once were hobbies into their occupations. Degreed class straddlers Janelle (33) and Olivia (28) both own fitness centers (Janelle has owned a yoga studio for almost 10 years and Olivia recently opened up a franchise branch of a women's only gym); middle class Emily (28) is an independent pastry chef who supplies three restaurants with her wares. The reason that all three women are able to maintain their own businesses is because their partners are able to provide them with a great deal of financial support. Both Janelle and Olivia are putting all of their income toward growing their businesses while their partners pay all of the household expenses and Emily noted that she "pays what she can" every month while her partner pays the rest of the bills. Janelle's partner, Jonathan explained how he felt about their complementarity. He noted,

She doesn't have to worry about, "Is there gonna be money in the account?" or paying the bills or whatever. I'll do that. It's just one less thing or two less things to think about. If you can focus on just a single thing, you're a lot more effective at doing it, whereas if you spread your effort over three or four different things, you don't do any of them very well. You end up screwing up your finances. You end up not paying your bills. You end up not getting the groceries you need. But if all you're focused on is, "This is what I need to get for the house" that's what you do. And you do it very well.

All three of the women who had their own businesses expressed gratitude toward their partners for supporting them financially. Although they have managed to achieve their

own occupational dreams thanks to the financial support of their partners, in exchange, all three women do the vast majority of household labor while trying to grow their businesses. The second shift (Hochschild 1989) is the price they pay to achieve their career goals.

None of the other conventional women have autonomous jobs, though some expressed interest in having their own businesses. Twenty-three year old Stephanie, for example, is trying to start a wedding planning business while still working at a call center since she and Jake rely on both of their incomes to run the household. Because most of their partners do not earn enough to completely support them financially, in part due to their lack of college degrees, it will be difficult for the women like Stephanie to devote all of their energies toward their pursuit of autonomous jobs as Janelle, Olivia, and Emily are able to do.

Women's Occupational Pathways and (Lack of) Plans for Advancement

The vast majority of the middle class conventional women have clear occupational paths and the means to achieve their career aspirations. In contrast, the career plans of the working class and class straddling women are more ambiguous. A very small number of these women, even if they are working in solid professions, intend to try to advance through the occupational ranks. Instead, most are satisfied staying at their current career levels and are focused on aspects of their jobs (such as having nice colleagues or a flexible schedule) other than promotion. Perhaps because their jobs are already more creative and autonomous, the middle class women seem to enjoy their work much more than do the working class and class straddling women.

Many middle class women are quite certain of their career paths. Kristina, 24, for example, enjoys being an architect. Juliana just finished her master's degree in allied health education. She explained that she had spent the last two years as a trainer for the University athletic department and that she was currently, "looking for a[nother] athletic training position. I've applied numerous places and had a few interviews and I'm just kinda waiting to see what comes up." Only Emma, a 30 year old waitress with a degree in political science who hopes to be a photographer but who has had difficulty finding work in that field, and RaShinda, 27, who has an interdisciplinary master's degree in International Affairs/Africana Studies but who is currently staying home with her two young children, seem uncertain how to go about pursuing their occupational goals.

In contrast, over half of the working class and roughly half of the class straddling conventional women have vague occupational ambitions. Stephanie, for example, is the degreed partner in a class-straddling relationship. She has a degree in anthropology, but would like to be a teacher or a writer or an event planner. When asked about how far she would like to pursue her education, Stephanie noted,

I'd love to get a PhD, but I don't even necessarily have to go to school if I can find something that I like. What I'd really like to do is be a writer. I'd really like to be a novelist. But it's so hard to get published and get recognized, and get a contract and all that. So, if that doesn't happen, then I'd like to continue with school and see what becomes of that. Right now I'm trying to start my own business as an event planner because I would really much rather run my own business than be employed by someone else. I'm bad at dealing with authority, so I'm helping a friend to plan her wedding. That's really fun. I'm really enjoying it.

Laura, a 23 year old waitress in a working class union, felt that she may switch occupations in the future but had no clear plan for doing so. She noted, "I don't mind doing--- I enjoy what I do. I mean I like the changing of the people constantly and

interacting with people. I don't know. I might change later on." When asked if she was interested in continuing her education, she remarked, "I've thought about it. I've considered maybe seeing what classes I would be interested in and stuff like that, nothing right now." Because they lack a bachelor's degree or their university educations did not prepare them for specific careers, the paths available to the working class and some class straddling women (like their male partners) are less obvious.

Though their occupations are solid, very few working, middle, or class straddling conventional women detailed plans for advancing within their fields. There are a few exceptions, however, particularly among the middle class. Katherine (25) loves her job as a research coordinator so much that she plans to get a PhD. When asked if she was finished with school, she replied, "Oh no. I have to get a PhD to pursue psychology which I want to do. I want to get a PhD in mental retardation and developmental disabilities, 'cause I do research with children with autism right now and that's the general area that I want to hopefully pursue..." Aubrey is pursuing a graduate degree in early childhood education and thinks she may someday move into administration. However, although these middle class women dream of advancement, their pathways to mobility are not yet as concrete as those of their middle class male counterparts. Katherine noted that she was uncertain as to whether she would be admitted to a graduate program, despite really wanting to attend.

I actually applied last year but to all adult health psych programs in clinical psych, which is extremely competitive and my GRE's aren't stellar, plus my GPA isn't stellar thanks to my freshman year of goofing off. So I'm really hoping that this time will be a lot better. I'm taking a GRE prep course right now actually so we'll see. I'm applying one more time.

Aubrey explained that, as of right now, she was uncertain as to which educational path to pursue to meet her occupational goals. She said, “I was thinking maybe about getting another masters, it might be in administration ‘cause I could see myself moving into a principal position. And then if I went back for a PhD right now, I could see myself going into EdPsych and teaching teachers how to be teachers.” In sum, while a few of the middle class women hope to continue moving up within their professions, exactly how or whether they will achieve their goals remains uncertain.

Similarly, only one working class and one class straddling woman noted that they wished to advance; however, both have made more strides toward achieving their goals than the middle class women who hope to advance in their careers. Working class Tameka, 29, was attending nursing school to obtain what she called a “career, not a job” and wanted to return for more schooling to advance through the ranks. After working for the Bureau of Worker’s Compensation as an administrative assistant, Brandi, the non-degreed partner in a class straddling relationship, decided that she would like to be promoted to an investigator for the agency. She returned to community college to get the degree in law enforcement necessary for the job and currently has one year of classes left to finish in order to complete her associate’s degree. Their goals may be more easily attainable because the path toward achieving them is more straightforward than the goals of the middle class women who hope to advance.

The more common scenario among conventional women is to be employed, but not necessarily hope to advance through the ranks. Juliana, for example, the middle class athletic trainer, explained what she was looking for in a new position. Her desires

centered around a fun, friendly work environment rather than one that offered the opportunity for advancement. She noted,

I would like it to be fun. I don't mind traveling a little bit, but I'm very much a homebody, I don't wanna have to travel all the time with the teams. Something close to home. Right now it's like a 45 minute drive down to here and it kills me every day, so definitely closer to home. Good people. I'd like to work with people closer to my age... I'd like to expand my social circle a little bit.

The same focus on aspects of a job other than advancement was also evident among the working and class straddling women. When asked what she saw herself doing for work in the future, class straddling Natalie, 24, answered, "Same type of work that I'm doing now: accounting and administrative type of work. I like doing that. I mean, unless I went to school for cooking then I would like to be a chef, but that's kind of looking a little too far ahead right now." Ming, who at 29 and about to finish a bachelor's degree in accounting, had one of the highest occupational potentials among the working class conventional women. Still, she had yet to begin applying for a job because she was unhappy about the prospect of full time work. When asked about her top priority, she hesitantly said, "I think I'm looking for full-time job I guess (laughs). I don't like to 'cause, oh, just Monday through Friday and from morning to night and work. It just feel[s] like it's gonna take your whole life there 'cause you're doing the same thing." These women's lack of impetus for progressing at work, regardless of their social class, may result from the fact that many of them view their own occupations as secondary to their partners' careers.

Although few have plans for advancement, most middle class conventional women specifically mentioned how much they enjoy their jobs. Kathleen, for example, a 27 year old apprentice midwife credited her partner Derek with suggesting that she

pursue her chosen field. Once in it, however, she discovered that she had a great deal of passion for the work. Emily, a self-employed pastry chef with a degree in sociology, noted that “I’m not so concerned about my career” in terms of advancement, but said of her job “I really like it. I really like working with flour and sugar (laughs)”. None of the 9 working class conventional women specifically said that they enjoyed their jobs, perhaps because they had less independence and opportunity for creativity in their mostly pink-collar occupations.

Privileging Men’s Jobs

Among both working and middle class conventional couples, especially among the female partners, the theme of privileging the men’s employment emerged again and again. Couples made future relationship plans around only the man’s job, some women ignored or downplayed their own accomplishments in favor of highlighting the educational and career accomplishments of their partners, and couples planned for the female partners to be the trailing spouses. For the middle class women in particular, privileging the men’s jobs often required a significant amount of sacrifice of either the women’s own occupational plans or their relationships. Among working married women, for example, becoming a “trailing spouse” often results in a significant pay deduction (Shauman and Noonan 2007).

The experiences of three working class couples (Valencia and Jorge, Anthony and Diana, and Max and Tameka) illustrate this point. Twenty-two year old Valencia, a temporary worker, explained that she would eventually like to be a medical lab technician but was planning her career around Jorge’s. The two intended to move back to his hometown where he had promising occupational prospects. Valencia noted that the town

was building a new hospital, so she was “probably gonna work there,” but seemed less concerned with her own occupational prospects than Jorge’s. Twenty-one year old Anthony has been working as a dock unloader to help provide for his partner, Diana, and their two-year old daughter, while attending college to become an architect. Although he felt that the timing of childbearing was less than ideal, he prided himself on the future he was building for his family. When asked where he saw family fitting in with his career plans, Anthony noted, “They’re coming along for the ride.” Diana and Anthony both view their work revolving around Anthony’s career. When asked about her own future occupational plans, 19 year old Diana never detailed her own goals, but instead replied,

Well, I’m waiting for Anthony to graduate. (laughs) Yeah. Well, he’s getting an architecture degree. So, hopefully he wants to open up his own firm. I mean, I plan on being at home I think for a while until [our daughter] starts going to school full-time and stuff like that. When she’s old enough to be on her own then I wanna definitely do something.

Finally, Max works full time while attending college classes so that Tameka can focus solely on completing her own associate’s degree. Their future plans as a couple, however, are contingent only upon his educational completion, not hers. Max explained that they couple plan to marry only once he has finished school, regardless of where Tameka is in the educational process.

Now we’re just trying to get the financial situation straightened out. I hate struggling. I hate it, but I know it’s just a part of everyday life and I’m trying to get to the point where I’m in a better situation so we won’t have to struggle and then I’ll be able to give her what I think she deserves and all. And that’s kind of where I am. So I think once I get done with school, regardless if she’s done or not, because she’s in school too, regardless if she’s done or not that’s when the plans will go. We’ll start going out with setting wedding dates and making plans like that, so that doesn’t seem too far off.

Like these working class conventional couples, most of the middle class conventional couples also indicated that they privilege men's jobs over the women's. Audrey (23), for example, bragged about how self sufficient her partner has been since the age of 18 due to his hard work. Despite her own high achievements as a full-time graduate student who works up to 50 hours a week in an elementary school, she downplayed her accomplishments, explaining apologetically, for example, that she had not been able to get in more than 5 hours a week at her second job recently. Likewise, Kristina enjoys her job as an architect, but plans to support her partner, Matthew, in his dream by working from home to support his firm. "Matthew's thinking about doing his own thing someday, his own [architecture] firm, and that's his goal in life for the career side of it so the fact that I could potentially sit at home and help him make money as long as I needed to [is] favorable to me." She, like many of her counterparts, continues to view his job as more important than her own.

For these middle class conventional women, the fact that at least one partner in the couple privileges the man's employment often involves a great deal of sacrifice of one's own goals. Katherine, for example, noted that her job as a clinical research coordinator was so rewarding that she was working on publications and taking a GRE prep course to be accepted to a PhD program in her field. She and her partner, Travis, plan to marry, but it is unclear what will become of her educational goals or their relationship, since Travis does not plan to leave his accounting job to move wherever Katherine gets into school, and she does not feel like she can ask him to do so unless the two are married. She stated,

I would feel a lot less apprehensive about asking him to [move to] where I'll be in grad school if we are already married. He's a CPA. He can find a job anywhere. If I'm gonna have my own career I need to be able to move someplace, wherever I can get that as a means to having that career and I would feel a lot less submissive in the discussions we have about that than I do now, 'cause at that point he's committed himself to me.

Despite her own enjoyment of her career and high occupational goals, without the support of her partner, either her educational pursuits or her relationship will have to be sacrificed. Travis, who privileged his career over Katherine's, said that he hoped that she would go to graduate school in Columbus because, "I'm not ready to give up that stability of the current job." When he was asked what would happen if Katherine received a job offer in another city, he noted,

What I've said is we'd get an apartment there and have her try the job for a couple months, make sure it's not something that's all bright lights on the outside and slum place on the inside. And then at that point we'd consider [me moving there]... I can't say I wouldn't be hesitant to, 'cause I've built up so much here that I don't want to move at all. But, at that point, I think it's only gonna be fair to give her an opportunity. It's gonna be tough to do it.

Given his extreme hesitancy at the prospect of leaving his own job for one of her own, it is unlikely that Travis will be fully supportive of Katherine's occupational dreams.

Several of the conventional women mentioned that they were willing to make accommodations for their partners' jobs, but the conventional men did not share similar sentiments. One of the advantages of having the mantle of "provider" bestowed upon them is the privilege of determining where the couple will live. As long as the men's jobs are considered more important by either partner, the women will not have the ability to fully pursue their own occupational goals while maintaining these relationships.

Interestingly, none of the five class straddling women privileged their male partners' employment. The women's own educational credentials (three of the five

women had bachelor's degrees while their partners did not), plans for advancement within their careers, or participation in solid professions may have led them to feel that their own occupations as equally important to their male partners'.

Among conventional couples (particularly the working and class straddling couples), male partners generally have higher aspirations at work than their female partners. This leads some couples and individuals to privilege the male partner's job over the female's, even if the woman has a solid occupation as well. In addition, while several individuals were interested in autonomous careers, this goal was only attained by those in the middle class. The work orientations of these couples (particularly the men's greater career focuses), likely impact the ways that they choose to arrange their financial obligations.

Financial Arrangements

The working, class straddling, and middle class conventional couples employed a variety of different financial arrangements. Some men were fully supporting their partners by paying all of the household expenses. While the middle-class and class-straddling men were happy with this arrangement, in part because of the gratitude their partners expressed, the working class men who were "paying it all" hoped that this arrangement was temporary. In other couples, men were paying at least 60% of the household expenses while their female partners paid "what they could" or "the small bills." Interestingly, many of the middle class women utilizing this financial arrangement expressed a great deal of guilt over paying fewer bills. Finally, for some couples, housing and utility payments were shared equally, but the male partners took on more variable expenses such as dinners out or groceries. Though some social class differences exist

among conventional couples in terms of their reactions to their financial arrangements, the strategies couples employed for divvying up the household kitty are similar across social class lines.

Feeling about Paying it All

In part because of their higher salaries, all of the conventional men are paying a greater share of the household expenses. Some men are paying all of the household bills. Among the middle class and class straddlers, none of the men who were fully supporting their partners were dissatisfied with the arrangements, but the working class men who were paying all of the bills were less satisfied with doing so. This may be because their lower incomes make it more stressful to try to provide for two. Alternatively, some of the working class men had expectations of sharing finances more equally before moving in with their partners. Perhaps because of the gratitude the middle class women expressed for their partners, middle class men were more likely to express pride in being able to provide, rather than disappointment or discontent at having to do so.

Middle class Jonathan's statement, for example, showed that he thought that his current arrangement with Janelle in which he paid all of the household bills was best for the two of them. He explained that even though he provided all of the income for the household so that Janelle's revenue stream could all go back into her yoga business, he felt that the arrangement was equitable because she budgeted their money. When asked how it was working for the two of them, he explained,

It's worked out great. We've done that for about 9 months now and I think both of us are much happier. She just writes all the utilities and the groceries and everything out of that account, and all I do just put money in there, make sure it's all settled up.

By highlighting Janelle's role (paying the bills) and minimizing his own (by saying that "*all I do*" is put money in the account) Jonathan demonstrates that he feels that their respective responsibilities for household finances are fairly distributed. Peter (30) expected that his partner will begin contributing to the household again soon (RaShinda had a baby less than three months ago and is staying at home for now), but he too was satisfied with their current arrangement. Still, he does not anticipate that their relative financial contributions will change much once RaShinda is working again. He said that even after she returned to work, "I would love to take care of all the bills. Then she takes care of what we need in the house." Peter elaborated, "I would take care of the rent, take care of the phone bills, take care of the Internet, take care of all that stuff... she would buy food and put gas in our cars."

Working class men who are fully supporting their partners do not seem as pleased with their arrangements. This may be, in part, because their lower incomes require them to stretch their budgets more tightly in order to support two people. Alternatively, they may have expected that their arrangements would be more equal before moving in together. Jorge, for example, did not realize that he would have to provide for his partner and, while he was not too unhappy to do so, he hopes that they will split "some of it" when Valencia becomes employed again. He added that, for now, he feels that his partner benefits more from the relationship, saying, "I would say that's why she benefits more because I mean I tell her she don't have to work right now. I mean I could tell her to work and tell her 'Hey, you need to start paying for your stuff' but I don't." Ron was very vocal about his dissatisfaction with providing for Crystal, a 21 year old exotic

dancer. Working on commission, Ron explained that he went two months without a paycheck. Crystal's reaction to the situation really upset him.

...so for two months I pretty much made no money. And that's 8 weeks of making not a dollar. So I was about to be evicted, and she paid the rent for me. Now she was like, "You have to pay me back" after she's lived in my house for the last, almost year, rent-free, she's telling me I have to pay her back. Which upset me, but I'd still do it. It's no big deal, whatever, that's the way she is.

Crystal's expectations of the relationship were initially quite different than Ron's. She said,

I just had this thought that I didn't have to pay any bills just because I don't know. I just feel like I'm a student and I don't make any money but it's gotten to where like he's said that I need to start paying for part of the bills like his previous girlfriends did...

Crystal agreed that she would pay more of the bills in the future, but it had yet to happen.

The middle class and class straddling conventional men may be more comfortable with paying for all of the household expenses because of the gratitude expressed by their partners (Gager 1998). Janelle, for example, discussed how happy she was that Jonathan was supporting her while she was trying to grow her business, calling their arrangement "fabulous", and saying that when Jonathan began paying all of the bills she felt, "like the weight of the world was lifted off my shoulders." Similarly, Kathleen, an apprentice midwife, discussed how grateful she was that Derek's salary and generosity allowed her to pursue her less profitable career.

Greg, like the other middle class men who are paying all of the bills, spoke with pride about being able to provide for Olivia. He noted,

She does half marathons and she loves to run. Do we have \$160 to spend? Responsibly, probably not. Could we afford it? Yeah. I made her get some shoes. I paid for them. It's my money, you're buying new shoes. So to answer

your question in that way, if she needs it, she won't ask for it but I will get it for her...

He further explained that he knew that Olivia wanted to participate financially, but that she just was not able to at this time. He said,

Now what I do is just give her my checks and let her take care of it so to me, what that does is that balances out the responsibility. It still gives the other person for lack of a better term "self-worth", 'cause I do know for a fact that it disturbs her that there is money not coming in on her part because that's the kind of person she is. Do I give one iota? Absolutely not, and I tell her that. It doesn't make it easier because she is an independent person and when you're an independent person you do that well. You take care of yourself. To have somebody come in and basically not take over but be the sole provider, it makes you feel a lack of participation

Because they had not necessarily expected to share bills more equally, have higher incomes than the working class men, and their partners express gratitude for their current financial situations, the middle class men who are "paying it all" are more satisfied with their financial contributions than are their working class counterparts.

Attempting Fairness in the Face of Inequality

More than half of the conventional working, class straddling, and middle class men are covering greater than 60% of the household bills while their partners contribute to at least some household expenses. Their arrangements do not appear to differ much by social class. These couples are using one of two strategies to ensure that their financial contributions are generally equitable. Some of the couples have arrangements in which the female partner pays the "smaller" bills and the male partners cover the larger ones while others rely on the female partners to pay "what she can afford". While the working class women spoke with pride and highlighted their partners' generosity, the middle class

women expressed concern that the way they divided their financial obligations was unfair to their male partners.

Travis, for example, explained that Katherine contributed a flat fee to the household. “Well as far as finances [are] concerned, with her not making any money [Katherine earns \$30,000 per year to Travis’s \$76,000], she’s still more or less a tenant because she pays 300 bucks a month and everything else is taken care of.” Katherine noted that the \$300 she paid Travis covered their cell phones and car insurance. Likewise, Stan, a working class orderly, said of his partner, Keisha, “She’ll pay smaller bills ‘cause she’s not making as much, so she’ll just pay little cable and telephone and things of that nature.” Among other couples, the female partner contributed whatever she was able. Emily, for example, a middle class pastry chef explained that she tried to give her partner \$600 a month but that she was not always able to. “A lot of the times I don’t always give him \$600 a month. Sometimes it’s less. It’s usually never more. But sometimes it’s less.” Similarly, Vic, a working class father-to-be explained his and Carly’s arrangement, saying, “...she doesn’t make as much as I do so I pay for a greater share of--- she pays her share of the rent, her half of the rent and just for bills she does what she can and I pay for the rest.”

Conventional women whose partners were paying most of the bills highlighted the men’s generosity, but the working class women were more vocal about the men’s contributions. Keisha, a working class woman, for example, explained that because of Stan’s work ethic and financial support, the two have had a comfortable life.

Stan’s been working his behind off, oh my goodness. I actually just got back to work here a couple [of] weeks ago. And Stan’s been busting his tail as far as working, picking up days. I mean, the job that he has at the hospital, he works

12 hour shifts. So, he'll do maybe five 12-hour shifts in a week. In one week, that's lotta hours. And he does everything in his power to do what he has to do. So, we've been making it really good. We've been making it good.

Laura, a waitress, carried a picture of the engagement ring she and her partner had picked out in her purse, and pulled it out for display during her interview. She bragged that Simon, a 25 year old carpenter, was willing to purchase a much more expensive ring for her, but that her practicality reigned in his spending. She said,

We talked to the jewelry guy and he said that the best way to choose a ring is by 2 month's salary, so he said "We'll get a bigger ring 'cause I can afford to pay for anything out there" [I said] "No, I'm fine with this. Why spend three grand on the engagement ring when I can get the whole set [engagement ring and wedding band] for three grand?" And he said "Well, whatever you want."

Interestingly, some of the middle class women seemed to think that their financial arrangements were unfair for their partners, while none of the working class conventional women expressed similar sentiments. Travis, for example, explained, "She doesn't feel like she's contributing enough, but she can't contribute anymore." He then elaborated that in order to help her feel better about their situation, he was very careful when speaking about financial decisions. He stated, "When we go out and pick out an entertainment center, it's more picking it out for *our* living room. Making sure to use the correct verbiage and not use 'my.'" He added, "[I make] sure that I include her in the decision. I may be paying the whole bill, but she's participating in it." Matthew, too, noted that his partner was uncomfortable with him paying most of the bills. He noted, "There are a few months that come and go and I know that she's having trouble, and I just refuse to take money from her, and it bothers her but she also knows that she can't afford to pay it so she gets by." Kristina, Matthew's partner, explained that the two had

differing ideas about finances when they first moved in together, which may be what led to her feeling uncomfortable when Matthew pays a greater share. She said,

He has this mentality that we're in this together, this is our lives from here on out...We're in this thing together, but I'm still like, "But I'm not gonna take your money, 'cause it's not our money yet." I thought going into [this relationship] it's my money-his money. He thinks going into [this relationship] it's him taking care of me or showing me that he can take care of me, which he does that a lot. He pays more of the mortgage than I do; he pays for dinner and groceries way more than I do. But then we rationalize it as "We're in this together. You make this much, I make this much. You pay for this much, I pay for this much." So it's kind of a ratio thing we do.

Matthew, like many other conventional men, thinks of financial provision as one way of taking care of his partner. Kristina is comfortable with this concept, but only after marriage. Until they are married, Kristina feels like she should be contributing a more equal share. Because she has quite a bit of debt and Matthew has a relatively large mortgage, however, she is unable to pay an equal share.

Perhaps because their incomes are relatively low compared to their partners or their attitudes toward gender are more traditional (Rubin 1976; 1994), the working class conventional women do not seem to feel uneasy with their partners paying a greater share. Instead, they seem to accept paying a smaller share as something for which to be grateful, but not apologetic. Brandi, the class straddling woman whose partner, Artie, paid the majority of the bills, was similar to the working class women in her feelings about her and her partner's financial arrangement. She did not seem to feel uncomfortable with Artie paying a greater share of the household bills, but she did say that she wished he would be more financially responsible.

Picking Up the "Extras"

A final financial arrangement employed by a few class straddling and middle class conventional couples is that the couple generally shares expenses fairly equally but the male partner takes on a few “extra” expenditures such as dinners out or entertainment. Emma, a middle class waitress and freelance photographer, explained, “We don’t really keep hard and fast track of like who buys groceries, which is mostly him, or who pays for dinner. We just kind of feel it out. And actually, he has been doing a lot of that recently.” When asked about their financial arrangements, Stephanie, a degreed class straddling call-center employee explained that, while they shared most of the expenses, her partner, Jake, paid for groceries more often than she did. She said, that they split the “major expenses” (rent and utilities) in half but that,

...without [Jake], I mean, I still have my parents to give me money if I’m really suffering, but I’d much rather get the money from him because when I get money from them it makes me feel like I owe them because they’ve already [spent] so much money on me. But when it’s Jake, and he’s buying groceries, well we’re gonna share the groceries. And I do stuff like clean and pay the bills and that sort of thing that I think kind of makes up for that.

All four couples employing this strategy explained that the male partners occasionally cover more of the bills because the men earn more money than their female partners, making the arrangements somewhat equitable in their minds.

Among these conventional couples, the male partners either currently out earn their partners or, in the case of one couple are credited with doing so. As a result, conventional men are responsible for a larger share of the couples’ living expenses, though their exact apportionments differ. Whether paying a larger share of the living expenses affords men great control over the household finances remains to be seen.

Financial Control

Although few share bank accounts, partners can use multiple strategies to attempt to control the household income. For the majority of middle class couples and some working class and class straddling couples, each partner controls his or her own income, though couples differ on the amount of input they accept from their partners regarding luxury purchases. Second, some men have been given or have taken greater control over the household income, though the ways in which they do so differ by social class; middle class men limit the amount of money their partners can spend, while working class and class straddling men simply apportion more of the discretionary income to themselves. Finally, a few working class couples have decided to give the female partner more control over the household finances as a way of reining in the men's out of control spending.

Each Controls His/Her Own Income

Although their work orientations and financial arrangements are often traditional, the majority of the middle class and about one-third of the working class and class straddling conventional individuals each control his or her own income, with neither partner ultimately being afforded more control. However, there is quite a bit of variation in regard to how much each partner takes the other's desires into account, ranging from always trying to consider the other partner's wishes before making a major financial decision to refusing to take a partner's feelings into account before making a desired purchase.

Some couples, for example, try to always consider one another before making purchases, viewing their income as shared, rather than separate. For example, Greg, a class straddling business owner was asked if his partner would say anything to him if she

felt his planned purchase was too expensive. He replied, “Yep. I’d want her to and she would and vice versa.” Asked if either partner could stop the other from buying something they wanted, he added, “If one was adamant enough probably...If it was substantiated, it could be backed up I guess and one could stop the other in a very, well not ‘stop’. ‘Stop’ puts a negative connotation on it, but it would be a very positive [conversation].” Likewise, Keisha and Stan, a working class couple, both explained that if either knew that the couple could afford a “splurge” at the time, they would make a purchase. Stan added that each partner knew that they could spend “about \$20.00” without consulting the other. Perhaps couples who employ this strategy are used to taking their joint financial situations into account before making purchases because they view their finances as shared. Every couple employing this strategy is either planning for marriage or share a child; the permanence of their unions may make mutual financial decisions seem rational.

Other couples view their finances as separate, but note that their partners would have some input; their partners could stop them from making large purchases, unless the purchases were something that they truly wanted. Randy and Ming, an airport mechanic and accounting student were using this strategy. Thirty-five year old Randy explained that he sometimes took Ming’s suggestions into account, especially since he had purchased a house for the two of them, but that when he really wanted an item, he would just buy it. When asked if she could stop his spending, Randy said,

It depends on how much I want it and how long I go without it... I want a remote control helicopter real bad but it’s like \$350 and so I just kind of think, “Is it worth it?” but see now that we have the house I’m also thinking, “That’s a new refrigerator. That’s a new stove. That adds value to the house, easier to

sell.” So do I get a toy? So actually she does have a say, but then sometimes I get to the point where I’m just like “I’m buying it!”

Ming, a Chinese immigrant, echoed his sentiments, explaining that Randy often had input, but that she had learned a strategy for getting around his opinions if she really wanted something. “It’s kind of like issue because girls always want to buy [some] new thing. And then he will say, ‘How come you can buy this instead [of] pay bills?’ So I just laugh at that, I don’t care. And then I just learn to go shopping not with him.”

Some middle class couples also gave their partners input into their financial purchases, unless they really wanted an item. Derek, a Yale-educated computer programmer was asked if Kathleen could stop him from buying something that she felt was frivolous. He replied, “I mean there’re two sides to that. One is she would be able to stop me from buying it but the other is that I don’t think she would if it were really important to me.” When asked if he could stop Kathleen from buying something he thought unnecessary, he had a similar reply. “I mean, when she really wants something, no, I guess I can’t really stop her.” Most of these couples do not have plans for marriage or share children, which may explain their greater reluctance to completely share financial decisions.

Among a final set of couples, neither partner was willing to accept input from their partners, regardless of the spirit in which it was given. Emma, for example, vented her frustration about the three cars her partner owned, but added that if he wanted to purchase another car, “that’s his business.” Likewise, she said that he would not be able to stop her from buying anything she wanted. Ron provided specific examples of items that he and Crystal had purchased, despite the objections of the other. He said, “The car I

just bought, or just paid for. I bought rims and tires for it. Cost me about two grand. And she was like, 'I can't believe you spend \$2,000 on rims and tires. You coulda got those for 500.' I said, 'I coulda, yeah.' But I wanted really nice [ones]." He then added that Crystal had spent \$900 on a dog, against his objections. When asked who controlled the money in their house, Crystal explained, "Right now it stands like I control mine, he controls his." Asked what would happen if Ron did not approve of one of her purchases, Crystal noted, "I'm sure he'll kind of say things, but I mean it's not gonna make any difference to me." Neither of the couples who refuse to consider one another's opinions on purchases envisions a future together or share children.

Limiting Women's Spending

Despite their higher earnings and conventional attitudes, only around one-third of these conventional men are currently attempting to assume financial control of the household income. Middle class men who do so generally try to limit their female partners' spending. They admit to nagging the women about past purchases, directly asking the women to slow or stop their spending, or being imperious in their financial authority in order to curb the women's purchases.

For example, Sean, 25, discussed how he attempted to control Emily's spending, and, on occasion, was successful, "She buys records and I hassle her about spending money on records, especially when she was trying to save money... I really got her to stop buying records before she came to Europe... she was able to save enough that she bought a plane ticket..." Emily recalled what happens when she spends money that Sean does not think she should. "[He says] 'You could spend it better.' I'm not a saver so he's always been on me about saving and he's like, 'Or just put it in the bank, just put it in the

bank.” Emily does not appear to be unhappy about Sean’s attempted control; she admits that many of her purchases are “frivolous.” Audrey also willingly relinquishes some control over her finances to Jack. She admits that she has never been good with money and is thrilled to have Jack take over her disposable income. When asked who controlled the money in their household she stated, “His being a financial planner, I would definitely give him the pants as far as financial situations go in our house.” Only Kristina is currently unhappy that Matthew tries to curtail her purchases; when asked about financial control she said, “I control mine, he controls his. He likes to try and tell me that I shouldn’t be spending money on things, but he also knows that it is my money and he needs to step off.” However, once the two are married, she prefers that he take over all of the money and give her an “allowance” because she admits that she is bad with budgeting her income.

Seizing the Disposable Income

Four of the working class and class straddling conventional men have assumed (or attempted to assume) greater financial control within the relationship. However, in contrast to the middle class conventional men, for whom assuming financial control takes the form of limiting their partners’ spending, for working class and class straddling conventional men, having greater control over the finances seems to mean having greater access to the couple’s disposable income. Such privilege does not extend to the women in these relationships, who do not have the same power to make discretionary purchases.

Asked who controlled the money in their household, working class Anthony replied, “I definitely have to say when it comes to paying bills and being really good at it, that’s her all the way. When it comes to frivolous spending and stupid crap that would be me.”

Although their earnings are nearly equal (in fact, Diana reports slightly out earning Anthony), the designation of “provider” the couple places upon Anthony affords him greater control over what little disposable income they have. Julie explained that she “would definitely have a say” in day to day spending. However, when Ray wants to go on a casino trip, she related that she cannot curb his discretionary spending. She relayed,

We always have a problem with the gambling because he maybe does it three times a year and it’s never thousands of dollars but it’s the difference between him saying “We can afford to go in there with \$250” and I’m saying “We can only afford a hundred,” and at that point if it came down to it he’ll play the “I make the majority of the money” card and “Why are you doing this when you know” because we go with his family and he’s like, “I don’t want to drive an hour if I’m only going to go up there with \$100 between the two of us” so then he’ll play the whole “I’m trying to ruin the trip”

Despite her attempts to keep their budget on track, Ray spends the couple’s “fun money” as he sees fit. Ray’s belief that bringing in a greater share of the income leads to a greater share of spending money was a common one among this group.

The working class and class straddling women do not have this same control of discretionary income. For example, when asked who controlled their money, Jerry, a degreed class straddler, explained their financial system. “I think I do. I control all the money and the checkbook and stuff so whenever she needs to buy something she just tells me, but usually she just buys food.” When asked if his partner, Natalie, could stop him from spending money on something he wanted, Jerry replied, “I don’t think so. I’m really good with my money just cause during the college times I was really bad so I’ve gotten to learn from a lot of big mistakes.” Natalie’s example backed Jerry’s assertion. She explained how when she first moved in with Jerry she really wanted cable television, but did not get it because, “He doesn’t really wanna get cable.” In this case, Natalie (like

other working class and class straddling women) felt that her own purchases were constrained by her partner, but, as the financial provider, Jerry does not concede the same power of financial control to Natalie.

“Keeping him from making those bad decisions I feel like is part of my duty”

Finally, two working class couples and one class straddling conventional couple had decided that the female partner should take greater control of the household spending in order to rein in the purchases of the men. The women’s strategies for doing so ranged from gently reminding the men that paying bills needed to come before spending on unnecessary items to directly telling the men that they already had enough “toys” and should not purchase any more. Their male partners appreciated the women’s efforts, especially because they have seen the benefits that come from living within their financial means. Interestingly, the women frame their demands as caretaking, rather than control, which allows them to maintain their conventionally gendered identities.

When asked what his partner did for him within their relationship, Max listed some of the sweet, romantic things Tameka did for him, and then added,

...she also keeps me focused on, “Hey, we’ve got this bill to pay” stuff like this whereas before I was kind of foolish, just frivolous with money. I wouldn’t care “Hey, here go do this or I’m gonna go buy this. Oh, I’ll pay that later,” and she keeps me well grounded on not to do things like that

Jorge, who plays in a band at the church he and Valencia attend, noted that, like Max, “...there’ll be sometimes where I go overboard where if I have money I’ll spend it. I have a bad habit of doing that. I mean I used to just save, save, save, save, save but now I want to spend, spend, spend, spend, spend.” Valencia confirmed Jorge’s desire to spend and explained that she was able to stop him from spending money on any new instruments.

She said, "...he likes to go to the guitar place a lot and look at the basses and so he's like, 'Ooohhh. This looks nice.' I'm like, 'No, you don't need a new one.' I tell him 'No' cause he doesn't need it. He's like, 'Ok. You're right, I don't. I'm just looking.'"

It is interesting that three men, who are conventional in many other ways, are willing to cede control of most of the household finances to their female partners.

Stephanie's story, perhaps, explains why Jake was willing to listen to her financial advice- because he experienced negative consequences from his spending. She said,

...he was really bad at managing his money when we first got together. He was constantly broke, he was constantly overdrawing his account at the bank...I was like-"You get paid way more than I do. Why do you not have money?" So, I started telling him, We need to buy groceries. And you need to make your lunch instead of buying it every day. We need to start conserving on this thing and that thing and not go out to restaurants every single night. We need to stay home and make food."

Now, she explained, Jake has seen the positive outcomes of allowing Stephanie to control his spending. She proudly said, "I've helped him be able to pay off more of his debts, and take care of his finances." She added that she felt that it was her responsibility, as Jake's partner, to ensure that he is taken care of in multiple ways, including financial, saying,

I think as far as control over the money goes, he has his money and I have my money. Like, it's totally separate. But at the same time I can say to him, like, if he---- there's this video game he really wants. He wants to get the *Spiderman II* game, but we just bought a new mattress for our bed. So I told him, "You know what? Video games are expensive. You can buy that video game once we've paid off the mattress." And he was like, "Oh (sad voice)." But, keeping him from making those bad decision I feel like is kind of part of my duty.... as his girlfriend. I can't help but feel a little bit like his caretaker. And he's my caretaker too.

By framing the women's behavior in very feminine terms- caretaking, rather than controlling, these couples may be able to maintain their preferred roles. Jake, for example, continues to be the primary provider, but Stephanie is able to demonstrate her

love for him by managing their money. In addition, the fact that these couples are all working class or class straddlers may explain why these men are willing to cede control of the finances to their female partners. Turning over financial management to women (especially in low income households) can be another way that men can “do gender” through money since this is often a stressful and onerous chore when there is not enough money to make ends meet. The blame for financial problems can then be moved from the man (who may feel emasculated by not earning enough to support the family) to the woman (who will then be blamed for failing to budget properly) (Komter 1989; Vogler 1998).

Although the greatest number of conventional individuals each controls his or her own income, they allow their partners to have varying degrees of input into major purchases. Other couples have given greater financial control to one partner. When the male partner has greater control, this is often displayed by limiting the amount of money their partners can spend (among the middle class men) or allotting more of the couples’ discretionary income for themselves (among the working and class straddling men). A few working and class straddling couples have given the female partners greater financial control, but they frame this control as a form of caretaking, allowing them to maintain conventional beliefs. Just as the ways that they control finances vary, so do these conventional couples’ divisions of domestic labor.

Feelings about Housework

Working, straddling, and middle class conventional couples arranged their divisions of labor in a number of ways. Couples fell into one of four arrangements in terms of who was performing the housework. A few felt their divisions were fairly equal

(though, upon closer examination, they privilege the male partners). Two working class men are doing the majority of the household labor, but hope their arrangements are temporary. More common arrangements include a traditional “indoor/outdoor” split and both partners performing all tasks regardless of gender-type, but the female partner doing most of the work. The majority of couples are happy with their divisions of labor, anticipating that they would have conventional arrangements or believing that they are equitable because the male partner pays a larger share of the financial obligations. Still, a few women are unhappy with their arrangements. There are some differences in social class groups in terms of the ways in which the women have tried to equalize their divisions and men rationalize avoiding housework. However, no one group of conventional women appears to have more power to encourage their partners to share more equally in the household labor.

Believing it's Fair

A few couples said that their divisions were fairly equal. However, upon closer examination, the more time-intensive chores were actually performed by the female partners. This is the case for Jack and Audrey, a middle class pair. When asked who did most of the household chores, Jack said, “I’d say 50-50. I’d say it’s pretty much down the middle. For one thing, she beats my butt on this, is the laundry. That’s just ‘cause she can’t stand to look at the laundry for long and I can, so that’s her choice, to go down and do the laundry.” Jack initially stated their arrangement is nearly equal, but he then revealed that Aubrey does more laundry than he does because he is able to “wait her out”. When asked to detail their household chores, Aubrey provided a list of her and Jack’s respective tasks.

I do laundry. I sweep. I don't think he swept one time. That's because we have all wood floors in our house, and he's against using the sweeper on wood floors. Where I'm like, I am not taking a broom and sweeping up these floors, you better believe I'm using the sweeper on them. So he won't use it, and I know it's fine cause my mom has one section of wood floors in her house and she uses a regular sweeper on it. So I sweep, I do the laundry, I feel like I unload the dishwasher a lot more than he does, but he'd tell you the same thing. And as far as the rest goes, like he cleans the bathroom and I clean the kitchen and we're pretty evenly dispersed as far as dusting and things like that go. So, he does all the handy work, when we have to take doors off of something, he's the one that does stuff like that or put like the mats on the wood floor. He's the one who like got the thing out and put the sticky stuff under the mats.

Although they share cleaning the kitchen and bathroom, Aubrey's responsibilities (sweeping the floor and doing the laundry) take much more time and must be done more often than Jack's occasional handy work.

Men are Temporarily Doing Most of the Work

Another uncommon arrangement used by two working class otherwise conventional couples were divisions of labor in which the male partner was performing more housework. Neither man was very satisfied with this arrangement; however, both expected that it would change in the future. In addition, these men framed their tasks in masculine ways (relating them to being in the military or being "braver" than their partners) as a way of maintaining their conventional identities in the face of nontraditional behavior.

Randy, a former service member, related his precision in performing household chores to his time in the military. When asked what percentage of the household chores he did, he replied, "Well personally I would say like 90 [percent] but I think actually if I think about it is like 60-40, 70-30 [me]. She's taking a heavy load [of courses] and so she does do a lot of homework so I'm hoping there's an end to all of it." Randy hoped that

their chores would equalize or that Ming would take on the bulk of the household chores once she finished school. Ron mentioned that Crystal's lack of cleaning was one of the major problems in their tumultuous relationship. When asked about their division of labor, he noted that he did about 60% of the work, adding, "Oh she's, lately she's been helping a little more because of how much I have done and how much that I've-- it's gotten to the point where we're so at each other that it's either she goes, leaves, we break up, or she starts doing stuff."

Despite wanting their divisions of labor to change, both men agreed that a complete reversal in which the female partners did the majority of the chores was unlikely because both men had higher standards of cleanliness than their female partners, Randy from his time in the service and Ron from his upbringing. Ron explained, "I was brought up totally different. I mean, my dad had us cleaning bathroom sinks, toilet bowls, I'm not scared to stick my hand in a toilet." Randy added that if he had the ability to change his division of labor with Ming, "She'll do 90 [percent of the housework] and I can do 10 [percent] but I'd never be happy with it 'cause it wouldn't be done right. Yeah, I'm just, I don't know why but I'm just like that." In a few cases, then, men's personal preferences for cleanliness and learned behaviors trump otherwise conventional mindsets. Still, by masculinizing their chores (relating them to military service or "being fearless"), these men are able to maintain their masculine identities (Coltrane 1996) while performing traditionally feminine chores.

Traditional Indoor/Outdoor Split

A substantial proportion of the working class and roughly half of the class straddlers and middle class couples had a traditional division of labor in which the male

partner performed all of the “outdoor” chores and the female partner did all of the work inside of the house. Men were often relegated to taking out the garbage and fixing things, while women scrubbed, mopped, and did laundry. The arrangement seemed to be more equal for the middle class couples, most of whom were homeowners who had considerably more “outdoor chores” than the couples living in apartments did. Still, most individuals were happy with their arrangements, either because they felt that household chores should be gendered or because they expected their current divisions before moving in together.

Simon and Laura, a working class couple, explained their individual responsibilities. When asked to describe their division of labor, Simon, who tried throughout his interview to demonstrate that he was a “good boyfriend,” explained that he stuck to taking out the garbage and fixing things but would “help” Laura when specifically asked. He said,

I help her with laundry. I told her I kind of despise I don't know, well I told her I'll fold the laundry I'll help. I'll put the dishes away, and she can wash them all. I'll take the garbage out all the time and make sure anything around the house, I'll fix it even though she's pretty handy. She can handle herself pretty well. I try to help her out as much as I can and clean and keep up but I've noticed that [she does] basically all the laundry unless she, she has to go to work and [says], “Honey will you get the laundry out and fold the socks?” then I'll do that but for the most part she does. The dishes, she does, I give her credit. She does most of the work around the house you know, me, I clean up and pick up and make sure I contribute.

He explained that he felt masculine and feminine proclivities lead him and Laura to each do particular chores.

I think women are just---, you're [referencing the interviewer] the same way. You're very particular. Women have a certain way they want things folded, a certain amount of how they wash things, how they treat their stains and everything else. I think that's one of the issues you know. Garbage of course I

think is a man's job 'cause lots of times it's heavier. You've got to walk out in the cold and being a gentleman you take that on.

His partner, Laura, explained that she also felt that men and women should be doing particular chores, explaining that she did almost all of the work around the house, but adding that, "He does the trash. He does like the hard stuff."

This arrangement appears to be more equitable for the middle class and class straddling couples; working class "traditional" arrangements disproportionately disadvantaged the female partners because all of the working class couples employing this arrangement lived in apartments, where "outdoor" chores are limited. When pressed to further define what tasks they actually do, these men appear to be taking out the garbage and occasionally putting together ready-to-assemble furniture. In contrast, the middle class conventional cohabiting couples who have traditional indoor/outdoor divisions of labor, all lived in homes owned by one or both of the partners. This makes the men in these couples responsible for yard work and home maintenance (as well as taking out the garbage). Travis, a certified public accountant, explained what he and Kathleen each did, saying,

I do anything with the yard, lawn, house improvements and building, building stuff in the basement. That's going too slow. And she does some of the cleaning and she does most of her laundry. She doesn't do my laundry. But she does like sweeping the floors and stuff, clean the bathrooms. So, pretty typical split.

Asked what he meant by a "typical split", Travis clarified, "The man doing the outside and the yard work and the wiring, electricity, house repair. And she does the cleaning and she doesn't really cook any more than I do, so she does more cleaning." Kathleen, a research coordinator, noted that their division of labor was not unexpected. Asked what she thought living together would be like, she said,

Oh I knew that would be stereotypical, that I would do the cooking and most of the cleaning 'cause I'm a perfectionist and he doesn't seem to see dirt [chuckles] and he would do the outside stuff. He would cook out [grill] which is the only way of cooking he really knows how to do, and he would do the yard work and the house stuff like changing light bulbs and ceiling fans so that is how it is right now.

Although the middle class men live in homes with yards where there is more "outdoor work" to do, their chores still need to be performed less frequently and are often less routine than those that their partners complete.

Two of the five conventional class straddling couples have traditional housework arrangements; one of the two couples owns a home while the other lives in an apartment. Here, homeownership rather than which partner has more education appears to guide the relative equitability of traditional arrangements.

Like Katherine, who "knew that [her division of labor] would be stereotypical", most of the women who have traditional arrangements always expected to share chores in this way. Kristina, a budding architect, concurred with Katherine when asked what she expected of their division prior to living together, saying, "I did know I was gonna be like a wife and making dinner and cleaning the house, because he doesn't do those things, so I was ready to take on those kind of responsibilities." Their male partners either expected to have a traditional division of labor or did not know what to expect regarding household tasks before moving in together. However, when situations are unclear, individuals often revert to hegemonic beliefs about gendered behaviors (Ridgeway and Correll 2004), meaning that a traditional division of labor was not surprising to any of the men. Artie, for example, a degreed class straddling man, was asked about his expectations for housework. He replied, "I just, I thought we'd just kind of handle it as it came, I guess."

When asked what actually occurred, he explained that Brandi does the vast majority of the household labor. Artie stated,

I'm kind of lazy so I try to clean up and stuff. There's some stuff that I can do that I can at least manage to find a way to enjoy and then there's some stuff that she does. I mean she has to really give me a good kick in the butt to sometimes get some stuff done.

Female Partner is doing Most of the Housework

Nearly half of all conventional couples have arrangements in which the female partner does the majority of both the indoor and outdoor housework. This arrangement differs from a traditional indoor/outdoor split in that both partners perform both the "male" and "female" typed tasks, but the female partners do more than 60 percent of the total labor. Most were satisfied with their household arrangements, however, arguing that the men just did not see the need to do as many chores as the women wanted to do or that they had a harder time "seeing dirt."

Diana, who works in retail and at a bar, and her partner, Anthony, a dock unloader and architecture student, have an arrangement in which she does the majority of the household tasks regardless of whether they occur "indoors" or "outdoors." When asked what chores he did, Anthony replied, "I try and keep up. I try. I do laundry and all that stuff." He and Diana both noted that each took turns cleaning the house and taking out the garbage, but when asked what percentage of all of the tasks each partner did, Anthony replied, "...it's probly [sic] like a 70/30 [with her doing 70%] or something like that." Middle class couples like Aaron and Emma also alternate doing various chores, but the female partner does more tasks overall. Both Aaron and Emma clean the bathrooms and kitchen, do the laundry, and work in the yard. Aaron explained their lack of a system for determining who does what around the house,

I think we both try to do the things that need to be done and I don't think either one of us expects that the other person--- it's not like we made up a chore list or something where it's divided up of who is supposed to do what on what day or something like that but I think it's really an informal just hope that it gets done and hope that neither one of us gets stuck with too much of the stuff.

However, both he and Emma admit that Emma is the one who “gets stuck with too much of the stuff.” Emma explained that Aaron just failed to see the need for housekeeping like she did, saying, “I think he has a sort of vision that I don't where he'll go through and peel off his shirt and throw his pants down where I'll be like, ‘I just vacuumed. Clean up your shit!’ but yeah, I just think he's not tuned in to [the need to keep the house clean].” Though men like Aaron and Anthony do occasionally scrub toilets and clean countertops, they do so less frequently than their partners. They are willing to take on more traditionally feminine tasks, but not devote as much overall time to domestic labor as their counterparts who own homes and do the “outdoor” chores. Although the majority of conventional couples arranged their housework in a way that was unequal, most were happy with their current household divisions of labor.

Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with Housework Arrangements

Despite the facts that in the vast majority of the cases the female partners were performing the lion's share of the household chores, most of the conventional women, regardless of social class, were satisfied with their arrangements. Individuals among the working, straddling, and middle class groups said that they felt that the female partner's disproportionate amount of work at home is equitable because the male partners are financial providers, with the vast majority either working more hours, earning higher incomes, or, in many cases both. Only a few women were dissatisfied with their arrangements overall, but none of them were doing much to try to change their divisions

of labor. Instead, some focused on changing their own attitudes toward their unequal apportionment of chores to become more accepting of their dissimilar shares.

These couples view complementarity as an equitable arrangement, particularly because the male partner earns a larger share of the household income (Greenstein 1996; Klumb, Hoppmann, and Staats 2006; Lavee and Katz 2002). Julie, a 30 year old working class woman noted,

He brings in the majority of the money; he makes more money than I do per hour so it's like 100% tackling different roles. I am the homemaker, take care of the apartment, do all of the grocery shopping, any kind of social things I set up, and he is work and school.

Similarly, Stephanie, said that she did about 80% of the housework, explaining, "I am the one who always ends up cleaning the bathroom, vacuuming, cleaning up the living room, all that." Still, she was fairly satisfied with their arrangement because Jake paid more of the bills. She said,

...he doesn't really clean the bathroom or anything. Unless I nag him to do it. And then he's like- "Oh, you want that to be cleaned? Okay." He doesn't mind doing it, he just doesn't think of it. So he's really good about housework, as long as I remind him that it needs to be done. But he also buys me groceries. Like, when we go grocery shopping, he buys the groceries 'cause he makes a lot more money than I do. So that kinda makes up for it

The sentiment of the female partner exchanging housework for a male partner paying greater shares of the household expenses is more common among the middle class and class straddling couples than among the working class conventional couples. When asked who does most of the housework, Janelle, degreed class straddling owner of a yoga studio explained, "I do it all. I do it all but he provides the finances." Likewise, Olivia added, "He brings home the money [laughs]. The least I can do is clean up!" These couples, all of whom are conventional in terms of their finances, may view conventionality in

housework as a natural extension of their paid work arrangements. This perhaps occurs most commonly among the straddling and middle classes because many of those men earn enough money to independently support their households, in contrast to the working class men who usually rely on two incomes to “make ends meet.”

In contrast to the two working class men who were unhappy with doing more of the household chores, only a few conventional women spoke of their dissatisfaction with doing more of the housework. Even then, their level of disappointment with the inequality of their chores and attempts at changing their situations was minimal. Brandi, a non-degreed class straddling woman explained that she and Artie had very different approaches to housework. She noted, “I mean it’s not that he won’t pick up dishes and stuff like that, but he’ll just do it on his time and they can sit there a week and I will go in and do it. And laundry is the same way. He won’t do it except when there’s absolute dire need of laundry.” Still, she had not done much to try to get Artie to take on more of the housework. A similar sentiment was echoed by Emma, a middle class conventional woman. She too downplayed the situation and did little to change it, working instead on changing her own attitude toward the inequality. She noted that when she occasionally got annoyed with her 35 year old partner, Aaron’s, lack of housework that she reminds herself

“Ok this is my boyfriend, this is who I love. I need to not freak out about the sink that’s been clogged up for three days because I love him and it’s not a big deal.” It’s getting a grip on that and having the ability to remind myself and to cherish that above like the crap that really drives me nuts.

Though they mention their dissatisfaction, these women’s situations are unlikely to change until they decide to try to change their partners *and* the men agree to take on a greater portion of the housework.

Men's Strategies for Housework Avoidance

Men utilized a number of strategies for avoiding housework. These included “buying out” of the labor, rationalizing that their jobs were more difficult than their partners’, or explaining that the women were better at or enjoyed doing more of the household labor. It did not seem to occur to any of the men that housework did not come “naturally” to the women but was instead a learned behavior. The vast majority of the women, too, failed to see how they contributed to their own inequality.

Middle, straddling, and working class men all explained how they “bought out” of housework. Jerry, who works at a retail frame shop, described how he paid an extra household bill and, in exchange, his partner Natalie did the laundry. He remarked upon how the two reached their current arrangement, saying, “I guess at the beginning we just would be like, ‘you clean the bathroom, I’ll clean the kitchen’ kind of thing, and we made a deal that I paid for the internet bill while she did the laundry. I love that. I hate laundry...” Travis, an accountant explained that he always expected to “get away” with doing less housework than Katherine does. When asked to explain why, he noted, “...because I pay for the dinners and pay for a few other things.” He added, “...it’s my way of cooking to pay for the nice meals. Since she grew up in Baltimore, she’s very accustomed to eating lobster and oysters and other stuff where the meal for two is 90 bucks, a hundred bucks. That’s my way of cooking.”

Matthew, an architect, explained that he came up with a creative solution to the fact that neither partner wanted to mop---he bought Kristina an expensive power mop that she now feels obligated to use. Not only are many men doing less housework because they

pay more of the general household expenses, but some are buying out of specific chores by paying “extra” bills or purchasing household goods and services.

Several working class men said that their jobs were more difficult or tiring than their partners’, which they therefore felt entitled them to do less work at home. This argument was not made by any of the middle class or class straddling men. For example, when asked who did the majority of the housework, Simon, who builds custom cabinetry for a living, remarked,

...she does do the majority [of the housework] but she understands too that I work 10, 11 hours every single day 5,6 days a week. She sees that and she knows when I get home I want to sit down, drink a beer and just relax and she don’t give me no problems about that, she really don’t, and I appreciate it and she understands that. I think that’s her way, ‘cause she does feel really sensitive and it kind of makes her feel bad that she can’t contribute more money, and she knows how hard I work for my money, how much I actually put out compared to what she does. But she contributes so much in other ways, and I remind her all the time how valuable she is, so she does her fair share and she makes up for a lot of things for stuff at home that I don’t. She’s so sweet. I get in the shower and like my underwear, everything is laid out. It’s so nice.

It is likely that these working class men focus more on the types of tasks they do at work rather than the amount of income that they earn both because blue collar jobs often require more physical labor than pink collar occupations and because these men do not earn a great deal more than their female partners. Without being able to justify their lesser housework based upon income alone, they rely on the physical demands of their occupations to explain why they cannot perform as many chores at home.

A set of explanations for why women did more housework that crossed social class lines among these conventional couples was the extremely common ideas that women do more housework because they are better at it, neater than their partners, and/or

because they have a greater desire to see it completed. Jake, a non-degreed class straddling computer technician reported,

She does a lot of cleaning mostly because she's good at it and I'm not. If I clean the bathroom it still looks dirty when I'm done and I don't know how. That's a girl thing. I think girls can clean the bathroom and I think guys clean the bathroom they're like, [miming cleaning the bathroom] "Well I swirled some water around in the tub and I straightened this thing up and rubbed the toilet seat off and I'm GOOD!" and it totally seems good if you're a guy. You [men] look at it and you're like, "It looks so much better than when I came in!" I think girls see the potential. I don't see it. The bathroom has no potential for me.

Anthony explained that he had expected Diana to do the majority of the housework because he was less capable. He said that the reason he expected her to do more was, "Just stereotype, I mean 'cause she honestly like when she was growing up her mom would have her do that stuff all the time and I never cooked or anything. Well actually, I can't even make peanut butter sandwich right sometimes but I'm working on it."

Numerous middle class couples addressed this theme as well. Audrey, a graduate student, explained why she did more work around the house than her partner, Jack. "I'm also the one who does all the laundry, but then once again that's my anal-retentiveness. Like I want it done now. Like Jack will do it, like I know he'll do it and he'll get around to doing it, but I want it done NOW"

Juliana, a recent master's graduate, explained that she blamed herself for part of the reason the chores were so uneven (cf Allen and Hawkins 1999), something that most of the other women failed to address. When asked if she felt that the division of labor would ever change, she explained,

No, I think that I've set myself up [both laugh]. And I knew that I was doing it, but I just can't handle having the house be dirty. I can't wait for him to get home. So no, I'm always and forever going to have to clean the

house. And I don't like the way that he does it. So even if he does do something, I have to re-do it. Laundry is very fair, we both do laundry. But I don't like the way that he folds my clothes. So I re-fold my clothes and he couldn't care less. So I bring it upon myself and I'm fully aware of that. And I kick myself every time, but I'm too picky to let it go any other way.

It is possible that most women did not reflect on the fact that they were participating in the inequality because they did not think of their overall divisions of labor as inequitable. Because most of their partners paid for the bulk of the household expenses, they viewed performing most of the chores as just.

Class Differences in Men's "Helping"/Refusal to "Help"

Two additional differences emerged among the working and middle class conventional couples in the ways they discussed housework. These leave middle class women more advantaged in some ways, but less advantaged in others. Middle class women, at least on the surface, are advantaged because they are "helped" more frequently by their partners. In contrast, most of the working class women had given up asking for help because they found their requests unmet. Still, half of the middle class men asserted that there were certain chores that they simply refused to do, a theme that did not emerge among and of the working class or class straddling men.

A majority of the middle class and class straddling women spoke with pride about the ways in which their partners were willing to "help" them with the housework---a theme that did not emerge among the working class. Some women phrased this by explaining that, although they did the bulk of the chores, their partners were quite good about performing a few particular tasks. Emma noted that she did almost all of the laundry and cleaning the house, but added in Aaron's defense that, "He actually does a

lot of the grocery buying and he actually does a lot of the cooking.” Olivia phrased the way her partner Greg contributed to the household slightly differently. She explained,

He’s very, very helpful around the house...he’s very helpful as far as chores goes, yeah... I have to push him sometimes, you know cause all of his clothes are in the spare bedroom. I call that his room... and with ‘his room’ he doesn’t always pick it up. I’ll do the laundry and I’ll put it on his bed. And it will still be there.

In Olivia’s mind (and those of others whose partners “help” with the housework) having a man “help” with the chores is a source of pride. However, having a partner “help” seems to require a great deal of vigilance and badgering on the part of the women. Like Olivia, all must ask for the help and, even then, it is not always provided. It is possible that these women feel lucky to have partners who are willing to participate in any of the chores given the conventional nature of their relationships (Gager 1998).

In comparison, many of the working class women who asked for such “help” around the house found that their requests were not met and eventually gave up on their aims. Diana, for example, explained that she sometimes asked Anthony to do more, but to little avail. She said,

I’d more or less get like pissed off and be like, “Anthony, why couldn’t you do this before I got home?” You know after I like threw a big fit about it, then he would, [say] “OK, well I’ll do it. “I’m like, “No! It’s pointless now, I already started,” You know, that kinda thing. So, we got over it though. It was just kind of a little thing you just kinda get over.

When asked if the situation improved, she tried to give Anthony some credit but acknowledged that, even though she “got over it”, she still was not getting the help she wanted, saying, “Um, yeah kinda. We still run into those problems.” Similarly, Tameka related her frustration with doing so many dishes. Her partner Max noted that she used to ask him to do his fair share, but he admitted that he did just enough to appease her,

saying, “I try to go in there at least wash a few dishes here and there once a week, once every 2 weeks, [But I] try to avoid those dishes as much as I can.” Tameka appears to have since stopped demanding that he do an equal share. It is unclear why this phenomenon does not appear among the middle class. Either the middle class conventional men are more willing to do some tasks when asked or the middle class conventional women have greater power than their working class counterparts to request occasional assistance.

Despite the women providing lip service to the men’s household contributions through the discussion of male partners as household “helpers”, half of the middle class conventional men had drawn clear boundaries regarding which chores they would assist with and which they would not. This means that middle class conventional men had more power to control who does the housework in some ways, by asserting their “right” of refusal over certain chores. Evan, a salesman, was straightforward in his explanation, “I don’t do bathrooms. Bathrooms are icky to me... I don’t do floors. If it has to scrub, I don’t do it. I’ll swifter, I’ll vacuum. I do not scrub.” Sean, on the other hand, a property manager who installs art installations part time, couched his refusal to clean in the rationale of chore-related childhood distress. “I really hate cleaning. I like things being clean but I just can’t do it. I like physically shut down when I start cleaning. Like I can’t bring myself to so much as put a dish in the dishwasher a lot of days....I don’t know if it goes back to my father being a clean freak and me hating to clean...” Sean, paused, then added that when he lived alone, “I cleaned *my* apartment every once in a while. I mean I actually owned a mop and I would mop my hardwood floors and clean stuff. My dishes would pile up to a certain point and then I would have to do the dishes.” He seemed to

lack insight as to why moving in with Emily rendered him unable to do the exact same chores he had done as a bachelor. Gupta (1999), however, notes that this behavior is typical as many men reduce the amount of housework that they do upon moving in with a female partner. Although these men view themselves as being above doing particular chores, they do not seem to recognize that their refusal puts their female partners into the exact positions of doing the scrubbing and mopping that they themselves abhor.

Middle class and class straddling conventional cohabiting women may have more power to ask for help from their partners in terms of household labor, but middle class conventional cohabiting men also have greater power than their working class counterparts to refuse to help with certain tasks. The conventional women can request help, but if their male partners repudiate particular chores, their pleas will go unheeded. Financially, middle class and class straddling conventional women appear to benefit more than working class conventional cohabiting women because their partners are better able to finance the women's own occupational goals. In terms of housework, however, none of the middle class conventional women receive greater assistance from their partners---they just choose to phrase their experiences in different terms than the working class do. The working class conventional women no longer ask for help while the middle class and most of the class straddling conventional women ask, but do not necessarily receive.

Conventional women, regardless of social class, are almost always doing more of the household chores. But, because their domestic arrangements were expected, most couples are satisfied with their current divisions of labor. Those few who are unhappy with their divisions of labor tried equalizing their divisions in the past. Middle and class straddling women occasionally ask for, but do not necessarily receive help, while

working class women eventually just stopped asking. Although couples shared a detailed snapshot of their lives at the time of their interviews, they also explained that their housework and financial arrangements have changed over time and provided hints that they may change yet again in the future.

The Process of Change among Conventional Couples

Although not all couples detailed the evolution of their financial and household arrangements, many explained that their divisions of labor have evolved over time, primarily in response to structural factors such as work or school. Still others provided tantalizing hints about the ways in which they viewed themselves apportioning their paid and housework responsibilities as their relationships continue. In all, most of the couples who discussed changes in their relationships said that they have become more conventional over time, and plan to adopt even more traditional arrangements should they marry and/or have children with their current partners.

The Evolution of Finances and Housework

A variety of structural factors, as well as some individual- and couple-level reasons, has led most of the currently conventional couples to develop more specialized divisions of labor throughout the course of their relationships. These include changes in employment, entering school, and pregnancy. For some class straddling and middle class couples, the men's realizations of inequality made their relationships less conventional than in the past. These reasons were not necessarily mutually exclusive, with half of all couples who have become more conventional over time doing so for multiple reasons. Of those couples whose arrangements have changed over time, most experienced a change in

both their paid and housework since originally moving in together, though a sizable number experienced changes in only one realm (financial or household labor).

Changes due to Employment

The most commonly cited reason for becoming more conventional was a change in one partner's employment. Typically, either the male partner obtained a better paying job or began putting in more hours at work or the female partner had difficulties with unemployment or took a lower-paying, more satisfying job. In addition, a few working class men had been unemployed when they first moved in with their partners, a fact the men tended to downplay, but quickly found work. Some of their working class female partners responded by leaving the workplace entirely in favor of attending college or because their jobs were too stressful. In contrast, middle class women who experienced employment changes either left the workplace temporarily to care for infants or started their own businesses. Although numerous couples experienced changes in their financial arrangements due to employment changes, few changed their household divisions of labor as a result (Bittman et al. 2003; Brines 1994).

Aaron and Emma, the manager of a chain printing store and a budding photographer, explained that when Aaron took on his management job, their roles within the household shifted. Whereas before they had been more equal, Aaron's new position entailed more hours at work. When asked about their division of labor he said,

Lately in the last few months I've probably been working quite a lot and have probably not exactly been doing my share of the work [at home] I think but I mean like I say we didn't decide when we moved in somebody was gonna do this or somebody was gonna do that and I think sort of like the financial part of it. We just sort of let it fall where it fell and if somebody had time to do it they did it or if somebody didn't they didn't.

Emma explained that while the couple had originally planned on sharing bills and household responsibilities equally, Aaron's new work demands and higher income made that unlikely. When asked what she had anticipated living together to be like she noted,

I mean [originally] we decided that it should be pretty much 50-50 with the bills, all bills. I think recently I've been doing more housework but he's been working a tremendous amount, and he's also been earning more than me ... I have some back money that I need to give him and he'll get it eventually, but I don't mind picking up extra things in the mean time while he bears that burden.

Despite some of these couples' original intentions to have an equal relationship, the demands of the male partner's work and the extra income that accompanied his greater responsibilities often made being equitable a more attractive arrangement.

A few working-class men were unemployed when they first moved in with their partners, but quickly found steady work. Simon explained that he had cut his thumb off with a saw and was drawing worker's compensation when he and Laura first moved in together. Vic was living off a dwindling trust and student loans, and Stan had recently lost his job. Though their female partners described in detail the men's work situations, these three men all glossed over their bouts of unemployment. Carly, for example, explained that when she and Vic first moved in together.

Vic was doing worse off financially because he didn't think he would be in school, so he didn't think his financial aid would cover his bills. And he couldn't find a job. So like, I was buying some things for us... before he got his job when he had a whole quarter that he wasn't working and he wasn't in school. So his mom was paying him, but, and the deal was he would pay her right back once he got his student loans. So his mom is helping out with that.

Unlike Carly, who went into great detail, when asked about his work before he got his current job in acquisitions at the University Press, Ray simply noted, "I was just living off of the student loans." The men may have been more reluctant to discuss their bouts of

unemployment because they are not consistent with their current conventional relationships. These couples all focused on what steady workers the men are now, however, with Keisha even going so far as to refer to Stan as “a gift” because of the way he provides financial support and helps around the house.

Numerous women experienced changes in the workplace, though these differ by social class. Working class women who experienced financial changes became more conventional because they stopped working all together. In contrast, middle class women either opened or are growing their own businesses (into which they reinvest all of their profits) or are staying home with children temporarily. Jorge, for example, explained that he had been paying all of the bills since Valencia quit her retail job after experiencing quite a bit of job stress. He said, “I told her she don’t have to [work] since we only have one car and she doesn’t know her way around.” He explained that the couple originally shared housework more equally but that, “I would say she would do more. I mean now that she’s not working or in school so it would probably I would say she would be about maybe 70/30 or 80/20, her percentage.” Max was also comfortable with Tameka not working. After she was laid off from a customer service job, he explained that he encouraged her to focus on getting her associate’s degree. When asked if Tameka was working, Max replied, “She’s was working with the phone company. They went through a lot of different things, so she left there so now she’s in school, but in school full time for nursing, and she’s been in school almost two years but she’ll be done hopefully soon.” He was then asked if he had been shouldering all of the financial responsibilities and replied, “Kind of right now. It doesn’t bother me.”

In contrast, middle class and class straddling women whose relationships became more conventional because of their jobs either were staying home with children temporarily or, more commonly, began or were trying to grow their own businesses. Peter mentioned that RaShinda intended to resume her employment but had been staying home since the birth of their first child 20 months ago; a second baby further delayed her plans to return to work. Since then, he had been covering all of the bills on his graduate stipend and a second job he had taken at a factory. Other couples, like Janelle and Jonathan became more conventional while the women were trying to expand their businesses. For example, Janelle explained that Jonathan had encouraged her to shut down a joint venture and open her own yoga studio. She said she was trying to pay most of the bills and do most of the housework at that point in their relationship since she and Jonathan had not yet decided how to divide their division of labor. Their discussion of the way in which they arrived at their conventional arrangement provides a glimpse into the negotiation process. Janelle said,

I was carrying the lion's share and I had a little mini breakdown and started crying one night and he said, "What?" and I said, "I can't do this!" because what he was doing was he was giving me like \$400 or \$500 a month, but I'm such an idiot that I can run my business books because it's got a system so I do my sales and I pay my bills and I do all that and I can do that, but with my own stuff I just can't. I just put it all in the kitty and just pay it all at once and I don't know what everything is because I don't want to total it all up so bills go out and I just throw up my hands and said, "I'm not doing this. I'm not doing it right. I fucked up. I don't know how much it's costing me." And he said, I just cried, and he said, "Know what?" and then it was also coming to like it was, it was a little, it was intense, wasn't fighting but he would say, "The kitty litter box stinks!" and of course I'm thinking, "Well they are your cats!" and I said, "This is ridiculous" because he would say like, "Did you go to the grocery store today?" and I'd say, "No, did YOU go to the grocery store today?" it was like none of us had these roles defined and it was so hard because we were both just trying to do a little bit of everything and instead it just all came back and I just started crying and he said, "OK sit down. Let's, let's talk about it. This is it. How are we gonna

do this?” and I said, “I would like to just be responsible for taking care of everything in the house. I’m perfectly fine with cleaning the kitty litter box and walking the dogs and cleaning up the poo in the back yard and going to the grocery store and cleaning the house and doing the laundry. I absolutely hate having to stress out about ‘Do I have enough money in the bank account to buy groceries?’” and he said, “OK. Done. My job is to make sure there is enough money in the account to buy anything you need in the house and you then will be taking care of the groceries” and I said, “[sigh of relief] Thank God.” It was like the weight of the world was lifted off my shoulders and it’s been fabulous ever since cause he loves it now cause he’s like, “We’re out of half and half! You’ll be taking care of that then, won’t you?” and I’ll say like, “Oh I need to make out a big check here. You got enough money in the account cause there’s a big check coming out?” so it’s fabulous.

Her partner, Jonathan explained that when he first moved in with Janelle, he was still trying to pay for a condominium he had on the real estate market and reiterated her point that neither partner had defined roles. He said that he was much happier with their current conventional arrangement. Discussing the changes their division of labor has undergone, he said,

...after a while I was just like, “You know, this is just stupid.” Let’s just get a joint bank account and I’ll just put money in there and I’ll worry about putting the money in and you just worry about groceries, stuff for the house whatever you need, you just write the checks out of that account and if I need anything from you then I’ll ask you for it. And so it works out better that way because I don’t have to worry about, “Okay, am I contributing an equal amount? Am I doing my share?” And she doesn’t have to worry about the money. She’s great at like shopping, doing her thing, doing chores... getting the pet food, doing all the things, and that’s what she likes doing. And she likes going and doing that kinda stuff, but what she hates doing is keeping a check book and keeping finances and that’s what I’m good at. And I’m responsible for making sure that everything’s balanced and we got money in the account and putting the money in the account. And if ever we need some money, I can ask her, “Well I don’t have any money this month, do you have anything? That’s cool.” And all she has to worry about is just swipe the card, get the groceries, whatever. And I don’t have to worry about getting the groceries, I don’t have to worry going to get pet food.

For couples like Jonathan and Janelle, reaching a more conventional arrangement made both partners happy, in part because each individual was certain of how to behave within

the context of their relationships. Maintaining equality may be difficult, then, since it requires constantly negotiating and defining each partner's positions within the union (Risman 1998).

Rarely did both partners experience occupational changes that led to changes in the household division of labor. However, this situation did occur for two working-class couples, both of whom have lived together for several years. Stan and Keisha, for example, have alternated between bouts of unemployment since moving in together three years ago. While one partner was working, the other took care of most of the household responsibilities. Ray and Julie had a different experience. When the two first moved in together over six years ago, neither had many ambitions. The two were living in Ray's parents' basement. As Julie explained, "We were stupid and then we were living with his parents and there was no--- we were just like two kids in the house that happened to share the same bed..." She noted that she used to have to encourage Ray to be financially responsible, recalling that she would say things like, "Ray, are you really sick or are you just faking sick? You need to go to work!" when he attempted to avoid going to work. However, once Ray obtained a better job and her hours were cut at work, Julie noted that she noticed a change that she referred to as a "power shift". Asked to elaborate, she said,

I think it's just a role that kind of bubbled up when he started making more money and I'm ok with it. I'm fine with being taken care of and being watched over and I think he's just kind of settled into it as well. He wants to make sure we're both of the mindset that we're so proud of ourselves that we've made it this far, that we have a nice apartment and we're both doing really well in school that whatever has allowed this to work we're fine with.

Since Ray obtained a better job, Julie noted that their division of household labor has changed as well.

Couples whose relationships became more conventional as a result of workplace changes might have been dissatisfied with the changes because they were, in part, not within their control. However, the vast majority are happy with their conventional lifestyles. This may be because their financial arrangements (with the male partner as the primary or sole breadwinner) now match their own and societal traditional expectations.

Changes Due to Schooling

Several working class couples became more conventional over time because the female partner returned to college. Most of the women who did so were in their late 20's at the time, and able to go back to school because their male partners could shoulder the majority of the financial burden. For example, Randy, an airplane mechanic, met Ming when he was in the military. Since getting out of the service, he has been able to purchase a condominium for the two and took on even more of the financial responsibilities than he did before. He explained that he encouraged Ming to stop working full time in order to finish her education, saying,

Well actually it came to the point where I'm making pretty good money now and before I was making pretty good money and so I just told her "Just don't worry about it. Just do what you can when you can and just finish school" so she's working part time but her money she uses for herself. I mean she goes to the store and whatnot and she was paying bills for a while and then I told her "Don't worry about it just finish school cause then when you finish school then you'll be making more money rather than working part time and stretching school out and then you can make money. Don't worry about money."

Carly explained that, since she had returned to school, she had been able to pay fewer bills. As a result, Ray was paying a larger share of the household expenses than before. She said, "...right after I got into school, my financial aid never came through. I could pay rent but that was about it and I had to barely squeeze to [pay

my] bills. And he would help me out when I needed gas and we would just each pay, just help each other out.”

Only one couple, Anthony and Diana, became less conventional over time because of the changes in school attendance. Anthony had been paying all of the bills when Diana first gave birth to their daughter since Diana was still in high school at the time. Following her graduation, she began working and Anthony returned to school and shifted from full to part time work. Now, although their arrangement is still conventional, their financial division is more equal than in the past. The male partner returning to school after a hiatus or as nontraditional students was a rare phenomenon among the conventional couples. This may be because conventional female partners, particularly those who hold working class jobs, do not earn enough to provide the bulk of financial support for men who wish to attend college. Unless these men are able to find employment that will provide tuition reimbursement, as Max, an administrative assistant at a middle school who is getting his education degree has, returning to school in order to boost their earning potential is unlikely.

Changes due to Pregnancy

Pregnancy/childbirth changed the lives of a few of these conventional couples in a variety of ways. One conventional woman was pregnant at the time of her interview and two other couples shared children. For Carly, her pregnancy made their relationship less conventional, at least temporarily. She explained that she had always planned on being primarily responsible for domestic duties, but her morning sickness precluded her ability to do certain chores. She said,

...when I got pregnant my morning sickness, it was so bad. I wouldn't have the energy to do the dishes. And I felt really bad because I wasn't helping him out like I used to. And, it's just kind of like I think he'd gotten used to me doing dishes and things like that, so it's kinda messy sometimes but. And it's kinda frustrating. It was pretty much the way I imagined it.

Anthony also explained that the birth of his and Diana's daughter had made their relationship less conventional in terms of housework. He noted that he originally intended for Diana to do all of the work around the home but that the birth of their daughter changed that. He explained, "...once we had the baby, yeah, I've gotta help now. I cook now. I'd never cooked in my life" adding of Diana, "...she's really busy. She works and goes to school too and I mean I can't expect her to [do] everything." Still, all three couples who share children admit that the women are or plan to be the primary childrearers. Their relationships remain conventional, in part, because the women will or have traded a portion of the cooking and dishes for breastfeeding, diapering, and rocking.

Men's Realizations of Inequality

A few class straddling and middle class men seemed to recognize that their household divisions of labor unfairly taxed their partners. Although the women continue to do the bulk of the chores in their homes, the men have taken on more responsibilities, making their relationships slightly less conventional than when the couples first moved in together.

Olivia explained how Greg came to the realization that their division of labor was not necessarily equitable. She stated,

I remember, where when Greg got to a point where he realized that maybe he does need to compromise with me a little bit. We got this lamp from *Z Gallerie*.. And it was delivered. I mean, I'm very independent. I've lived in my own house that I bought, by myself, for years! I can do this stuff. And he's like, "Oh, I'll get it, I'll get it." Like two weeks goes by, just put it together!" So finally I'm

like, screw it, and I just put it together. And I couldn't figure it out. I got most of it but then the very top part, couldn't figure it out. So I just left it in there. And he comes home in the middle of all this. And he's like, "What are you doing?" I'm like, "I'm putting the lamp together." And he just shook his head and walked away. And I'm like, "Huh, what?" And then that's when he realized, he's like, "You've been asking me to do it, why can't I just do it? Why is that difficult for me to do?" You know cause he, I would have this whole ongoing to do list. And I still have to give him a to do list. He asked me last night, "Can you make a to do list for me?" Cause I'll ask him, "He did you get to do this? Did you get to that? Did you get to that?" And, "No, no, no. Just write it down." So I had this to do list, especially when I first moved in because there was so much going on. And I'm like, why can't he get to it? And so that's when he finally realized, "Why can't I just do it?" Because everything on the list it takes him no time at all. It takes him two hours, he has it all done. "What was so hard about that? And now I can sit here on the couch with you and be comfy." But my mind doesn't let me relax until things are done. You know, it drives me nuts!

For most men, the recognition that things were unfair led to small changes. For example, Derek, a computer programmer explained that he recently realized that the philosophy of housework that he abided by for the first several years that he and Kathleen lived together disproportionately disadvantaged his partner. When asked about their division of labor he said,

I think I was 19, she was 18 when we moved in together, so we didn't really have good skills in that department. She's very concerned with housework but doesn't like to do it. I'm less concerned with housework and don't like to do it. So that caused a lot of friction. At least 10 years ago, my attitude was that the first person who really felt like something needed to be done should do it. And that left her with cleaning the house all the time, so that didn't work out so well. As we've learned to communicate better it's been more evenly split.

Similarly, Peter, a Kenyan graduate student noted that he tried to remember that his cultural traditions were not necessarily fair to RaShinda. Although his experience as an immigrant is unique, the gendered expectations he grew up surrounded by cross national and cultural boundaries. He explained,

...as much as my mom taught us how to cook, taught us how to do most of this stuff, laundry and everything, back in Kenya men kind of just chill out and the

women do most of the stuff in the house and most of the cooking. Actually, pretty much everything. Men just get into the house, you pick up your newspaper and watch your TV. You wait for the food to be on the table and all of that. But I had to really adjust myself, 'cause those are notions I came with from Kenya and I grew up not seeing my dad do anything. So that's how you see yourself or picture yourself as a married person, so I had to readjust all that stuff. So I just kept making sure I pick up after myself, make sure I clean the house, make sure I do everything around the house. So those are some of the big adjustments I had to make when I—I'm still actually making [laughs]. I'm still trying to get through that, but I think I'm doing better than I did in the beginning.

Still, although Peter notes that he does “everything around the house” he clarified that, for him, “everything around the house” meant that he does about 30% of the housework while RaShinda continues to do the other 70% and be the primary caregiver for the couple's two young children. While the household division of labor these couples employ has become more equal over time, nonetheless their division of labor remains conventional. Particularly telling is the fact that their arrangements changed only once the male partners decided that change should occur rather than in response to the female partners demanding change or expressing their unhappiness about the division of labor. The middle class may have more liberal attitudes about egalitarian behaviors than their working class counterparts, in part because of their college attendance (Clarkberg et al. 1995; Denmark et al. 1985; Myers and Booth 2002). However, those attitudes do not appear to translate into significantly more egalitarian behaviors for the most conventional couples. Instead, the men's feelings about the inequity in their relationships leads them to do just enough around the home to assuage their own concerns.

Anticipated Future Changes

Couples were asked or often volunteered information about the changes they thought that marriage might bring to their relationships. While many mentioned

combining finances or sharing insurance companies, few discussed marriage as a pathway to changes in their divisions of labor. Instead, most individuals (particularly men) felt that marriage would bring about no changes, though their female partners sometimes disagreed. Only one response, couple-level disagreements over changes after marriage, differed by social class. Working class couples were far more likely to disagree about whether their divisions of labor would remain the same after tying the knot than their middle class counterparts. Still other couples agreed that having children, rather than getting married, would lead to increased conventionality in their unions.

More or Less Conventional

Only one couple agreed that marriage would make their relationship more conventional; one other felt that their relationship would become less conventional should they marry. Both anticipated changes in control over household finances.

Matthew and Kristina, for example, agreed that he would get more control over the household income once they were married, with both explaining that Kristina lacked financial savvy. When asked what he expected to change after they married, Matthew said, “This is selfish on my part but if we were married, I would be able to just over-run her finances.” He added, “I would just [say], ‘You’re done with this. You’re not touching it anymore.’ She’s mismanaged it to a point where it, it needs someone to take it over but I don’t feel like it’s my place yet, so that would definitely help us. But it’s not a necessity.” Kristina concurred,

We’ve already vowed that he’s taking all my money and giving me an [allowance]. I’m like “I don’t care! Take all my money!” cause I’m so bad [with] money and he’s so good with money and he’ll admit it and I’ll admit it so I’d rather him take care of all that, and right now he doesn’t feel like he should

so that's the one thing that I'll hand over to him that will be different but I just don't--- that's not a good idea until [we're married].

Conversely, two class straddling women hoped to have more financial control if they married their partners. Artie and Brandi planned on Brandi being in charge of all of the money once the two married. Artie explained that their financial situation would be better after marriage, "Just because [we] would probably just have her manage the finances and stuff. Other than that I don't have a problem with her doing it right now anyways but I *really* wouldn't have a problem with her doing it then--- shared accounts and stuff like that." Stephanie also hoped to take greater control of the finances if her relatively short relationship with Jake continues because she does not feel that he is good at budgeting his income. However, because Jake does not want anything to change in terms of their financial arrangement, Stephanie will be less likely to modify their situation than Brandi.. While these couples' arrangements will become more or less conventional over time, these particular planned changes in financial control appear to be motivated more by individual skills than gendered expectations.

Although not explicitly addressed, some couples are likely to become more or less conventional over time as their work/school situations change. This may be particularly true for couples among which the male partner becomes more educated, as men's education often results in a greater earnings growth for a couple than does women's education (Shauman and Noonan 2007). Diana and Anthony are both students, but each places more significance on Anthony's bachelor's degree in architecture than Diana's certificate in real estate. Once Anthony graduates, the couple is likely to experience a

more segregated division of labor regardless of whether or not they have married, as his income and status within the union rises.

Other couples may see their divisions of labor become less specialized when the female partners graduate from school, get better jobs, or see their businesses succeed. Juliana, for example, had just finished her master's degree two weeks before her interview. For most of their relationship, Evan, a salesman, has been the financial mainstay. Once Juliana obtains a job in her field, however, their financial division of labor is likely to become more equal, which may change their household division of labor in unexpected ways. Some women like Julie, a nanny and full time college student, and Janelle, who owns her own yoga studio, have been doing the majority of the housework, they explained, because their partners paid nearly all of the bills. Olivia's quote, "He brings home the money [laughs]. The least I can do is clean up!" provided another example of this mindset. If the financial division of labor becomes less conventional, it is possible that their household division of labor may as well. It will be interesting to see what rationalizations women like Olivia use for continuing to do the vast majority of the household labor if their partners do not take on more of the work at home as the women pay more of the household bills. However, Gupta (2007) suggests that it is only married women's absolute income, rather than their income relative to their partners' that allows women to "opt out" of housework. Whether this finding is also supported among cohabitators remains to be seen. Alternatively, these women may use their newfound earnings to outsource chores to lower class women by hiring domestic workers (de Ruijter, Treas, and Cohen 2005; Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette 2001)

No Change

Many couples expect that marriage will not change their divisions of labor. They view marriage as only changing the women's last names and as a way of adding to their house wares. They do not anticipate that getting married will lead to a change in their current financial obligations or household chores.

For example, Stan and Keisha both enthusiastically discussed their impending engagement, already referring to one another as "fiancé/fiancée" although the arrangement had not yet been made official. When asked what would change after marriage, Stan said,

Just the name change. That's all, because we're at the point now where as to we're both getting older, both ready to settle down. We're realizing it's going to be with each other and, that's just basically it. Nothing is really gonna change besides her name, oh, she's waitin for, itchin for that. Yeah, she's itchin for that. To say "her husband" instead of "her fiancé" so that'd be the only thing.

Keisha also commented that all that would change would be her name, saying of the changes she expected after marriage,

We'll still be going to work, doing what we supposed to do. Still being together. Still reaching for the same goals. Still looking towards our future. So to me, there's really no difference. If you have that connection when you are in a relationship, there shouldn't be no difference when you get married.

Jonathan and Janelle felt the same way as Keisha and Stan. Following their engagement, both acknowledged that they did not expect anything to change in their lives after marriage except, Janelle humorously noted, that they would now have more gifts than ever before. She said,

Well we'll have one hell of a lot better kitchen utensils. That's for damn sure because we've already had a shower and it's like, "Sweet Mary!" it's like Christmas. If I knew this is what happened when you got married I would have done it like 3 times already. It is incredible things people give you. It's insane. I mean like I have a *Cuisenart* Food Processor, I have a *Kitchen Aid* Stainless Steel Mixer- thing. I got this fabulous wooden bowl with little hands and

beautiful, fabulous things from *Crate and Barrel* and *Williams Sonoma* and it's just like, "Oh! We have the best kitchen stuff ever!"

The majority of the couples who expect no changes have lived together for at least 18 months. This may have given them time to find a balance within their relationships that both partners are satisfied with and hope will not change with the addition of rings.

Disagree on the Changes to Come

Although a sizable number of couples felt that no changes would occur after marriage in terms of their conventionality, an equal share disagreed on what changes marriage might bring. The most common type of disagreement was for the male partner to believe that marriage would not alter the couple's division of labor while the female partner thought that the couple's life would get even more conventional after walking down the aisle. The female partners likely were the ones who most often expected changes accompanying marriage because the men did not expect to change their own financial/household labor, but the women thought that their own roles would evolve. Working class women often felt that these changes would be in the domestic arena, while middle class women felt that their financial arrangements or control would differ.

Jorge, for example, did not plan on anything changing after he married working class Valencia, something the two had been actively planning. Valencia, however, planned to take on all of the chores around the home once the two married, adding that she did not trust Jorge's household skills. When asked what would change after the two were married, she explained,

I think I would probably have all of the house chores. I mean I make him like sometimes vacuum. That's easy. He can't mess up on that but I don't like him doing laundry cause it makes me worried. I mean like I've always just did the

laundry. I get like nervous that he's gonna put the red with the whites or something and it's gonna bleed everywhere so I'm like, "No, I'll just do it!"

In contrast, middle class couples who disagreed over changes in conventionality after marriage were concerned about changes in their financial situations rather than housework. Sean and Emily, for example, had been talking about marriage a lot since their engagement. He stated that he did not anticipate any changes, saying that the only difference would be that, "I'll get to refer to her as my wife." Emily added that the two had been talking about the topic and, as a couple, did not anticipate any major changes, saying "Sean and I have been talking about what's going to change, and we can't come up with anything. Other than the fact that we'll be married." However, when asked specifically about financial changes post-marriage, she added that she hoped to turn over control of all of the finances to Sean saying,

It'll be unconditional with money. I mean I have no problem with just giving him everything I make and maybe keeping a little something for drinks out with the ladies. I have no problem with that. 'Cause I would rather not deal with money at all and he's great with money.

The fact that the female partners are often expecting to become more conventional themselves following marriage while the male partners expect the division of labor to stay the same is telling. The change in the household division of labor that Gupta (1999) observes occurs between cohabitation and marriage may result from women feeling that they need to change their behaviors upon becoming "wives" more so than men changing their roles upon taking on the title "husband".

Babies, not Marriage, bring Changes

A number of individuals and couples noted that they did not expect their relationships to become more or less conventional following marriage, but did think that

their unions will change (generally getting more conventional) if they have children with their current partners. Some of the middle class couples intended for the female partners to stay home at least part time after having a baby, a theme that rarely emerged among the working class.

Vic, whose partner Carly was four months pregnant at the time of their interviews, explained the differences that he thought marriage might bring as opposed to having a baby in a way that was representative of this group,

Well the big change will be the kid already. I keep referring to “the kid” because I don’t know the sex yet. We’re not that far along. I won’t know that for another 3 or 4 weeks so that will be the earliest but so the kid will be the biggest change. Marriage will sort of, eh, you know, we’ll throw a party.

These couples all believed that marriage was an extension of their current cohabiting unions. Only once children were born did they anticipate major changes in their divisions of labor.

As the interview schedule evolved, we began asking couples their plans for balancing work and family. Several middle class couples plan on having the female partner stay at home once they have children. Despite having careers that they enjoy, some middle class women intend to leave their jobs for at least a few years or work from home once they have children. Juliana noted,

Evan has a lot more earning potential than I do and we both realize that. So he’s definitely going to be the breadwinner in the family and we both think it’s important to have a mom at home. So at least for the first couple years of their lives, I will be at home, whether that’s full time or part-time, depending on how the money goes until they’re like in Kindergarten half the day or something like that, then I would consider going back.

Only one working class conventional woman volunteered that she would like to work part time after her children are born- none brought up being stay at home mothers nor did

they express strong desires to remain working once they have children, though most working class couples were not directly asked their plans for balancing work and family. Still, a few working class men said that they would like their partners to stay at home once the couple has children. Randy, for example, mentioned that Ming was unsure about staying home, but that he would prefer her to. He said,

I'd like her to stay home but we don't know 'cause I think to have a comfortable life we both have to work like the two family working household anymore, so it would be nice to have her stay home, I think, but then I think she would get bored. She likes to do stuff, and so we don't know.

It is possible that the working class women have not yet considered what they would like to do with their jobs once children are born since most have yet to find a solid occupational path. In addition, it may be that these couples feel that they cannot afford to be one-income families, though they may reevaluate this in the future.

To summarize, twenty two couples (nine working class, five class straddling, and eight middle class) currently abide by conventionally gendered behaviors. Among these couples, male partners are credited with paying a greater share of the household expenses and have clearer occupational paths. Often, their work is given greater credence by one or both partners. Although few couples cede financial control to one partner, when male partners have financial control, the ways in which they manage the household coffers differ by social class. Middle class men limit their partners' spending while working class men apportion more disposable income for themselves. A few working and class straddling women are given control of the household finances, but when they are it is phrased as a form of "caretaking" rather than "providing." Most conventional women also engage in caretaking via doing the majority of the housework. While most women

expected and are satisfied with their domestic arrangements, a few have attempted, to little or no avail, to get their partners to take on a bit more of the chores than the men have historically assumed.

Many of these couples have not always had their current divisions of labor. Instead, a variety of structural and individual factors (such as changes in school and employment, or middle and class straddling men's recognitions of inequality) have led these couples to become more or less conventional over time. Most couples do not anticipate that their relationships will change again in the future unless they have children together. However, some modifications seem likely as other changes (such as the one partner advancing in his/her career or finishing school) impact the couples' financial situations.

Chapter 5: Contesting and Equalitarian Couples

Twenty-one year old Stacy was first drawn to Andre, 25, because of his “beautiful Spanish eyes” and the sweet words he whispered in her ear. Andre was similarly enamored when he met Stacy at a vampire role-playing game and invited her out for pizza afterwards, even though he had a girlfriend at the time. They realized that they had quite a bit in common; both viewed their jobs (Andre as a mortgage processor and Stacy as an assistant manager at a telephone survey research center) as a means to an end, rather than intrinsically satisfying. Both enjoyed watching movies and sharing their favorite genres of music with one another. The two took their relationship fairly slowly, moving in together after 20 months when Stacy became unemployed.

Once they shared a roof, however, Stacy quickly became disenchanted. She knew that Andre wanted to “take care of her”, but didn’t realize that he would want to completely take over her finances. She knew his home was a bit messy, but never imagined that she’d be expected to constantly pick up after Andre and his friends. After asking Andre to help her more around the house when she began working didn’t change their division of labor, Stacy tried another tactic- she picked up a second job so that she would be home less, forcing Andre to take over some of the chores if he didn’t want to live in filth. Andre never seemed to realize that the fairy tale had ended. He felt that taking over Stacy’s finances was a sign of commitment and didn’t quite understand why she would need independent control over her earnings. He hoped to earn enough money to allow Stacy to stay at home permanently, and wasn’t sure why she felt it was important to be able to support herself. He loved that she did the vast majority of the chores when the two first moved in together, and he was willing to take on a larger share---but envisioned that the change was only temporarily while Stacy was working more finishing court reporting school.

For now, the two seem to have two completely different sets of desires: Andre hopes for a more conventional relationship in which he’ll be responsible for providing financially while Stacy takes care of the home, and Stacy wants to create a more egalitarian union in which neither partner is bound by the roles expected of “husbands” and “wives.”

Like Andre and Stacy, at least one partner (generally the woman) in 25 couples was contesting conventionally gendered behaviors. Contesting partners attempted to deviate from tradition in at least one arena: sharing housework more equally, failing to privilege the male partner’s employment, or refusing to cede financial control to the male

partner. In addition, the majority shared their financial obligations equally, though this division was not unique to the contesting group alone.

Although all of the contesting couples shared the common feature of having at least one partner who was attempting to flout traditional gender norms, the way in which they did so and the effectiveness of their attempts often differed by social class. Eleven of the 26 working class couples, two of the eight class straddling couples, and 12 of the 27 middle class couples are contesting conventionally gendered behaviors. Many couples, particularly among the middle class and class straddlers, are contesting conventional gender norms by sharing the housework. Middle class women, in particular, have succeeded at getting their partners to assume a fairly equal division in the home. Still, this requires a great deal of vigilance on the women's parts. Some of the middle class have chosen to use work orientation as a way of flouting conventional norms; for example, they intentionally assign equal value to their jobs or privilege the female partner's occupation. When the working class has nontraditional work arrangements, however, it is generally due to structural factors or financial needs rather than deliberate choices. Other couples are sharing household expenses equally, though this alone is not enough to justify inclusion in this category since many couples share financial obligations, especially if they have similar earnings. Some otherwise contesting men have attempted to assume or have assumed a greater sense of control over the couple's finances. This phenomenon is more common among the working class; for some working class women, refusing to permit their partners this control makes them feel strong and independent. Finally, for working class contesting women, equally sharing financial obligations is a source of pride and allows them to feel that they are eschewing conventional arrangements; class

straddling and middle class women appear to approach this situation from a more pragmatic perspective and see themselves as “doing their share” rather than actively contesting gendered norms. Although these couples are all contesting established conventional gender norms in some way, no working class or class straddling couples and few middle class couples are intentionally trying to create a completely egalitarian relationship.

Feelings about Housework

Though some cohabitators were “doing gender” in non-conventional ways through their work orientations, financial arrangements, or refusing to cede financial control, the most common way of breaching conventionally gendered arrangements was through the insistence on a more equal division of household labor. A large number of women are attempting to increase equality within their household divisions of labor. Those who have used direct strategies (e.g., clearly demanding help) are often more effective than those who use less direct strategies (e.g., posting a “chore chart” on which each partner initials what he or she does to visually depict inequality). Other couples are sharing housework as a part of their overall philosophy of egalitarianism. The couples who have been most successful at sharing housework equally are those who have created a strategy for guaranteeing that their divisions remain fair; the responsibility for ensuring fairness often lies in the hands of the female partner, however.

Again, the ways in which individuals and couples contest housework often differ by social class. Among the working class sample, female partners were shouldering most of the housework; despite their attempts to increase equality by contesting conventional

norms surrounding the division of labor, they were unhappy with their situations. Sam, 18, for example, admits that he does less than his fair share of household chores, saying,

I'll admit I am lazy. When I get home from work, I don't really wanna do much. So she usually ends up cleaning up the room and stuff. She does most of the housework, but I'll take the trash out or something like that. And I'll always help her carry bags of groceries in and stuff, or pay for the groceries. Her and the kids'll usually do the putting it away and stuff. And I figure, I paid for it, ya'll can at least put it away.

His partner, 34 year old Rhoda, explained that she tells Sam that they should take turns with household chores, but that he does not always live up to his end of the bargain. She said, "Well I just tell him I clean the room one day, he cleans the room the next 'cause he's kind of messy so I kind of get irked a little bit with the clothes all over the place." For now, Rhoda's contesting, like that of other working class women, is not enough to lead to an equal division among the couple. Research suggests that, at least in other arenas, when couples have competing ideologies, they are likely to engage in hegemonic behavior (Humble, Zvonkovic, and Walker 2008).

This was not the case among the class straddling and middle class couples. Twelve of the 14 straddling and middle class couples agreed that each partner did between 40% and 60% of the household labor; the vast majority were satisfied with their arrangements. Elizabeth, for example, explained that she was very happy that she and Dean shared household chores so equally based upon each partner's preferences. She said,

Thank God he likes to vacuum and he hates doing bathrooms, 'cause I am really ok with doing bathrooms, so we have a very fine division of labor and cleaning. We basically do pretty much everything holistically together. We clean the house together, but I always do the bathrooms and he always vacuums. It was this revelatory moment when we discovered that he hates doing the bathrooms and I hate vacuuming. We were both like, "No, really? You don't mind?" so

that's lasted for 5 years now and has been great. We pretty much cook all the time together, we do laundry, I mean chores we do together.

The greater equality in housework experienced by the straddling and middle class couples may be related to the fact that the middle class contesting women and the class straddling woman who has a college degree have been able to get their partners to do more housework while most of their working class counterparts have not been able to influence the amount of household labor that their male partners do (Blumberg and Coleman 1989). In addition, none of the working class contesting couples had established strategies for ensuring equality, but nearly half of the middle class contesting couples had negotiated systems for guaranteeing fairness.

Attempting to Increase Equality

Several middle class and one class straddling contesting women were able to get their partners to do more housework than they had done when the couple initially moved in together. However, only one working class woman was able to get her partner to take on a greater share of the household chores. The different ways in which these women have attempted to change their divisions of labor may explain the difference in their effectiveness. Whereas the middle class and class straddling women have been more straightforward in their demands, the working class women have tried less direct strategies for getting the men to take on more of the household chores. The ways in which the women have attempted to effect change might explain the men's reactions. The working class women's indirect strategies have allowed their male partners to admit that things are unequal, but make excuses why doing more of the chores is not likely. Because they have not specifically been called to task about their lesser housework, they have

been able to rationalize away their partners' silent desires and modest cajoling. In contrast, perhaps because their female partners directly confronted them about the unequal load, most of the middle class and class straddling men admitted that their guilt over doing less than "their fair share" has led them to take on at least forty percent of the household chores. Alternatively, the men's differential reactions may be a function of their social class (Komter 1989).

Jessica (30), for example, was one of the middle class women who was able to get her partner to do a larger share of the chores than when the two first moved in together. She stated that she has always had a lower tolerance for mess than 31 year old Martin does, but added that they since the two have lived together for a while, Martin now automatically does the housework if he can sense that she is frustrated. She said, "...he can just tell, sometimes I get so like, 'Oh my god! We have to clean this place or we have to move!' So as soon as he sees me start he can sense that like, 'Okay, she's getting fed up, she's getting mad.' So he'll just clean everything." Likewise, Lauren (23) explained how she initially had been folding most of the laundry for conventional reasons but eventually became really dissatisfied with the situation. When asked about the chores now, she noted,

The only thing we really [had] problems with is him folding his clothes and that's it, but most of the time he somehow ends up paying for laundry so I figure if he pays for it I might as well just fold the damn clothes, but we've only gotten into a discussion about the clothes folding once. I freaked out and I'm like, "I'm not gonna be folding these clothes the rest of my life!!"

Since her outburst, Lauren and her partner Justin (24) have been folding clothes together.

Among some working class contesting couples, the female partners attempted to get her boyfriend to share more equally in the chores. In contrast to the experience of most of the middle class contesting women, however, only Stacy succeeded. She began working more hours so that Andre would pick up more of the slack at home. Andre explained that, although he feels he should be sharing more equally in the housework anyway, he views the arrangement as temporary. He stated,

... she is going to school and working such a schedule that she gets up at about--
- she has school at I think 8:00am and her work schedule goes until midnight. She doesn't actually work until midnight everyday. Sometimes she gets off a little earlier and sometimes she goes into school late. But she is working a lot, and she's just really stressed out. So I'm really trying to make an effort to get the laundry done and do some of the things that she would normally [do], something that I should be doing anyways, but to keep her happy and sane until her schedule changes. And I mean part of that's picking up and doing stuff around the house.

Fewer working class contesting women may be able to change their housework situations because, unlike the middle class women who are more straightforward in their demands for equality, the working class contesting women are gingerly trying to affect change rather than demanding parity. For example, Brittany (24), a veterinary technician, made a list of all of the chores she did and posted it on the refrigerator for 29 year old Spencer, a sound engineer, to see. Jackie (24) has gradually been assigning Chad (24) more chores in the year that they have lived together, but does so reluctantly. She said, "I don't want to feel naggy, so I just wish he would be more proactive and do these things without me saying, 'Hey, will you do this?'"

Chad's feelings about the housework he did were typical of these working class contesting men. He admitted, "I know it kinda isn't fair. I try to do more with that. I just don't see the dirt usually." Working class contesting men like Chad and Andre, who

realized their smaller shares were unfair but who did little to remedy their situations are not that different from their middle class counterparts. For example, not all middle class couples are sharing housework exactly evenly. Instead, the female partner generally does closer to 60% of the housework and the male partner does roughly 40%. Many of the middle class men also felt that, even though they did at least 40% of the housework, they still did not do everything that they could or should. For example, Nathan (24), who works in purchasing, was asked how his division of labor with Andrea (25), a social worker, was working out. He said, “Good. Like I said, it’s really 50-50 I think. If anything, maybe I could hustle a little more and do a little more.” Some class straddling and middle class contesting men expressed guilt over not doing a “fair share”. Jeff (32), a class straddling computer systems network analyst, for example, explained, “I’m really conscientious of the fact that--- I mean if she was doing everything and I’m just sitting around like watching TV or something then that would suck. If I was her I wouldn’t feel good and so I wouldn’t want to feel like that.” As a result, perhaps, class straddling and middle class contesting men do a more equal share of the household chores than working class contesting men do.

Rather than blaming any remaining inequities on their own inability to “see dirt” or lack of desire to perform chores as their working class counterparts did, class straddling and middle class Contesters often explained that the men did slightly less housework than their partners because the women have higher standards for cleanliness or are more adept at cleaning. Miguel (27), for example, said of 26 year old Lisette, “I would say like she cleans a little bit more than me. She’s kind of sick because she cannot have everything everywhere. She has to put it in the correct way and in the same order all the time.”

Similarly, 23 year old Tabitha explained that she does slightly more housework than Edward (also 23) because she likes things neater than he does. When asked who does the majority of the chores, she said, “I think we both share the responsibility. I do more of course because I like things a certain way, so I might do more of the cleaning but he’s more of a cook...” Her partner, Edward, added that Tabitha cleans a bit more than he does because she feels she is more skilled. He noted, “I clean the kitchen, we both do, but she cleans the bathroom. Not that I can’t clean the bathroom but she feels that she cleans it a lot better than I can, so she cleans it.” Although the vast majority of class straddling and middle class couples share housework nearly equally, explanations for why women do slightly more are interesting. Unlike the working class who often explain that the men cannot or will not do more housework, the middle class and class straddling couples reframe the situation as the female partners preferring to do a greater share due to higher standards or better skills. This both affords the women more satisfaction with the situation and relieves the men of some responsibilities, because it is assumed that the men would do more housework if only the women “allowed” them to do so. Whether the women would actually cede control, however, remains to be seen since women often internalize the domestic tasks that they are “supposed” to do and feel that if those tasks are not done correctly that it will reflect poorly upon them (Stone 2008).

Equal Housework as an Expression of Egalitarianism

Few contesting couples are sharing housework evenly as a part of an intentional plan to create an overall completely egalitarian relationship model, but some middle class couples view nontraditional housework arrangements as a way of expressing their egalitarian beliefs toward relationships in general. Alisha (24), for example, was

concerned that because her partner's mother and grandmother took care of their homes, Jared (also 24) expected the same of her when the two moved in together. She said,

I love Jared's family but Jared's mom, Jared's dad, and Jared's grandma all live in the same house so whenever I'd go over to visit, Jared's mom and grandma insisted on making dinner and the dishes and the laundry and the cleaning and all that stuff and I was thinking to myself, "Dear, dear no. I hope that he doesn't get here and anticipate that that's my job" because that wouldn't happen. But it was just awesome. It didn't turn out like that, but I had that fear.

Alisha noted that Jared did not have the same orientation about housework as she did.

Overall, however, she was quite pleased that he shared the housework with her evenly, even if she occasionally needed to remind him, "'I'm not your grandma and I'm not your mom.'" For Alisha, having a partner who would share the housework meant having a partner who shared her less conventional outlook on relationships. Dean and Elizabeth both agreed that part of the reason they shared housework evenly was because it fit their overall philosophy of what a romantic union should be- egalitarian. When asked about the division of labor, Dean responded,

We were always very principled that it was going to be very equal, and we always wanted it to be very equal. That's something now I think we try to do that. I think it's gone back and forth. We've learned about what one of us likes and what one of us does. In general, I think we believe, and it works out pretty well, that she'll notice something to clean and it will irritate her so she'll do it, but I'll notice something else that may not irritate her as much so I'll do it.

Typically, women in romantic unions have stronger beliefs than do men that housework should be shared equally (John, Shelton, and Luschen 1995; Hohman-Marirot 2006). However, unless their male partners are also willing to comply, these middle class couples would not have equal household divisions of labor in which chores are shared nearly 50-50. In the case of these few couples, both the women and the men express a

desire for egalitarian unions, something that may be a result of their college educations (Myers and Booth 2002). Other middle class men who are not necessarily striving to create a nontraditional relationship may be doing a more equal share of the household labor within their unions out of a desire to satisfy their partners' wishes or an intrinsic sense of fairness.

In contrast to the scant number of couples who have done so, few middle class couples and none of the working class contesting couples have intentionally tried to make their divisions of labor equal as a way of expressing their refusal to adhere to conventional gender norms. Most contesting couples do not express a desire to be in an overall egalitarian union, nor do they use the language of feminism to explain their behaviors. Instead, their reasons for sharing the housework are related to fairness and individual desire. Although equally sharing housework or financial arrangements is a way of contesting conventionally gendered norms, the partners in these few couples do not think of it that way. Instead, they think of their behaviors as relationship-specific.

With few exceptions, contesting men, regardless of social class, seem to be focusing more on equity, or the feeling that their unions are fair on the whole, while most of the contesting women are focusing on equality, or dividing their divisions of labor equally. In general, women focus on equality within their unions more than men do (Gager 1998; John et al. 1995). This difference in ideologies may help explain why women are contesting their household divisions of labor more frequently than their male partners are. For these men, equality may not be a primary goal as long as they feel that their other contributions within the household (e.g., financial, emotional) are enough to make up for their lack of housework performance (Klumb, Hoppmann, and Staats 2006).

Regardless of their beliefs about equity, working class men may also feel that gender privilege precludes them from doing the least desirable, most onerous chores, even if they are not the principal financial providers in their households (Brines 1994; Greenstein 1996; Lavee and Katz 2002). This may explain why they are less likely to yield to their female partner's demands that they take on a more equal share of the housework. The more egalitarian beliefs of middle class men (Aronson 2003; Deutsch 1999; Ellwood and Jencks 2004; McCabe 2005; Rubin 1976; 1994) might make it harder for them to ignore the women's desires for a more equal household division of labor, especially if they recognize that, for their partners, equality is considered the most equitable division of labor. Men's commitment to an equal division of labor, more so than women's, is necessary for the maintenance of an egalitarian household (Risman 1998); however, it appears that middle class women's insistence upon equality can lead to the initial creation of an equal division of labor.

Strategies for Ensuring Fairness

Breaking a hegemonic norm can be quite difficult, and the non-conventional behavior is sometimes difficult to maintain (Brines and Joyner 1999; Schwartz 1994). The fact that many more of the middle class contesting couples have equal divisions of labor than their working class counterparts may also result, in part, from the fact that none of the working class contesting couples have worked together to create strategies for ensuring fairness while half of the class straddling and middle class contesting couples have. Still, however, women are often responsible for ensuring that their arrangements remain somewhat equal.

Rachel (24) and Nicholas (29), for example, use a rotating chore chart to ensure that their division of labor is fair. Other couples, like Brad and Carrie (also 29 and 24, respectively), only clean the house at the same time so that neither partner feels that he or she is doing a larger share. Brad explained that he had hoped that Carrie would help him clean more regularly. He said,

I thought she would actually help me get on more of a schedule as far as cleaning the apartment and stuff like that, which she has somewhat. She just brings it up and says “You need to clean right now” and if she is helping too, I’m not just gonna sit there while she does it, so that gets me to do it.

Brad’s comment brings up an important issue. Despite the fact that the majority of these middle class contesting couples are sharing the housework, for many, the division is not exactly even. The female partner often has the added responsibility, as Carrie does, of ensuring that the arrangement is maintained (cf. Risman 1998). Kevin (27) echoed Brad’s sentiments when he was asked about what he had expected the division of labor to be like prior to moving in with 28 year old Amy.

I thought that she would do the cooking. I thought that we would split our own laundry; she would do hers, I would do mine, which is the case and I would do like, if she cooks dinner I would do dishes, or like the garbage or whatever. I think in reality we still split the laundry. Cooking she does I’d say 99% of it. Dishes, I’m kinda, I have to be, not coerced, but I have to be--- she needs to ask me to do it. I thought I would do it voluntarily, and I don’t do it. I’m not as quick to volunteer to do the dishes and take out the trash, that sorta thing.

Even though Kevin does do the dishes, it is only once Amy asked that he takes responsibility for completing the chore. Although some working class women (like Brittany, who attempted to create a “chore chart”) have tried to implement similar strategies, without the men’s active participation in ensuring equality, a fair division is

unlikely to occur. The primary difference between the middle and working class contesting couples in terms of housework, then, is that while the working and middle class women both Contest conventional norms about women being primarily responsible for the home, only the middle class men abide by the women's demands for more equal unions.

The most common way that these couples were contesting conventionally gendered norms was through at least one partner insisting upon more equality in domestic labor. Among the working class, the women were rarely able to encourage their male partners to take on an equal share of the housework. Among the class straddling and middle class women, however, most were able to encourage their male partners to do between 40-60% of the household labor. The strategies that the middle class couples negotiated to ensure domestic fairness, the middle class women's diligence in ensuring that couples followed those systems, and the middle class men's views on fairness led to more equal divisions of labor among the middle class than their working class counterparts. Many couples and individuals are contesting the household division of labor, but some are attempting to defy traditional norms in other ways.

Work Orientation

Some contesting individuals and couples have chosen to maintain conventional work orientations or are uncertain about their future occupational paths, but a sizable proportion of these individuals contest the male's occupation as most central to the couple. They do this in a number of ways. Some give the female partner's career top priority or equally privilege one another's jobs. Still other women, particularly among the middle class, are choosing to put a strong focus on advancing within their careers right

now, something that clearly differentiates them from their conventional counterparts. However, this group of women intends to focus on their careers only until they have children, at which point they hope to become more conventional. For now, however, they are contesting the male partner's work orientation as most central to the couple.

Contesting the Male Partner's Occupation as Most Central

Within most conventional families, men's jobs are considered more important than the paid and domestic work that their female partners do (Bernard 1981; Potuchek 1994, 1997). Men's privileged status within the workplace often leads to extra privileges at home, including greater decision-making power and the ability to "opt out" of the most onerous household tasks (e.g., Bernard 1981; Hochschild 1989; Orange 2002). Even when women provide at least half of the household income or more, couples often minimize this contribution to allow men to maintain their masculine identities (e.g., Brines 1994; Tichenor 1999). Still, some evidence suggests that this may be changing. Some couples have set out to create households in which women's occupations are at least equally important to their male partners' (e.g., Blaisure and Allen 1994; Risman 1998; Schwartz 1994), while other men have turned away from the provider role as result of structural barriers or individuals' desires in order to prioritize family obligations or leisure time (Coltrane 1996; Gerson 1993).

Nearly half of the middle class and a few of the working class couples are contesting the conventional idea of the male partner having the primary career. Couples are doing this in a number of ways. A few are privileging the female partner's career. This complete reversal of tradition is somewhat rare, however, perhaps because overthrowing gendered norms entirely is difficult to maintain (Brines and Joiner 1999),

particularly because workplaces are often organized to reinforce traditional gender roles and benefit men who have supporting female partners at home (Becker 1981; Gerson 1993; Martin 2003; Presser 1995; Schwartz 1994). More commonly than overturning established gender norms, a sizable number of couples are assigning equal importance to each partner's job. This strategy is not without precedent because, although somewhat rare, egalitarian ideologies suggest that each partner should play an equal role in their divisions of labor, both at work and at home (Blaisure and Allen 1995; Risman 1998). Perhaps because of the nature of their jobs, while both groups of women were striving to succeed in their careers, only the middle class women expressed that they derived a sense of pleasure from their work.

Nicholas and Rachel, for example, a middle class couple who have dated for over three years, are planning their futures around Rachel's job. Nicholas is an architect, but intentionally chose a position that allowed him to have a great deal of free time. He explained that he had recently switched firms because, "I needed to finally be able to relax and have one focus and not be all over the place. I wanted to spend time on my extra-curriculars. That got left by the wayside as soon as I started undergrad." His lack of drive to advance within his career and his willingness to take a backseat to his partner makes him a good match for Rachel, who is finishing her PhD in physics. Nicholas bragged about Rachel's field and earning potential, then explained that he would move for her job and perhaps become a stay at home father because "...her research is so specific there are only about 7 places in the world that she can work after she's done with her degree so we've talked about all those different scenarios. A number of them I probably would not be able to work [because] some of them are out of the country..."

Both are planning on Nicholas being the trailing spouse. Similarly, Lauren is more focused on income and promotions than her partner, Justin. Both worked in politics until Justin left his job because he felt that his work in legislative service did not support his personal political beliefs. He now sells landscaping and is unclear what career he plans to pursue in the future, but when asked about what he was looking for in a career, he explained,

I have to like the people I'm working with. I think I also wanna be at least appreciated for doing my job. I mean I don't need a 'good job' every day, but I need something from my boss that says, "I'm glad you're working here for me, you're doing a good job." Money's not always the option.

Justin's quest for a job that focuses on meeting his expressive, rather than instrumental needs, clearly separates him from the conventional men. His partner, Lauren, differs from conventional women because she planned on continuing to move up in her field. She said, "...hopefully in the next couple of years my position will change and I'll do more policy work... I'm planning on staying here for 2 or 3 years and then maybe moving out to DC, doing some kind of lobbying for some kind of reasonable and reputable cause [chuckles]." Although these men are steady workers, their personal values of leisure time and enjoying their jobs lead them to choose more flexible occupations. If their jobs were more traditional or they focused more on career advancement, it would be very difficult for their female partners to succeed in such demanding occupations that often require moving in order to advance.

Other couples view both partners' careers as having equal value. Lindsey, a professor, and Drew, a lawyer, both 36, have managed to equally privilege each partner's demanding jobs. The two have taken turns moving for one another's careers. Both

partners explained that Drew had promised to follow Lindsey until she got tenure because she had followed him to graduate school. Lindsey noted how the two have made career directions across their 16 year relationship.

When we went to grad school we went to Penn because it was the one place we both got in. I got in more places than Drew did which meant I was the one who gave up something to go to grad school, so Penn was sort of--- I built up cred[it], he built up debt on the relationship life choices. Then he went to law school, his choice. He went to law school in a different city and he didn't have to do that then he set us on this weird path of living apart so he built up yet more debt and I built up slightly more credit, only slightly marginally so. And then I worked my butt off to get this post doc to go to a really prestigious school. It changed when we moved to Philadelphia because that meant he had to follow me up and that was the deal. His deal has always been until I get the tenure track job he would follow me where I went. I used up ever ounce of my credit getting us to Columbus, Ohio so the slate is totally clean until I get tenure. If I get tenure then the next choice is 100% up to him whether we move, go, stay, whatever, it's up to him. If I don't get tenure obviously we have to renegotiate because I don't know what we're going to do but basically we actually have a sort of plan about how this goes.

Such careful consideration given to ensuring equality was evident in numerous aspects of the contesting couples' lives.

Like some of the middle class contesting couples, a few of the working class contesting couples have non-conventional work orientations in which the female partner has the most solid occupational path. Jackie, for example, works in social services and has gone back to school in order to advance in her career. Having done numerous projects with children she was working with in a group home setting while attending college, she planned to become an art therapist. In contrast, her partner, Chad, is still unclear about his work orientation. Chad currently works part time at a community college setting up phone systems and part time in a coffee shop. He notes that in the future he plans to do, "...either teaching or doing music or composing. Just trying to hock that and if I need to

have something on the side, just whatever I can get on the side.” Sherry (21) was also taking steps toward working on a clearer career plan than her partner, Tyrone (25). Sherry was a college student who was a year away from completing her bachelor’s degree in communications and hoped to become an anchorperson. She explained the actions she had taken toward her goal, saying,

I’ve done a couple [of] internships and I kinda see where I wanna go now...I would love for [my job] to be not so serious and to be MTV v-jay for a week or something like that. I can’t tell my dad that. He’ll be like-“Okay, whatever.” But that’s pretty much it. I kept my minor in business so I can have some type of edge.

Sherry’s partner, Tyrone, explained that a family member had gotten him a position as a postal worker, but that he did not see a future in the job, despite being the highest paid man among the working class sample. Instead, he had hopes of becoming a rap artist.

Although it is possible that Tyrone will achieve his goal, Sherry has taken more steps toward making her dream a reality. Although these working class men do not privilege the women’s careers, they do view them as at least equally important to their own.

Tyrone, for example, explained how he really wanted Sherry to succeed in school, adding that he helped her celebrate when she made good grades. He said,

I love her and I want to see her do good because she’s got big dreams. Both of us got big dreams and she really [is] the type of person that I could see doing something big, and she could see me as the type of person that really could do something big so I want her to do that.

In contrast to their middle class counterparts, all but one of these working class contesting women expressed that they did not really enjoy working. When asked about her dream job, Jackie, for example, noted that she would prefer not to work in her chosen field. She said, “My ultimate goal is to have to work as little as possible and still have

enough money to support myself, so I don't know. I would like to do something that allowed me some sort of freedom to travel if I wanted to, so maybe working on my own in a way. I don't know exactly what that would entail but yeah, something." In contrast, the middle class women in this situation enjoy their jobs. Lisette, a middle-class Mexican graduate student was asked to describe what she would do with her life if she had all of the money she could ever need. She responded, "I would definitely work and I would definitely work in my area [environmental economics] but I would open a consultancy...I would love to do that, mainly in Mexico, 'cause we really need a lot of help and if I don't have that push, that thing about the money, I could really focus in on what would have to be done. But I would travel a lot [laughs]" Lindsey, a professor, was asked what she would do if she won the lottery- keep her same job, get a different job, or not work at all. She responded,

...no question, I would keep this same job. I worked way too damn hard to get it. Like I said, and I'm not doing it for the money, believe me, I would absolutely keep doing this. I mean our vacations would get WAY better but, I would still work.

She even referred to her career as her top priority, adding "I'm ambitious so...I want power, I want money, I want all of it. I want to be a huge success. I want it all." The middle-class women's greater focus on and love of their professions may be due to the types of jobs that their educations afford them. Their work is often more creative, more autonomous, and better remunerated than many working class occupations. This may help the middle class women feel more invested in their jobs than their working class counterparts.

Contesting Work as Part of an Overall Philosophy: Class Differences

All of the middle class cohabiting couples who are contesting gender by “doing work orientation” (West and Zimmerman 1987) in a non-conventional way are also contesting gender in other arenas of their relationship (such as financial arrangements or housework). This is not the case with the few working class couples who are approaching work in a nontraditional way. It appears that the middle class conventional couples who have non-conventional work arrangements see their employment as one of many ways in which they can be more egalitarian. The working class who had egalitarian work orientations or privileged the female partner’s job did so because of structural factors rather than as a way to intentionally create a more equal relationship.

Middle class Lauren, for example, referred to herself and her partner Justin as “feminists.” Justin elaborated on their relationship.

...we try our hardest for everything to be equal, ‘cause we’re also trying to set a good example for people out there. I’m trying to set an example for men that “Hey, your wife can be equal to you.” And she’s trying to send an example to women saying, “Hey your husband can be equal to you. He doesn’t need to be better and do more than you, or less than you.” We’re definitely trying to lead by example.

For these middle class couples, equally regarding one another’s work was considered yet another way in which to express their overall value of gender equality.

In contrast, the working class couples with non-conventional work arrangements seem to have been pushed into them due to structural factors rather than a desire to create a more egalitarian relationship. Tracy (30) and Mark (31), for example, both privileged Tracy’s job because she earned almost twice what Mark did at the time she became pregnant. Neither partner chose to have Mark stay at home because he was better with children or due to their individual desires. Instead, the reason was more pragmatic. When

asked how they decided that he would be the partner who stayed home with the children, Mark explained, “I made \$23,000, she made \$44,000. We didn’t even have a real conversation about that. I think it was just assumed on both parts.” Though both worked for the same coffee franchise when they began living together, Tracy had more seniority, better benefits, and the higher salary; he therefore assumed the role of stay-at-home father. When Mark was asked how he felt about their decision, he added, “I didn’t like it. I wanted to work. I mean, I am pragmatic and understand that what I do is just as valid as anyone else, but there’s always gonna be a little bit of the, ‘I’m not working thing’ going on in my head...” If the working class is more conservative in their views about expected gender roles, it is not surprising that they are more reluctant to actively create new templates for arranging work, especially, given the pervasiveness of the male provider role (Potuchek 1992, 1997; Rubin 1976, 1994). The liberalizing effect of education (Aronson 2003; Peltola, Milkie, and Presser 2004; Myers and Booth 2002) also likely increases the egalitarianism of the middle class, making equality something they incorporate throughout their relationships rather than something that, like Mark, they are “pragmatic about” when structural forces require them to be.

Women’s Occupations Important- For Now

Among those in the middle class who are not contesting gender or replicating conventional patterns through their work orientation, the most common type of work orientation was for middle class women was to enjoy their occupations. However, this group of women plans to reduce their work hours once they have children or attempt to delay climbing the corporate ladder until after their children are older. Justine (27), for example, is in her last year of a PhD program in clinical psychology but plans to work in

an independent practice part time after she has children. She explained that family had always been a priority for her and added, “I think it’s possible that once I have kids that I’ll drop down to part time if we’re ok financially, ‘cause I mean there’s very good daycares and everything, but I just really don’t want my kids to be raised by someone else all the time.” Jessica, an elementary school teacher, explained that she wanted to move into educational policy, but only once she and Martin’s (future) children were older. She explained why she wanted to remain a teacher until that time, saying,

Probably within a couple years we’ll be in the process of having or trying [to have children], which is also why I think I wanna stay teaching. It’s just a great job for families. I don’t think I could be a stay at home mom, but teaching is great because it’s great hours and you have three months of the year off and 2 weeks at Christmas which is nice, so you still have lots of time with family but-- - or maybe I could do part time for a little bit, but I don’t think I wanna give it up all together.

Only one working class woman expressed a similar sentiment. This view of work may be more common among the middle class because they view their careers as more flexible for a number of reasons. First, most of the middle class women who expressed that they would like to change their work orientation after having children are in occupations that they feel lend themselves to part-time work, such as psychology, social work, or education or which encourage them to veer toward domesticity as a strategy for balancing work and family (Gerson 1985; Orrange 2003). Second, all have partners who earn enough money to become the primary source of family income. Neither is the case for the majority of working class contesting women. However, given the wage penalty for mothers (especially those who are married) and the increasing demands of the professional workplace (Budig and England 2001; Jacobs and Gerson 2004), it seems unlikely that these middle class women will be able to find the flexible work schedules

they desire or be able to rejoin the workforce after a few years absence without experiencing significant penalties, despite their desires to do so. Balancing competing demands of being economically self sufficient and being primarily responsible for parenting demands will be quite difficult for these contesting women (Gerson 2002).

As part of their overall strategies for contesting conventional gender roles, a sizable proportion of these couples have non-traditional work orientations in which couples' jobs are equally privileged or the female partner's job is considered most central to the couple. Some women, particularly among the middle class, intend to adopt more conventional work patterns, though (by leaving the workforce at least temporarily or taking on fewer responsibilities) once they have children. Finally, some couples who are contesting conventional gender roles in other ways do maintain conventional patterns at work or are unclear about their future occupational paths. Regardless of whether or not they are contesting gender through their work orientations, virtually all of these couples, share financial obligations equally.

Feelings about Financial Arrangements

A more common arena in which these cohabiting couples are "doing gender" in a non-conventional way is in their insistence on sharing their financial obligations equally. To be clear, some couples in other subgroups also split the bills equally. For all of these contesting couples, however, sharing financial obligations is just one way of expressing their non-conventionality; each of the contesting couples who are equally sharing financial obligations are also behaving non-conventionally in other aspects of their relationships. Couples often work diligently to ensure that their financial arrangements

are equal or equitable. Other contesting couples are not sharing their financial obligations equally, but instead divide their bills equitably based upon each partner's income.

Sharing Financial Obligations Equally

Nearly half of the working class couples split their bills equally (paying between 40% and 60% of the household bills); most earned similar amounts. Most middle class contesting couples are also each paying between 40-60% of the couples' financial obligations. One of the two class straddling couples is also sharing expenses equally. Middle class women appear to take this equality for granted, assuming that paying their own way is "only fair". In contrast, working class women often spoke with pride about their ability to meet half of the family financial obligations. Regardless of their social class, all of these couples are diligent about ensuring their financial obligations are divided equally.

Brian, a 22 year old mechanic, and Shelly, a 28 year old waitress, for example, met while the two were working together at a chain family restaurant. Shortly after Brian moved in to her apartment, Shelly said she explained to Brian that he needed to pay half of the bills if he wanted to stay with her. Shelly explained,

...he officially moved in in March... He finally started staying [with me] 7 days a week and I wasn't making him pay the bills and he wasn't offering and I was like, "This is so messed up like how are you not even offering?" It started really to get me. I was like, "Ask him to pay to see if he wants to. Is he gonna move out?" But one day it was just like "We got to talk. You've got to start paying 50% because I can't do this." so that was when the living together became official.

When asked to detail their financial arrangement, Brian corroborated Shelly's story. He said, "We split [the bills] completely 50-50, even, even still. When we go out to dinner we split the bills unless one person doesn't want to go out 'cause they don't have the

money, and then you're just like, 'That's all right. I'll pay for it. We're gonna use this to go out to eat.'" He added that although the couple split their joint obligations equally, each was responsible for his or her own individual bills, saying, "I pay my own. My car is my bill, her car is her bill, her phone is her bill, my phone is my bill." Dawn (22), a working-class associate's degree student who has worked numerous cashier, front desk, and restaurant positions explained that, she and Eric (23) maintain their financial arrangement even if she is "between jobs". She asserted, "I just haven't had a job in the past two weeks, but it's still been 50-50. When [he] pays for something, I write him out a check for the other half. We take certain bills and pay 'em. It's very 50-50. 'Cause we're both struggling for money right now so we both kinda hafta do our fair share of it."

Numerous middle class couples also maintained arrangements in which each partner paid at least 40% of the household bills. Alisha, a pricing analyst, and Jared, a mechanical engineer, tried to divide their bills as equally as possible, but noted that Alisha paid slightly less than half because she earned a bit less than Jared did. She explained how the two reached their agreement, saying,

...once I got a job we sat down and once I figured out my finances and my bills alone and his bills alone we took what was left over and we took all the bills, the rent and all the utilities, an average that was high and we divided the utilities and the rent in half and they were approximately equal. The utilities combined with the groceries are a little bit less than what the rent is so because I make a little bit less I get that and he gets just the rent but on top of it he gets paid once a month and I get paid once a week, so it was easier for me to take utilities and the things that are one by one while he took the one big chunk in the beginning.

Edward, a college student who plans to complete his political science degree within the next two quarters, and Tabitha, who had just finished her bachelor's degree also split their household expenses equally. Tabitha explained their viewpoint toward money,

saying, “We both work so we share everything. We just started putting our money together but...we share everything 50-50...” This focus on paying an equal (or near equal) share of household bills did emerge for a few conventional and counter-conventional couples, but was much more common among those who are contesting conventional gender roles in at least one other arena of their relationships. It is possible that, for contesting couples, ensuring that each partner pays half of the bills helps ensure equality in other arenas of their relationships. Providing an equal share of the economic resources may make the women feel entitled to demanding that men do half of the household labor.

The working class and one class straddling contesting women who were paying half of the bills were intentionally attempting to break the norm that male partners should earn (and have greater control over) more money within relationships and felt a sense of accomplishment from their ability to take on half of the bills. Others brought up the fact that they always wanted to be able to support themselves, “just in case” their relationships did not work out. Vickie, for example, a 21 year old pharmacy technician explained how she initiated her and Howard’s (23) current arrangement. Proud of her equal financial arrangement, she said “I was the one who started from day one, the very first time we went out to eat, I was like, ‘I’m paying for my half, why should you pay for it?’ It’s been like that ever since.” Occasionally Vickie wished that Howard paid a greater share of the bills, but she qualified that statement, stating “I wanted to pay for my own things, and I feel better when I do that.” Natalie, too, explained that she felt a sense of accomplishment for being responsible for half of the financial obligations. In fact, she mentioned that she was proud of herself and Chad for having met their numerous

financial obligations on their fairly modest incomes. Dawn brought up the fact that, even though she had been unemployed for two weeks, she had still upheld her end of the household bills.

Other women clarified that, even though they felt good about paying half of the household bills, they thought that doing so served a purpose beyond fairness: being able to support themselves ensured that they would be protected in the future. Susan (20) explained that being able to pay half of the bills was something that made her feel good because one of her goals was to always be able to support herself. When asked about her plans for her future occupation she noted,

...what I want to do with my career is I want to make enough money to support myself and be happy. I don't want to be rich, but I don't want to be dirt poor. That's my goal: to do what I love to do and to be able to support myself doing it, and to be able to support myself so if he's not around I can still support myself. I mean, I guess it's kind of a mean way of looking at it but I guess it's kind of like looking out for yourself because, I mean, you honestly never know. I mean right now we cooperate. We do not argue because we always talk. We're like, "Hey, this is kind of bugging me. Do not do this." But that could always change because people change throughout their entire life so I always want to make sure I can support myself.

Similarly, Tabitha, who has a degree while her partner has yet to finish his bachelor's, explained that some of her friends and family members had more conventional views on gender and financial divisions than she did, saying,

...we share everything 50-50 and a lot of people don't think that's [right]. They're like "He should pay for everything" but we do everything 50-50 and it works out that way because I'm able to still have my independence, 'cause you don't want to do put your money together right now, I don't think, not being married.

Shelly even explained that if Brian ever wanted to get a joint bank account or buy a house together that she would want to contact a lawyer first, just to ensure that her personal financial interests were protected.

None of the middle class women explicitly explained that they were concerned about protecting their own financial interests. Edin (2000) finds that this distrust of one's partner, especially regarding his ability to provide an equal share economically, is a theme that appears among poor women. A similar idea seems to predominate among at least some working class cohabiting women. In addition, the female pride at the ability to pay half of the household obligations did not emerge from most of the middle class contesting couples who are equally sharing the bills. Instead, the vast majority approached financial equality very matter-of-factly.

For example, when asked how they divide the bills, Amy, a master's-level speech pathologist, noted, "I really think we're 50-50. I mean if... I go grocery shopping and spend a bunch of money then he will add money onto the rent check or something. We're good about that." Her partner, Kevin, a general manager at a local branch of an international shipping company, elaborated on the process, noting that Amy paid more in groceries, but that he paid a greater share of their meals out, which he says "kind of help[s] make up for that." Amy and Kevin, like many other middle class couples, spoke frankly about sharing financial obligations, with neither partner viewing their arrangement as a source of pride or concern.

These middle class contesting women may not be as proud of their financial arrangements as their working class counterparts for a number of reasons. Some couples may be splitting the bills down the middle because most have had roommates in the past

(in college, for example), whereas more of the working class contesting couples moved from their parents' homes into those they share with their partners. For example, when asked how she originally anticipated splitting the bills with Nathan, Andrea, a middle class master's-level social worker replied, "I think we knew it was going to be 50-50... he lived with 13 guys and I have had roommates off and on so that was just common. You're always going to split them up with how many people are in the house, so it wasn't really spoken about." Kate (29), who runs a state internship program, expressed a similar sentiment when asked how she thought that she and Paul (26), a political lobbyist, would share the bills.

I mean, rent would be right down the middle and then utilities. I had all these utilities in my name because when he was living with him roommate, his roommate had all of it. So basically Paul would pay the rent check and his roommate would give him the difference. He would take out all the utilities that they had and then he'd give him the difference in rent. And that's basically what we're doing now.

Alternatively, these couples may have a greater emphasis on fairness than on gendered norms. Among about one-third of these middle class couples, for example, the bills are not shared exactly evenly; in two couples she pays roughly \$100 more per month and in one couple he pays approximately \$100 more per month. The specific figures were arrived at based upon each partners' earnings. Justin explained that since he quit his job in politics to work in sales for a landscaping company, Lauren has been out earning him by about \$4000 per year. Since then, he said, "Basically now she's buying all the groceries. I'm still covering rent and she's still covering utilities. So basically she's covering about a hundred extra dollars a month which evens everything up." The majority of these couples earn within 40-60% of one another, which helps explain their

fairly equal division of the household bills. Those partners who earn more than 60% of the household income find ways of paying slightly more of the bills to maintain an equitable division, despite sharing rent, utilities, and groceries equally. Soliman (31), who earns about 65% of the household income by investing a sizable inheritance, noted that he occasionally gives his partner extra spending money to make up for the difference since they split the bills roughly 50-50.

Just as the middle class contesting couples have created strategies for ensuring that their household divisions of labor are fair, all of the contesting couples who divide their financial obligations within a 40-60 split are assiduously ensuring that their divisions remain even. Textbook editor Martin (31), for example, explained how he and his art teacher fiancée, Jessica (30) used a computer program to keep track of their bills. He stated, “I make her keep track diligently like if the electric bill [is] ‘\$26.33’, so she enters her numbers into a spreadsheet we have on our computer so I know exactly how much I owe her”. Similarly, during the course of his interview, Jared began totaling his and Alisha’s respective financial obligations. He noted that, although the couple intended him to pay a bit more since he earned slightly more than Alisha, he was concerned that perhaps she was paying too much and planned to look into the situation and possibly renegotiate their finances in the near future. When asked how the two share finances, he said,

The way we work it now is [pauses to think about the division], actually we need to discuss that. I thought it was even but I don’t think it is. I pay the rent, she pays the bills, the utilities and stuff and buys groceries. Now if we worked it out where she pays a hundred and some dollars for groceries a month then that’s fair, I mean that’s almost exact. But I think she’s paying a little bit more than a hundred a fifty or so dollars a month. So we’ll have to re-discuss that. Maybe I

can give her some money every month for groceries, but that's pretty much how we do it.

These strategies (carefully tracking where each penny is spent and frequently verifying the equitability of arrangements) help couples continually ensure that they are contesting the conventional norm of male partners paying the lion's share of the household bills, which contributes to the overall equitability of their relationships.

Equity, not Equality

This sense of fairness also seems to predominate throughout the contesting couples in which one partner is paying more than 60% of the bills. A sizable share of the working class, one class straddling, and a few middle class contesting men are paying a greater share of the household finances, as are a scant number of contesting women. Their reasons for paying unequal shares range from feeling more financially obligated for children to being the partner who wanted to move to more expensive housing, but in nearly all of these couples, the partner who is paying the largest share of the bills is also earning significantly more money.

Rachel and Nicholas noted that he earned more than she did for the time being, since his architecture job paid significantly better than her graduate assistantship. He explained how the two divided their bills as a function of their respective earnings.

Well, she's a grad student so right now I'm the provider and once she starts making more money then we will switch off so we try and split a lot of things which are not very expensive, like we alternate paying for each other's dinners and we try and pay for gas and things like that on a pretty even scale, but for big things like trips or major purchases or Christmas trees or things like that I usually pay for that.

Nicholas added that, "I've been covering some of her smaller expenses. She actually owes me about \$900 but she just pays me back when she can, but we've pretty much

been covering our own stuff.” since Rachel had recently paid a sizable sum to travel to Europe for her research. Similarly, Rhoda, a working class administrative assistant, earns twice what her partner Sam makes as a call-center employee. The two live with Rhoda’s three children and her mother. She explained their financial arrangement in which she pays the majority of the bills and Sam “helps”, saying,

I mean he does help me out sometimes ‘cause rent’s like \$460, my car note’s like \$440. I don’t make my mother pay rent or anything. She pays I guess the phone and I pay the gas and so there’s a lot of bills and a lot of responsibilities and I don’t get any food stamps and sometimes I might not have enough to stretch to buy enough food to last for the second week but it’s enough to last that first week, and he helps out with that second week of food and stuff and miscellaneous items like toilet paper, hair grease. He gets that for me or gas if my payday is like a week after. He usually helps me get to payday, gives me gas money and stuff. So it’s very helpful.

Rhoda, whose children are from a previous relationship, quickly added that she did not expect Sam to be financially responsible for her family. She explained, “I told him he doesn’t have to feel obligated to do anything. The children and those things are my responsibility, but he feels since we’re together, we[re] going together, that’s what men do.”

Only one couple is using a different arrangement. Justine actually earns slightly less than 30 year old David, but again, a sense of equitability has led her to pay a greater share of the bills. She explained that David had lived rent-free in a model home owned by his parents. Not wanting to live under his parents’ thumbs or be responsible for showing the home to prospective buyers, she offered to pay all of the rent on a new apartment if he paid the utilities and groceries. Both explained that, although her portion was more expensive, they felt that the arrangement was fair. This focus on “equitability” rather than simply “equality” suggests that contesting couples are actively examining their individual

and couple-level situations to find arrangements that may not always fly in the face of conventional gendered arrangements. Still, when male partners are paying significantly more, couples make it clear that it is because of his greater earnings, not merely conventionality for the sake of conventionality. Being a higher earner does not bestow contesting men with the mantle of “provider” in the same way that out earning one’s partner does for conventional men.

Although some conventional and counter-conventional couples also share financial obligations equally, for these contesting couples, financially “halving it all” is one additional way of contesting conventional gender roles (Deutsch 1999). Each of the contesting couples who is sharing financial obligations equally or working diligently to ensure their divisions are equitable is also contesting conventional behaviors in other arenas of their relationships. While middle class women take this fairness for granted, working class women were often proud of their ability to fulfill half of the couples’ financial responsibilities. Some couples have decided to each pay what they feel are equitable shares of the household bills, even though they do not split their financial obligations equally. These couples who equitably or equally share financial obligations could also be expected to share financial responsibilities.

Feelings about Financial Control

Instances in which one partner was able to exercise more control over the household income were uncommon among this entire cohabiting sample, in part, perhaps, because these couples’ unions are not legally formalized and current state laws do not protect the financial interests of cohabitators who pool their funds. Alternatively, they may be using a relatively short time horizon in which to assess equality or equity. Instead, a

more common response was for each partner to control his or her own income. Few contesting individuals ceded control of the finances to one partner; when the working class did, it was always to the male partner. Despite a few partners who willingly ceded control, the contesting women (working class, class straddling, and middle class) are less likely than their conventional equivalents to relinquish control of the household income to their partners, even if the men try to wrest it away.

Each Partner Controls His/Her Own Income

The most common financial situation for working, straddling, and middle class contesting couples was for each partner to control his or her own income. Similar to other groups of cohabitators in the sample, income was considered under personal control, even though household expenses were shared. However, couples differed on the amount of input they thought their partners would try to have over their spending.

Eugene (22), a working class man, explained his and Susan's financial situation by explaining, "We pretty much handle our own money situation and when the bills come we kinda pay 'em together." Similarly, Justine, a middle class woman, explained, "We both do our own completely separate thing, so if I don't pay my credit card bill he doesn't mind. There's no overlap at all." Her partner, David, a retirement planner, agreed with her, saying, "...in a way I respect that she has her own mind and she does what she wants. And I like that she lets me do what I want. I don't think we can both control each other in that, [we can] say, you know, 'Don't buy that' or 'Buy this or that.' We don't have that kinda power over each other."

Similar to the conventional couples, partners comment to varying degrees of on one another's purchases, but ultimately, spending decisions rest in the hands of the

partner who earned the income. Some couples felt that their partners would say nothing about the ways in which they spent their money, but others felt that their partners would comment on their purchases, even though their words would have no effect,

Natasha (23) was one of the women who felt that neither partner should have any say over the other's purchases, nor should they comment on each other's spending. She noted, "I would like probably wanna slap him if he told me 'Don't buy something' if I decided to. That's something like I'm really, like, 'It's my money, I'll do with it what I want.' And I want him to feel the same way." Chad, a working class man, agreed. He explained, "We don't really give each other any trouble for what we spend. What we make is our own money... I handle most of the bills and stuff. I actually pay most of them so actually that part of the money I handle, but I don't control any of her money."

Other contesting individuals, like Jeff, explained that one partner may say something if they disagreed with the other's purchase, but would not try to stop the other from making the purchase. He said that if Sabrina (24) bought something he disagreed with, "I might be like, 'That's crazy!'" but no, I wouldn't stop her. I think financial autonomy in a relationship is really important." Brian agreed, saying that if he wanted to purchase something that Shelly disagreed with, she would let him know. Brian explained, "She's probably gonna say, 'No, that's retarded'. She probably wouldn't actually stop me from [buying] it. She'd just say, 'You're an idiot'."

Refusing to Cede Control

A few women noted that their partners attempted to control the household income, but they did as they please regardless. Amy, a middle class speech therapist, was

in this position. Her partner, Kevin, explained how he tried to control Amy's spending, but to little avail. He said,

I'll say, "You don't need another pair of shoes" or "You don't need to be spending 70 dollars on a shirt" or whatever. I'll give my opinion. She's gonna do whatever she wants and she's very opinionated and she's very independent, so she's gonna do whatever [she] wants.

This theme of refusing to cede control emerged for some of the working class women as well. Although their partners tried to assume control of the household income, the women have refused to give up their portions. For example, Stacy (20), a call center worker, explained, "Andre is very controlling about money. If he had his way I would give all my money to him and he would handle it." Andre (25), who works in the mortgage industry, supported Stacy's statement. He described how he suggested getting a joint account with Stacy but that she refused. He added, "...she didn't like that because she wants to have her own freedom of spending I guess." For women like Stacy, refusing to surrender control of her income to her partner is a way of contesting conventional gender norms.

Ceding Control

A few individuals/couples decided to cede control to one of the partner. Among the middle class, men and women were almost equally likely to be afforded control over the couple's income. In all of these cases, one partner has voluntarily handed over control as a way of limiting their own spending. Working class women, however, sometimes gave greater financial control to their male partners, even if their own jobs were central to the financial well-being of the family. Working class couples may consider this a strategy for allowing the men to maintain their masculine identities in the face of their nontraditional work arrangements (Brines 1994; Coltrane 1996)

Middle class Rachel gave Nicholas financial control so that she would not overspend. When asked who controls the finances in their relationship, Nicholas explained, “she has me keep her credit cards [laughs] so I guess in that way I control a little bit more.” When asked what happens if Rachel wants to make a purchase, he added,

...she really likes to shop, which is fine with me, but she can sometimes get herself in trouble because she’s a grad student and not making a lot of money so I think it’s more of a check for herself. By putting it aside and knowing that she has to come ask me to get the money then she thinks twice about it. It’s not that I’m going to say “No, you can’t have your credit card”

Similarly, Justin and Lauren both agreed that she had more power over the couple’s discretionary income because she was the more fiscally responsible partner. Justin noted, “I think she had veto power because she tends to be a little more responsible with it.” For the middle class, then, ceding control is a semi-permanent arrangement; it persists only as long as the partner willing to cede control allows it to. In this sense, it may be a strategy for keeping oneself from overspending rather than financial control.

None of the working class contesting couples ceded financial control to the female partner. However, a greater percentage of the working class contesting men both had more financial control within their relationships and tried to take more financial control, perhaps because they had more conventional ideas about money than their middle class counterparts. Some of the working class contesting men had more control over the household earnings. Interestingly, two of these couples have nontraditional work arrangements in which the female partner’s job is considered more central. For example, although Mark and Tracy have a nontraditional work arrangement since he stays home with their children while she is a manager at a branch of a major coffee emporium, Mark has more control over the household income by allocating the couple’s entire

budget. He explained, “She brings home the paycheck and then I’m like the old 50’s nuclear couple- she provides the paycheck and then I divvy it for the most part.” Among the working class, these men may be “doing gender” by controlling the finances when they lack greater power in terms of their work orientation.

Among these contesting couples, the most common arrangement was for each partner to control his or her own income. Still, a few couples did bestow greater power to control the household coffers upon one partner. Among the working class, this partner was always the man. Few women were willing to cede control of their income, though, even if their male partners attempted to regulate the spending of the entire household. Just as these women insisted on having equal control of the household income, so too did they demand equality in terms of domestic duties. Although some contesting couples currently have fairly equal household and financial arrangements, their relationships have not always been equal, nor do they expect that they will always stay that way.

The Process of Change among Contesting Couples

Although not all couples detailed the evolution of their financial and household arrangements, many explained that their divisions of labor have evolved over time, either in response to changes in one partner’s work or as a result of women’s insistence on more equal behavior. Still others explained that their paid and housework responsibilities may become more conventional as their relationships continue. In all, most of the couples who discussed changes in their relationships said that they have become more equal over time, but plan to adopt more traditional arrangements should they marry and/or have children with their current partners.

Similar to their conventional counterparts, a number of contesting couples experienced changes due to work or school. Most commonly, middle class couples experienced changes in their household labor due to work/school while working class couples experienced changes in their financial arrangements. The agency that some contesting women exhibited in insisting upon more equal divisions led to a few domestic and financial changes, though middle class and class straddling women were more effective at creating equality than their working class counterparts. Over time, many of these couples adopted equal divisions of labor (in which each partner paid at least 40% of the bills or did at least 40% of the housework), but others' divisions varied over time or became more equal than in the past, though they remained unfair.

Changes due to Employment/Education

A sizeable number of couples experienced changes in their financial arrangements due to one partner's work or schooling. In most cases, one partner found a (better) job or began attending school. Rarely, one individual became unemployed, changing the couple's financial situation. Only one couple has actually developed a more conventional financial arrangement over time; when Beth (23) began attending school, 25 year old Mitch began paying a bit more of the bills, covering some of her school supplies when necessary. Another couple became even less conventional; Tracy had been paying the majority of the bills, but when she became pregnant, she and Mark elected for him to quit his job entirely to stay home with their son. More commonly, however, couples have seen their financial situations vary over time as a response to school/work or began dividing their finances equally.

Some couples have adjusted their financial arrangements over time in interest of fairness as in response to their individual work/school situations. Chad and Jackie, for example, a working class couple, try to always pay equal shares of the bills, but, as Jackie recounted, there have been times in which that has not always been possible. She explained,

With the rent we each do half. Sometimes with the bills, we can do like, “Well I’m gonna take care of this one and he’ll take care of that one” if they’re similar in amount. I guess it just depends and then some months he hasn’t had money for something so I’ll pay for it and then some months I’ll be broke and so he’ll pay for it. So as long as the rent’s paid we can finagle different things with the bills.

Dean, a lawyer, and his partner Elizabeth, a professor, explained that the two have always tried to ensure equity in their finances and have changed the shares that they pay according to each partner’s work/school situation. Elizabeth explained their financial situation early in their cohabitation, saying, “We’re both anal retentive planners and both hyperactive about money and all through grad school we had separate accounts and everything was split 50-50, which was really easy cause neither of us had any money. It’s really easy to split the whole world 50-50 when you’ve got nothing.” Dean elaborated on the changes that occurred over time, saying, “There were lots of periods where she had more money than I did, so she would bear more of our expenses. And since I’ve graduated from law school I’ve had more money than she has, so I guess my income bears more of the expenses but there’s never been an accounting.” Although variations have occurred in which one partner or the other paid an unequal share, these contesting couples are characterized in part by their focus on financial equity.

Other couples have seen their divisions of financial responsibility become more equal since initially moving in together due to one partner becoming employed or taking a better job. Working class couple Susan and Eugene now pays equal shares of the bills, but explained that it was not always the case. Originally, Eugene explained, Susan first moved in because, “I needed help with the money and she was willing to help me ‘cause there was a time, after I quit [my retail job], that I didn’t have a job for about a month. And she was gonna help me there. What she did is help me pay my bills and pay rent and everything.” Now, Susan explained, “...we split the joint bills which is the rent, the gas, the electric.” Natasha, a middle class translator, was also unemployed briefly for a time after she and Soliman moved in together; he paid the bills until she found another job. Likewise, Martin, a former engineer, decided to change careers when he moved in with Jessica. He noted that he explained his situation to her and that their financial arrangements gradually become equal as his new career progressed. He said,

I think we had talked about this. I thought when I first moved there, I’m not gonna be paying any rent or anything ‘cause I was up front with her. I was like, “I’m broke. I have \$50 in my bank account and if we go out to eat I’ll have \$30” so there’s no way that she could have expected me to pay and I think at the time it was between \$500 and \$600. [Now] it’s split 50-50. We pay \$275 in rent, utilities too, so I just figured, “I’m moving in and you have to trust me to figure out my shit” but once I started working I would pay for groceries... We’re definitely 50-50 on rent. We go out to eat or the bar, she pays one night, I pay the next night.

Because they have changed their work, or on occasion, school situations, these contesting couples have been able to increase their financial equality and equitability over time.

While most aim for financial equality, only some men (generally those who are class straddling or middle class) have been willing to adopt domestic equality as well.

One working class couple, Andre and Stacy, actually have adopted an unconventional

domestic situation in which Andre does nearly all of the housework since Stacy is working nearly 60 hours a week and attending school, but he views the situation as temporary. More commonly, some middle class couples have experienced increased domestic equality over time as a result in changes with employment or education, though other (middle and working class) couples have changed their domestic divisions multiple times in response to changing work or school situations.

A few middle class couples have adopted equal domestic divisions of labor since first moving in together as a result of the female partner's work or schooling. Jared, for example, explained that Alisha was unemployed for a while. When asked about their household division of labor, he explained,

For a while there I didn't really do anything because for about a month she was just looking here for a job. So, by the time I got home everything would be done three times over and the living room would be rearranged. So I didn't have anything to do for a while there, and once she got a job I actually started pulling my own weight.

Similarly, Jessica, a teacher, explained that during the summers when she is not working, she does nearly all of the housework. She said that their division of labor was usually even, but she tried to do more to be equitable during the summers, noting, "...especially during the summer, I'm not doing anything else so if I didn't clean, I'd feel lazy. I feel like it's the least I can do, [since] he's working every day." Unlike some of their working class counterparts, these middle class men were willing (though not always happy) to do at least 40% of the housework once their partners were working an equal amount of time.

Other working and middle class couples have experienced numerous changes to their household task arrangement in response to one partner's work or school changes. Sherry and Tyrone, for example, have alternated in who does the most housework over

time. Although she did the bulk of the work at the beginning of their cohabitation and does so now, Tyrone was unemployed for a few months before a relative helped him get a job at the post office. He said,

...basically what we do with chores is I was off for like a two month period of time and so I was doing a lot of cleaning up but with the chores we just get to them. She do[es] a lot of the clothes washing and keeping the room neat. I mainly do the kitchen and living room. She do[es] the bathrooms and stuff. She do[es] most of the chores. She used to fuss about them but now she do[es]n't really say too much about them.

Justin, a lobbyist-turn-salesman too, explained that he and Lauren's division of labor has also alternated over time based upon his feelings about his current employment. Justin noted,

Everything is very 50-50 in our house. And I think, to be honest, I think maybe within the past month, it's gone to her doing a few more things because I've been getting a little down about the work situation. So I find myself not really doing as much for no good reason. Which I've noticed and we've talked about too. So we're both aware of these issues. But it doesn't cause any kind of problem 'cause she's very understanding and obviously if it stayed like that it'd be a problem.

Lauren, Justin's partner, may be more willing to do slightly more of the housework now because Justin has done the same for her in the past. She explained, "...when I was surviving my last quarter [of school] he picked up a lot of the slack, washing the dishes, washing the bathroom." Similarly, Nicholas said that he took on a larger share of the chores occasionally in response to Rachel's schooling. Rachel and Nicholas have three other roommates that live with them, all students in Rachel's graduate program. Nicholas explained their division of labor, saying,

It's pretty balanced between the three of the female roommates....Usually it's even, but since they're all in the same courses when they get bombed I have to do everything so sometimes I end up doing it all and also they do a lot of

research abroad so there are months where I'll be by myself and doing all the chores.

None of the individuals who talked about their divisions of labor changing numerous times in response to work or school were unhappy with their situations. Instead, these couples seemed to view their responses to changing employment or schooling as equitable given the circumstances.

Interestingly, the majority of changes that working class couples experienced related to work/school were in terms of their financial arrangements, in contrast to the middle class couples who most often experienced changes in their domestic divisions due to employment or education. Although their partners were contesting conventional gender roles, working class men were often reluctant to take on more equal shares of the housework. This explains why those couples have experienced few changes in their divisions of labor in reaction to changes outside of their unions. In addition, middle class couples generally have higher paying jobs than their working class counterparts and their unemployment spells were often very brief (two months or less). As such, the middle class may have been able to use some savings to avoid altering their financial situations significantly in response to changes at work or in school. Like their conventional counterparts, some Contesters are attending college. How their divisions of labor will be altered in response to the graduation (and, hopefully, the subsequently improved employment) of one partner remains to be seen.

Changes Due to Women's Insistence

Some contesting couples' divisions of labor have changed over time due to the female partners' insistence that their chores or (in a few instances) financial situations

become more equal. Some women, for example, demanded that their partners pay a more equal share once enough time had elapsed to make it clear that the men would be living in their apartments for good. Other women attempted to get their partners to do a more equal share of the household chores. Whereas the class straddling and middle class women's demands that their male partners take on an equal share of the housework were met, working class women were less successful in their assertions. They were able to get their male partners to do more housework than in the past, but not enough to equalize their divisions.

Two women went from paying the majority of the bills when they first cohabited to insisting things become more equal. Now, both couples split all of the bills evenly. Both experienced their partners moving in to the women's apartments gradually, which made determining who should pay which bills particularly difficult. However, after a certain period of time, both women demanded that their partners pay an equal share. Brian, a mechanic, admitted that before he began paying an equal share of the bills that, "... I kind of felt guilty because I was there all the time. I wasn't paying any bills. I was kind of living free." Stacy, a waitress finally told him that he needed to pay half of the bills if he intended to live with her permanently, explaining,

Probably like February or March is when I asked him to start paying. He had been staying over like gradually days and more days and more days then all of a sudden in February or you know, whatever it was he was staying there every day I was like, "You need to tell your mom, you need to get your shit out of your mom's house. You've got to go. I mean if we're gonna do this, we're doing this."

Similarly, Natasha explained that Soliman moved in to her apartment gradually as well. She explained,

...it came to the point where I just couldn't afford to pay it all on my own. I said, "Look if you're living here, it would be great if you could maybe contribute some too." So that's what we agreed, just 50-50 on that and the gas or the extra stuff, we basically have just, "I'll get the gas, you get this." And I mean, it evens out after everything. And before I was not having a problem when I could kinda pay it myself and but once it started getting harder to do that I said, "Look it would just make more sense if you could contribute."

It is unclear what the men would have done if the women had not insisted upon financial equality. However, both reacted favorably to the women's requests and began paying an equal share of the bills immediately. Cohabitation is less institutionalized than either dating or marriage. Therefore, "rules" about things like how many nights per week someone can sleep over before contributing to the household bills are not yet established. Instead, they are something that each couple must determine for themselves in the midst of the situation.

The women's insistence that domestic labor be shared equally resulted in changes for three middle class couples where the woman had previously been doing the majority of the housework. Some reached a compromise with their partners wherein they relaxed their own standards of cleanliness while the men began cleaning more than they would have preferred. Others asked their partners to take on particularly hated chores or simply announced, "It's time for us to clean the house." Middle class women were able to get their male partners to do approximately half of the household chores; in contrast, working class men did only slightly more housework than they had previously in response to their female partners' pleas.

Middle class Lisette, for example, explained that things became even between her and Miguel over time. She said of their household division of labor,

...at the beginning it was terrible!...I like everything in a place and I hate having clothes everywhere so I'm like very strict on that and he is very clean too but he is not that ordered. Like his desk is always a mess, his books are everywhere....I start[ed] opening a little bit and he start being more order[ly]

Miguel and Lisette reached a compromise in which he took on an equal share of the household chores and she, in turn, relaxed her own standards for cleanliness. Andrea also admitted that she has higher standards for cleanliness than her partner, Nathan, something that surprised her. She explained,

I think that we had that trial run where he was basically at my house every night so we kind of knew. He's a lot more messier than I would have anticipated and he does not like to pick up after himself and I don't know how I missed that when we were kind of living together so I guess that kind of threw me because he just always seemed so clean when he wasn't at my house.

She said that once the two "officially" lived together, she would complain if he was too messy and ask him to pick up after himself. Now, she says, Nathan does at least 40% of the housework. She explained the way in which they arrange their household chores now, saying,

...he's really good at cleaning when he wants it to be done. When he wants to do it, he'll sit down and clean the whole house without me even asking him to...like I said he knows I hate to dust so he'll automatically take that chore when we decide "Hey we're gonna clean the house on Saturday" and that's just what he does. He won't even ask and he knows that I don't like to vacuum so he does that. We have these kind of like unspoken things. We have a lot of like non-verbals that we just know each other that we really don't have to talk about it so either one of us will say "We need to clean the house today" and then that'll just happen.

Although their male partners still do not enjoy doing housework, or, in some cases, do not see the need for their homes to be as clean as the women want them, they comply with the requests to do an equal share in interest of fairness.

In contrast, working class women were unable to get their male partners to do at least 40% of the housework, though some have been able to get the men to pick up a bit more of the chores than they did when the couple first moved in together. For example, Jackie, a working class group home worker, described the process whereby she had gotten her partner Chad to do more of the domestic work:

That's been a big discussion [laughs]. I knew before we moved in together he didn't do chores. And I don't consider--- I'm not saying I'm the neatest person-- -- OK, I'm very particular, actually. I like things clean. I don't like dishes in the sink. I dust. I mop. I clean the bathrooms. So for a while I was doing it all. I was picking up everything, and I'm like, "Maybe you could just---" so I gave him trash. He got to take out the trash and do the dishes, but then I needed some help so I asked him to mop. He asked me how to go about that [laughs] so he's done a lot better. He does the dishes, he gets the trash out, he can sweep, he can mop, he still hasn't mastered cleaning the bathrooms yet. He hasn't done that.

Still, both admit that Jackie does the majority of the household chores.

Jackie's statement brings up an important point. Some men like Chad have not "mastered" how to clean (at least to their partners' standards). Still, even when their female partners take the time to show them how to do particular tasks, some men feel frustrated by their partners' standards. Chad, for example, said, "...a lotta the big cleaning stuff, she kinda just does 'cause we've discovered that when we try to do it together she gets kinda annoyed with me. Asked to elaborate on what annoys Jackie, Chad said, "She doesn't think I'm doing it right." None of these men were dissatisfied with the way their female partners did housework, nor did they question how the women had developed their skills in the first place. Most seemed to assume that women "just knew" how to clean, which naturalized their own lack of housework.

Still other men used gender privilege to avoid particular chores. For example, Sherry explained that Tyrone does not clean bathrooms or dust. She said, "I could never

expect him to dust. He's like, 'That's for sissies.' So I dust. He's not a bathroom person, that's just my thing, so I do bathrooms now." Similarly, when asked to explain his and Dawn's household division of labor, Eric used the excuse that he has a harder time seeing dirt to explain what he did. Asked to list their chores, Eric said, "...when it comes to the gritty stuff I guess [she does it] but when it comes to the stuff that's easy to see I'll do that." When asked what was easy for him to see, Eric said, "Like when I shave and I have hair everywhere." Eric's chores consist primarily of cleaning up after himself, while Dawn takes care of most of their joint messes in addition to her own. Although some of these working class contesting women may have cleaning standards that are unfair to their partners, these men have demonstrated that they have the privilege to continue ignoring many of the household chores even when their partners continually contest their excuses by teaching them how to do particular chores. Although numerous working class men were able to avoid particular household tasks, only one woman, Susan, used gender privilege to ignore a particular chore. Susan's partner, Eugene, explained, "[What] I've been doing the most is clothes since she doesn't like to go in the basement 'cause she's afraid of spiders and bugs. So I pretty much have done the clothes since we moved in there, which I don't really care, that's fine. I need clean clothes too." Unlike Tyrone's excuse (that he does not dust because he is strong), Susan's reason for avoiding the laundry (fear) is one that makes her appear weaker than her partner.

Because working class individuals (particularly men) tend to have less egalitarian views of gender roles than their middle class counterparts, these working class cohabiting men may be more reluctant to do more of the housework, even if the couple shares their finances equally (Aronson 2003; Deutsch 1999; Ellwood and Jencks 2004; McCabe 2005;

Rubin 1976, 1994). Alternatively, their female partners may feel that they have less agency to demand equality. Unless these men are willing to take on an equal share, however, women's insistence alone cannot change their divisions of labor. It appears that some of these contesting couples, then, have at least some conventional attitudes about gender and the division of labor, even though at least one partner in each couple is currently fighting for greater equality in their financial or domestic arrangements.

Anticipated Future Changes

After detailing their current arrangements, couples were asked about what changes they anticipated would occur should they marry. Like their conventional counterparts, the most common response was that marriage would not change their divisions of labor at all or that things would not change until after they have children. Rarely, couples felt that marriage alone would make their lives more conventional. In contrast to their conventional counterparts, however, a fair number of women expressed a fear that marriage would bring with it expectations of traditional behavior. Only one response (that having children, not getting married, would make their unions more conventional) differed by social class. Here, it was mentioned almost exclusively by middle class couples.

No Change

The most common response (n=8) that contesting couples had to the possible changes that marriage might have on their relationships is to assert that marriage would have no impact. For example, Mark, a working class stay at home father who has a son with his partner and another on the way, noted that his relationship would not change if he and Tracy tied the knot. He said, "I don't think it will be any different, to be brutally

honest. Like I said, every facet of a marriage relationship is already there anyways. She would have a less dorky last name. That would be about it.” He elaborated, “I don’t see why it would be affected in any way, shape, or form. We’d still be living together and have the same availabilities and talents and desires so I don’t think it would change any.” Asked to explain the differences between cohabitation and marriage and what might change, Tracy noted, “It’s pretty much nothing else would change after [we got married]. We’d be going back to the same house with our family and everything like that. I don’t really see a difference between the two.” Though Mark and Tracy’s experience was somewhat unique in that they share children, even many couples without children already felt that they were living “as married.” Jared, a mechanical engineer, was engaged to his partner, Alisha. When asked if anything would be different following their nuptials, he explained, “I really don’t think it will be ‘cause we have every stupid couple, married argument that you can imagine, like, financial, being late from work, forgetting to tell her about some party we have to go to or something like that so. I mean, I just don’t--- I *cannot* see it being any different.” Alisha agreed, saying,

[Marriage] is just basically a piece of paper and the only thing it does is put us in a different tax bracket or place us in a different place financially so I don’t see the relationship any different now than in a year. It’ll be cute ‘cause we’ll be Mr. and Mrs. [his last name] but it won’t be different emotionally or responsibility-wise or anything like that.

Babies, Not Marriage, Bring Changes

Like their conventional counterparts, a number of contesting couples and individuals felt that having a child, rather than getting married, would make their divisions of labor more traditional. Even if they did not plan to leave the workforce entirely, some contesting women hoped to work part-time or flex hours once their

children were born so that they could spend more time at home. Middle class women, in particular, felt that they had chosen careers that would afford them this luxury. The views these individuals expressed about parenting make it clear that they have no intention of trying to create a “new” type of more egalitarian relationship, at least following the birth of children.

Natasha, for example, a translator, vehemently argued that, for now, her partner, Soliman should pay half of the bills and share equally in the housework. However, when asked how she planned to balance work and family, she said,

I think it's very important for the mother to be with--- that sounds so conservative or something but. The mother, or one of the parents let's say, to be with the child especially the first year or so and to really take an active role and not just dropping them off at the sitters or daycare or whatever all the time. I know that's very hard to do and I'm probably totally am not making sense when I say that. The freelance thing, if I decided to have children, that would be a good option for me because I know I'd have to spend time with children during that time but you can schedule--- like I can work weekends instead or nights and not having to go to a steady job day by day. It's very open, it's very like when you have to work you work, if not, don't. That would be ideal for that I guess but I don't know. I do know I wanna devote enough time with them.

Likewise, Nathan explained that his partner, Andrea, planned to stay home with any children the two had in the future. Asked how he felt about her desire, he explained,

I don't have a problem with it. I mean, I have no problem I guess being the quote, unquote, breadwinner of [the] family. That really doesn't bother me 'cause taking care of kids and a home is a job in itself. So, that doesn't bother me. I guess as long as we have financial freedom to do that, that's a great thing if you can be home with your kids.

Many of these women, like Natasha, or Amy planned to work part-time or flexible hours once they had children because they enjoyed their jobs and did not want to leave the workforce entirely. Still, it was clear that it was the women's careers, not the men's, which would be impacted the most by parenthood. Kevin's partner, Amy, planned to

work part time once the two had children. She noted that, in her field, this was very possible, saying, “Because there’s such a demand for speech pathologists in our field, I mean you can make your schedule whatever you want so it’s a great career to have if you have a family. So I will probably work part time...” When asked about balancing work and family, Kevin, a general manager at a shipping company, also explained that his job was particularly unsuited for the kind of balance Amy would be able to achieve. He said, “...this has also been part of our discussion. It’s gonna be a tough battle because I work some long hours. And you know ideally I’d like to have Amy stay at home.” Despite their attempts to keep their divisions of labor as equal as possible while cohabiting, once these couples have kids, the gendered nature of many of their jobs combined with their personal preferences make it likely that the female partners will become the primary parents. Their desires for equality are outstripped by structural forces that still encourage male partners to be primary providers while women care for children and the home (Gerson 2002; Orrange 2003).

This response was most common among the middle class and the bachelor’s educated class straddling woman. Again, this may be for two reasons. First, only middle class couples were directly asked the question “How do you intend to balance work and family?” since it was added only as the interview schedule evolved. Second, most of the middle class women who intend to stay at home with their children, at least part time, have jobs (such as “psychologist” or “teacher”) that lend themselves to more flexible, family-friendly schedules. The same is not true of their working-class counterparts.

Distrust the Changes Marriage May Bring

Four contesting women specifically mentioned that they are reluctant to marry or plan to never marry because they are inherently distrustful of the conventional expectations that accompany marriage. Their male partners' responses to what might change after marriage varied widely, but none of the men specifically mentioned the women's fears of the institution. Lauren, a political lobbyist, felt that her current partner was well suited for her, but mentioned that there was a "stigma" that comes with marriage. When asked to elaborate, she noted,

I feel like it's probably just the media and society. They put you into this figure where you have to be this perfect little housewife...so if you don't get married then you're not placed into this box where you have to like always wear a wedding ring and talk about your wonderful husband and be wife-like.

Asked to describe what she meant by "wife-like", Lauren explained that she and Justin had had several conversations about traditional parenting and household roles for women. She said,

...obviously nothing can be 100% equal but we're very equal in how we treat each other...he doesn't want to see me in [a traditional] role either. Like he doesn't want to [say] "Why don't you stay at home and I'll take care of you" because he wouldn't have any respect for me and I wouldn't have respect for myself if I did that but that's what we choose. I think that women who stay home that that's great for them, but I mean my mom stayed home and his mom stayed home. It was great for them but I don't want to.

She added that Justin had tried to assuage her fears that their division of labor would change by promising that if they did tie the knot that, "I'm not gonna suddenly grow a beer belly and sit on the couch and watch TV all day" while she did the majority of the household chores.

Similarly, Stacy, an assistant manager at a call center explained that she did not plan to marry Andre because she strongly disagreed with the roles that he expected of

each of them within marriage. She explained that her partner, Andre, wanted to be able to provide for her in such a way that she could be a stay at home wife, telling her, “I’m gonna be a millionaire by the time I’m 30 and I don’t want you to have to work. I just want you to sit at home and do whatever you want to do and write or read or paint or whatever you do and that’s it.” Stacy noted that she strongly disagreed with Andre’s dream, adding, “The thought of me sitting somewhere and not doing things is obscene.” A bad experience in a past marriage in which she was a stay-at-home mother led Rhoda to her current distrust of the institution. When asked what marriage meant to her, the administrative assistant replied,

Let me see, well I used to think marriage was being nice, being married to a nice man that loves you and taking care of you, loves your children and taking care of you and you didn’t have to work, you could sit at home, he’d pay for everything. But then you know as I got older with the things I had to go through, it’s like marriage is just a crock of shit! It’s like, women are just slaves to their husbands and we’re just getting paid to be slaves, which I’d rather just work and pay myself. Just cut out the middle man, you know?

These contesting women’s distrust of the institution of marriage and the related societal expectations that accompany being a wife leads them to shy away from marriage, even if they are satisfied in their current relationships.

More Conventional

Couples had a variety of responses to how their divisions of labor would be modified after marriage; some agreed, while others disagreed about the changes that marriage might bring. Most commonly noted among the remaining six couples was that at least one partner felt that their lives would get more conventional should they marry. A few men hoped to take more control over the household finances if they tie the knot. Others anticipated that the men would have greater provider privileges such as the ability

to avoid even more of the onerous household chores or greater respect within the household.

Some couples, like Howard and Vicki, a working class student and pharmacy technician, agreed that, if they should marry, they would adopt a more traditional division of labor. Howard explained that he would take more financial control, explaining, “I would be pretty strict on spending money. I save a lot. I save pretty much most of the money that I make....And she buys a lot of clothes. That would aggravate me that she spends so much money if we actually shared money right now.” When asked if their relationship would change if they married, Vicki responded,

I think it would only ‘cause I think I would feel kinda compelled to kinda do what I guess, what I’ve been told a woman should do or what I’ve been taught a woman should do. I don’t know. Just ‘cause I tease him all the time that if we were to have our own place, he’s the one that needs to mow the lawn and do all that stuff and I feel like I should be cooking...

Other couples disagreed on what would happen after marriage, but at least one partner (generally the woman) believed that things will become more conventional. When asked about the differences between cohabitation and marriage, for example, Eric, a working class accounting student replied, “Just the legality of it and the rings, the name change.” However, his partner, Dawn, an associate’s degree student who has held numerous front-desk jobs explained that if she and Eric married, “I think I’d be more, wifely. I think I’d really start, ‘Oh, we’re married well I need to do all this.’ I think I’d go even more crazy than what I do now. I’d really keep the house clean and really keep things organized.” When asked why she anticipated things changing, she had difficulty articulating a response but explained that marriage would somehow lead her to become more oriented toward family, rather than fun. She said,

I think I just have a little bit different mind set. Not like a whole lot different, but I'd start thinking more for future, I'd start thinking, "Let's look more now for houses. Let's start planning things, let's look for jobs. Let's look for our health benefits." I'd really start getting into the family mode set 'cause right now I'm still on the back-burner of like, "Hey I just got outta high school, I just wanna goof around." But I mean, if we got married I'd be really, "Hey this is what we need to do. Let's plan out our goals." I'd be really--- I'd be the task-orienter and he'd just let me go. He'd just, "Alright." He'd tell me what kinda stuff he wants to do. I do feel like he's kind of picking what we're gonna do for our future though, 'cause he's already kinda picked the areas we're gonna live in and stuff like that and, I've just kind of adopted them because they sound good.

Without recognizing it, Dawn and Eric already have begun laying the foundations for becoming more conventional in the future. By allowing Eric to select the location of their future home and Dawn "adopting" his desires, the two have set a pattern of privileging his wishes, despite Eric's current stated demands for equality in their relationship.

Only one of these couples who intend for things to get more conventional post-marriage are engaged to one another. Some may be reluctant to marry their current partners because they disagree on how things would change post-marriage. Alternatively, however, others may not yet have thought seriously about what marriage means for them. As such, they are relying upon hegemonic notions and past experiences as default models that shape their expectations for marriage (Ridgeway and Correll 2004). Vicki's comment above hints at this when she mentioned that she expects to do "what I've been told a woman should do or what I've been taught a woman should do" If she and Howard marry. Similarly, Tyrone was asked about the differences between cohabitation and marriage. He used a story to illustrate his answer, saying,

I look at my grandmother and her husband, my mom's mom and my granddad. Like he gets off work and she fixes a big meal. All the kids are in there, all the grandkids and everybody in there; we can't touch no food until after my granddaddy eats. He sits at the table by himself and eats and he goes to bed then

we can come in. Sometime he sit in there with us and visit but he gets his food first.

For Tyrone, his past experience with his grandfather experiencing provider privileges shapes his own views of what marriage is. If he and Sherry ever seriously consider marriage, he may revise his views of marriage based upon their couple-level experiences and desires. Still, what is clear is that many of these otherwise contesting couples plan on becoming more conventional, either because they marry or following the birth of children.

Contesting couples are classified by one or both partners actively contesting conventionally gendered behaviors in terms of domestic labor, financial control, or work orientation. In addition, these couples often share finances equally, though doing so is not exclusive to testers- some conventional and counter-conventional couples, and all of the equalitarian couples do so, too. While numerous working class women are contesting conventional gender roles, their middle and class straddling counterparts have been more effective in getting their male partners to take on a more equal role in their divisions of labor. Still, for these middle class contesting women, maintaining equality within their relationships requires a great deal of vigilance on their parts. Despite the equality that many contesting women have been able to tenuously effect within their unions, many of these couples expect that their relationships will become more conventional over time, especially if they have children together.

Equalitarians

When Caleb and Sophie first met while he was playing drums in a rock band, the two knew that their relationship was special. Sophie had gone to see his band at a friend's insistence and the two began chatting about music. She explained, "afterward we started talking some more and before I knew it I looked around and there was nobody

else in the bar and they were closing up.” The two maintained a long-distance relationship for a few months before Sophie moved to Caleb’s town. Still, she got her own apartment so that she could maintain her own space. Over a year later, each of the 26 year olds found themselves in need of a roommate and decided to move in together.

From the day they moved in, each found that they were well suited to living with the other. Although each had a bachelor’s degree (Caleb in photography and Sophie in audio engineering), neither was certain about the future occupational paths they wanted to pursue. Sophie encouraged Caleb in continuing his music and photography hobbies, though his work as a pizza delivery driver paid his half of the bills. Sophie worked in a community garden program to pay her share, but did not intend to make a career of it. The two were happy to pull their own weight financially, with Caleb occasionally buying a few “extras” because he slightly earned more. Their equality extended to household chores, as well. The couple has never had to struggle to maintain an egalitarian division of labor or negotiate the terms of their financial and domestic arrangements. Nor did they comment on how unusual their truly equal situation is or explain that they were trying to challenge conventional norms. Instead, they simply saw their division of labor as each partner doing what is fair.

Though they occasionally argue like any other couple, both Sophie and Caleb are very satisfied with their division of labor and their relationship as a whole. Each is set on taking things slow, but predicts that they will be married and thinking of starting a family within a few years. Whether maintaining their equal relationship will be possible in light of the structural barriers posed by work and parenthood remains to be seen.

Three middle class couples are dissimilar both from all of the other conventional, contesting, and counter-conventional couples in the sample. These couples will be discussed in light of the Contesting couples because all are distinguished by their equality, both in terms of financial and domestic obligations. Unlike their contesting counterparts, none of these three couples are actively contesting gendered norms. Instead, their relationships appear to have begun as relatively equal partnerships, a balance that they have maintained throughout their unions. Their phase in the life course (all are fairly recent college graduates) may be part of what has led to their “effortlessly” equal relationships, but it is also possible that they take egalitarianism for granted. Because these

couples are all satisfied in their egalitarian relationships, but have not had to work at creating equal unions, they are termed the “equalitarians”.

Work Orientation

Of the three couples who make up the equalitarians group, most have no clear plans for their future occupations, despite their educational achievements. For example, Caleb, who has a bachelor’s degree in fine arts, was asked if he ever saw himself going back to school. He explained,

That’s kind of up in the air. Right now I really don’t feel like it. I don’t know if it’s what I want to do because I guess if I did some type of graduate, post-graduate degree I don’t know if photography is what I really want to do because that pretty much orients you towards teaching and I don’t really want to teach photography necessarily, but I’m not opposed to maybe going into something else all together but I just don’t know if I have the patience right now to go back to school and go to classes every day. I definitely don’t have the money right now either. My parents helped me out with school which was great. I don’t know. I’m kind of in limbo right now as to what I want to do for a career.

Currently, Caleb delivers pizzas because the job allows him to take time off to focus on his band. He mentioned that he might also have an interest in becoming a park ranger if his careers in music or photography fail. His partner, Sophie, who completed her degree in music, currently works in a community garden program. When asked about her top priority she noted, “Geez, probably getting together a portfolio and getting some type of work with my degree, whatever it may be- just getting moving towards some type of solid career and just a job that’s steady. It doesn’t necessarily have to be my career forever, but more professional type situation than where I’m at.” The clearest occupation path of any individual in this group is James’. James (26) completed a degree in philosophy and has been working at a natural grocery store after spending several years

working a variety of low-wage jobs. He was recently accepted to an environmental law program. However, he clarified that it was his values, rather than his desire for occupational success, that drive his career. When asked about his decision to pursue law, he explained,

Well, when I was an undergrad I really had delusions of grandeur that I was gonna go out and change the world and do a lot of things and make a difference and it just seemed like the past couple of years when I was in China [teaching English as a second language] and living here in Columbus I've been really apathetic and really haven't done much and sort of fallen out of the circles that James from 5 years ago wanted me to stay in, so I really feel like maybe environmental law is a path that I should take to live up to what I wanted to do 5 years ago and get myself out of this little side track that I've been on for a few years.

The vague occupational ambitions among the members of this middle class equalitarian group are likely linked to their choices of college majors. All six individuals have degrees in liberal arts subjects like environmental studies and English. These majors do not easily lend themselves to a direct, unmistakable career path, something these equalitarians are now discovering in their mid-twenties. They may choose to remain in their current jobs, or, like James, decide to attend graduate or professional school in order to craft a clearer occupational route. Their current, relatively low status occupations do lead these couples to have relatively similar incomes, which likely impacts their current financial arrangements.

Feelings about Financial Arrangements

All of these three couples entered their relationships assuming that they would share their financial obligations equally, so each is satisfied with doing so. Although as a group their earnings are fairly low compared to their other middle class counterparts, each pair's earnings are similar. When asked how he expected to share the household

expenses, Andrew (27), a tennis professional, for example, responded, “Split the rent and the bills.” Their focus on fairness leads these couples to keep close tabs on their spending. Andrew’s partner, Rebekah (25), a bartender and former English major who decided to attend graduate school in education explained,

We each pay half, down the middle. Bills are kinda weird. We try to be equitable about it. Right now gas is in his name, electric’s in my name. And right now they’re roughly equal, but of course they aren’t all year, so we try to pay each other the difference and split it. The water we pay to our landlord. He pays for phone and internet/cable. He has more stuff in his name, and I’m always like, “How much do you want me to give you?” And he’s like, “Don’t worry about it right now.” And I’m like, “Well I wanna give you something, ‘cause that’s not really fair. And so I don’t know. I worry about our expenses sometimes.

Only Caleb, who earns slightly more than his partner Sophie, noted that he occasionally spent more money on “extras”. After mentioning that he and Sophie “split the rent and the bills,” he was asked if their arrangement was 50-50. He responded, “Pretty much, sometimes I’ll pay for things a little more, sometimes she’ll cover things but I’d say we’ll help out, we’ll each get things for the house and I’ll buy different random things that might be more expensive, stuff like that.” These couples attitudes about financial fairness leads to neither partner having greater financial control.

Financial Control

Among these three couples, each partner has control of his or her own income and neither partner assumes that one person should have greater control. Andrew, for example, when asked about who controls the household income, replied, “We control our own money.” James expressed the same sentiment, “We control our own money. I occasionally know how much she’s got just cause when money’s bad like ‘OK, how much did you get paid on that check so we can pay this?,’ but I generally don’t make it a

point to ask how much she gets on her check and she doesn't ask me." Each person was further asked if they would be able to convince their partners not to purchase an expensive item. Across the board, all answered "no"; most also explained that they rarely purchased frivolous items. Rebekah, for example, when asked what she would do if her partner wanted to buy something that she felt was too expensive said, "Well that's fine I guess. I mean, but again I feel like he would discuss it with me. He would, like he doesn't really have very extravagant taste." Caleb also noted that he could not influence his partner, Sophie's, purchases, saying, "I have some influence on her, she definitely listens to me, but if she really wanted something, she would buy it." Sophie concurred, noting that if she really wanted something, Caleb could not stop her from buying it; she noted that she could also influence him, but not curb his purchases. When asked if she could stop him from purchasing an expensive item that he really wanted (a drum set), she noted, "No. No, our finances are still--- even though we split everything evenly we're separate." These couples' focus on fairness and splitting everything evenly leads them to feel that each partner should have ultimate control of his/her own income, even if they do decide to accept input from one another. This focus on fairness extends to their feelings about domestic labor.

Feelings about Housework

All three of these couples explained that they were sharing housework, with each partner doing between 40 and 60 percent of the daily chores. Monica (26), for example, a large mammal keeper at the zoo said of her and James' division,

It's pretty even. He cleans the turtle tank 'cause I've said that I clean up after animals all day, I don't want to do it when I get home. So he does that, I do the dishes, he'll clean the bathroom. It's really even, I do the laundry but he does

like--- it's basically even. We have different things that I do but I think it evens out.

Rather than actively trying to achieve this balance like so many of their contesting counterparts have done, though, these equalitarian couples seem to have fallen into their arrangements based upon mutually shared desired levels of cleanliness. James, for example, said, "I think \we're very similar in our cleanliness." Likewise, Andrew noted,

I clean fairly well, she cleans fairly well, so I think we kinda respect each other and we're not--- we don't yell at each other to get stuff cleaned up, we just kinda do it. We're not neat-freaks, but we don't like places to be filthy either, so I think we mesh well as far as that stuff goes.

Rather than thinking of particular tasks as "gendered", these couples all think of one another as "roommates" and explained that their divisions were equitable given their circumstances. Sophie, for example, said of Caleb, "He's really clean and takes care of his space and he's a good roommate. We cook dinner together almost every night. He's really interested in that." Rebekah expressed a similar sentiment,

...we're great roommates though. I think we both have about the same level of tolerance for mess, which is a relatively low tolerance, but neither of us is anal. So we'll both start cleaning stuff up at about the same level. So the house stays at a level we both enjoy, which is good.

Unlike those in contesting relationships, both partners in these equalitarian couples seem to have taken for granted from the very beginning of their relationships that they would share their domestic and financial obligations equally. While their conventional counterparts presuppose that men will be the primary financial providers while female partners will care for the home and contesting couples struggle to achieve a more equal balance, these three couples simply assumed that parity would be the ruling variable in their relationships. Because they are not fighting to achieve fairness like their contesting

counterparts, it is easy to attribute their current balanced divisions of labor to being in very similar places in the life course, as both partners in all three unions have relatively low incomes and occupational statuses. However, it is also possible that these three couples are the first of a “new” generation- those who take egalitarianism for granted, but have not yet determined how to balance their careers with their equal roles in the household. These couples may be the gender forerunners of their generation (Myers and Booth 2002). In fact, many of their characteristics are the same as those that Myers and Booth (2002) identify as common among gender forerunners (those whose attitudes about egalitarianism are at least one standard deviation higher than their peers). All are well educated; most of the women have full time labor force participation while most of the men do not. In addition, most of the men have well-educated mothers, a factor common among male forerunners.

The Process of Change among Egalitarian Couples

These three equalitarian couples are a small sample, to be sure, but may be representative of a new trend. All three couples have always divided their financial and household responsibilities evenly from the beginning of their cohabitations. The three have lived together for varying amounts of time (from three months to two years), so it is possible that they will undergo changes in their divisions of labor in the future. Equal divisions of labor are very difficult to maintain (Risman 1998; Schwartz 1994), in part because even if individuals and couples are determined to divide their workloads evenly, institutions such as work can intercede (Risman 2004).

A further investigation of the working class reveals that three working class couples originally began their relationships sharing household labor and finances equally,

but they did so because of one partner's insistence on equality, not because both partners just assumed that egalitarianism was the proper course like the equalitarians do. At the time of their interviews, however, only one working class couple still maintained their arrangement, and only because of the female partner's vigilance in contesting conventional gender roles to assure the fairness of their division of labor. It could be that as some of the equalitarian partners complete graduate school or find more permanent careers, the nature of their work will lead them to make some changes. However, it is also possible that they will continue to assume that their housework and financial arrangements should remain equal, just as non-romantic roommates would.

Chapter 6: Counter-Conventional Couples

Patty (18), a barista, first met Josh (22), a part-time library clerk, through a mutual friend. She recalled how, after they attended a concert together, he chivalrously walked her back to her car. After that, both noted, they were inseparable. She was so excited by the way he actively pursued her, something that no other man had done for her before. Josh explained that the two became an official couple within a week, and spent at least five days a week together watching movies, camping, and smoking marijuana. Within eight months the two moved in together.

The two had different expectations of what living together would be like. Josh explained that before moving in with Patty he had expected that she would do more of the housework because she knew how much he disliked it. He was also aware that his parents would stop paying his bills something they had done for several years. Patty had different expectations. She had seen that Josh's previous apartment was always fairly clean and that he stayed on top of paying the bills, so she assumed he would be an equal participant in cleaning and bill paying in their joint household. She was really disappointed to find out that Josh did very little housework and frequently relied on her to pay the majority of the bills. Josh admitted that he hated to clean and often borrowed money from Patty, but generally minimized his reliance upon her.

The two haven't seriously discussed the future of their relationship yet, but Patty's disappointment with Josh's lack of domestic and financial contributions make it unlikely that such a conversation is forthcoming. She explained that she feels much more like Josh's mother, instead of his girlfriend. Josh, however, is much more satisfied with their union, explaining that Patty provides emotional stability for him. The two clearly have very different views of their division of labor, the quality of their union, and the way in which it affects Patty.

Like Patty and Josh, a total of 11 couples have counter-conventional arrangements. Counter-Conventional couples are demarcated by the female partner paying the bulk of the household expenses. In addition, the women in this subgroup often do more of the domestic labor. Their feelings about their divisions of labor, however, differ based upon the couples' social classes.

Six working class, one class straddling, and four middle class couples have counter-conventional arrangements. Work orientations among the counter-conventional

vary by class. Working and class straddling men and women typically have unclear work orientations and no obvious path toward particular occupations. In contrast, middle class counter-conventional couples demonstrate a variety of orientations toward work, perhaps because some view themselves as being in the midst of career transitions. Couples feel differently about the male partners' financial dependence based upon their social class. Middle class women, on the whole, are happy to support their partners because they view their situations as temporary or equitable. In contrast, the working and class straddling women are quite unhappy about paying the majority of the bills. Middle class counter-conventional women also view their traditional divisions of labor as equitable, which makes them different from working and class straddling men and women who are doing the vast majority of the household chores. Most of these counter-conventional couples do not envision a permanent future together, but do expect that their divisions of labor will have to change if they are to remain together.

Feelings about Financial Arrangements

Counter-Conventional couples all have one unifying trait: the female partners are the primary financial providers for all of the couples. While it is not uncommon for women to out earn their male partners (Brines and Joyner 1999; Winkler, McBride, and Andrews 2005), those who do so rarely receive the same types of privileges that are afforded to male providers and often end up taking on additional domestic duties to "make up for" their higher incomes (e.g., Brines 1994; Tichenor 1999). In contrast to the responses that male conventional providers receive from their partners (ranging from gratitude to getting extra privileges in their relationships), these couples view the female financial mainstays quite differently. Most of the working class men and the one class

straddling man seem unconcerned with their lack of financial contributions, even going so far as to downplay their partners' contributions and inflate their own. In contrast, the middle class men are often uncomfortable with being supported by their partners and explain that their situations are temporary. The men's reactions to the women's greater financial contributions may influence how the women feel about providing the bulk of the income for their households. While many of the working class women and the class straddling woman are unhappy with their financial arrangements, all of the middle class women are satisfied with the ways their households currently share income.

Female Responsibility for Financial Obligations

Among the working class and the class straddling counter-conventional couples, five of the seven couples agreed that the female partner paid the majority of the household bills. Two other working class couples disagreed, however. In those cases, the female partners stated that they paid the majority of the bills and the male partners initially said that the expenses were evenly split. However, upon closer examination of the men's actual income and their reported reliance upon their partners to "borrow" money to pay their share, it seems unlikely that the men are actually consistently contributing to half of the household bills. None of the four middle class counter-conventional couples disputed the fact that the female partners are, for now at least, the household financial mainstays.

Maria and Bill are one of the couples who agree that the female partner pays the majority of the household expenses. Maria (32), a bookkeeper, said of her and 34 year old Bill's financial arrangement, "We are right now, for the most part, a one income family because he is in school. He does get his student loans, but a lot of that goes for school, which is obvious." Similarly, Harry (32) explained that he was unemployed at the

moment but that he hoped to be paying bills in the future, saying, “I’m a little worried, but right now while I’m not really looking for a job. Well I’m waiting to hear back from this one job [unloading freight for a trucking company] but if I don’t get it then I’m gonna go down to fast food again...” He added that, on occasion, he pawns some of his things to make ends meet.

The other two working class couples disagreed, with the men stating that the expenses were shared fairly evenly but the female partners saying that they paid the majority of the bills. Based upon these two men’s reported incomes, however, there is little way that their contributions could be equal. For example, both Sandra (21) and Shane (22) report that her two jobs, one as a full-time restaurant shift manager and one as at a fast food restaurant pay significantly more than his retail stocking position because he is only working part time. Still, Shane noted that they share the bills, bragging that he earned more per hour (\$9.50 to her \$7.50) than his partner and adding, “We just work to pay our bills.” Sandra, however, expressed quite a bit of frustration over Shane’s work ethic and their financial situation, saying,

He just doesn’t have a whole lot of money I mean I depending on whether I’m in school I work between 40 and 70 hours a week and I get paid reasonable wages at all of my jobs and ‘cause I’m probably gonna go work at American Eagle Outfitters [where Shane works] over Christmas and then I’ll be getting paid more than I do, but I mean he’s off and on and off and on with jobs. He’s never worked more than 25 hours a week in his life. I’m looking at him like, “You don’t know what my life is like so don’t you even tell me. Like when you work 40 hours a week I’ll talk to you. Try 70.”

Both admitted that, until Sandra encouraged Shane to get his current job, she had been supporting him entirely. While Sandra discussed this at length, however, Shane mentioned it in passing.

The women are also paying the majority of the household expenses in all four of the middle-class counter-conventional couples. Bree (25), an auditor and Taylor (25) a computer repairman have a joint account, but since she earns a greater share of the couple's household income (almost 60%), the majority of the bill money comes from her income. She explained, "I think we both have direct deposit into our individual accounts, and we just move a certain amount. I guess I put more in the joint account 'cause I earn more." Likewise, Mason (26), a construction worker said of his arrangement with Kirsten (24), a market research assistant,

We split utilities. Rent, she was already like, "Nah, whatever" [explaining that she did not expect him to pay rent when he moved in with her]. Like I kick in kind of a little extra over that, like I give her like 30 bucks here, 40 bucks there, whatever. Groceries we split pretty evenly, I think, but it's kind of, I don't know. It's just when I have pocket money, which I always do cause I work all the time, I always make sure that [I give her some], and I don't really keep track in my head. I guess I sort of do, but I don't know."

Although the female partners are the financial mainstays for all of the counter-conventional couples, the ways that working class or class straddling and middle class couples discuss their feelings about their financial arrangements are quite different.

Unconcerned Men, Dissatisfied Women

Of the working class counter-conventional couples and the one couple (25 and 26 year old Vanessa and Robert) in which the female partner had a bachelor's degree while her partner had less than a bachelor's level education, most of the men seemed unconcerned with their inability to contribute an equal share to the household. Most either minimized their lack of financial contributions or unabashedly explained their dependence. Perhaps as a result, their female partners were very dissatisfied with what they perceived as the men's unwillingness to pay an equal share of the bills. The one

exception was among couples who shared children. In these families, the male partners were working at least part time or attending school, so the women may have viewed their arrangements as temporary inequities that will result in a better financial situation for the entire family (Gager 1998; John et al. 1995).

For example, even though he was not working at the time of his interview, Adam (29) noted that he and Sheryl (29) managed to make ends meet because, “We both work and pay our bills accordingly.” Asked to reconcile this with the fact that he had not been working for several months, he replied, “Yeah, I’m not working anywhere right now . . . Occasionally I’ll work with my dad to make some extra money here and there. I mean I always put it to the fund.” Robert who helps his partner with online sales, was more straightforward about his economic dependency. Asked why he originally decided to live with Vanessa, he explained, “Because I wouldn’t have to pay anything. Not half the rent, not half the bills, nothing.” He seemed genuinely surprised that Vanessa had allowed him to live with her, rent free, for as long as she had (over two years), but made no attempts to change their situation.

In turn, the majority of the working class female partners were dissatisfied with providing the bulk of the finances. Adam’s partner, Sheryl, for example, mentioned that she was angry that Adam left his well-paying job, saying, “If he woulda stayed at the first job, it woulda been fine. I have a little anger towards that,” Vanessa, who has her bachelor’s degree while Robert does not, noted that she was frustrated with Robert’s inability to take care of his financial obligations. She explained,

...if you give him money to pay a bill he’d rather just buy--- he’s like a big kid. He’d buy a whole bunch of candy or whatever like that...he always bring home the beans. He’ll bring home the magic beans or whatever. You send him to get

the money for the cow and he'll come home with beans, 'cause he doesn't really do anything like handle the money or do the shopping list or pay his insurance, anything like that. When I met him he was like 4 months behind on paying his car insurance, it was like come on! He had a job and money. I mean he had money to pay it and everything but he wouldn't keep his money in a bank. He just kept his money rolled around in his pocket in a big money clip and he didn't understand the concepts of banks (laughs).

Although her own financial situation was not much better (Vanessa sold used textbooks online and supplemented her income by braiding hair), she and many of the working class counter-conventional women seemed genuinely surprised at their male partners' lack of financial participation.

Only the women in working class counter-conventional couples who had children together seemed satisfied with their arrangements, perhaps because these three men were all working at least part time and attending school, hoping to further their occupational goals. Maria and Bill, for example, had a plan in which Bill would attend school full time and work part time, then, once he graduated, Maria would return to college. Bill admitted that there are things he could do better, but said that Maria was fairly understanding about the situation, saying,

She'd like me to be able to get out of school a little quicker but I think she understands that a class is a class. She would like me to get a better paying job right now, which I actually had to look for one. It's just not real easy to get a--- I could take any job but if it only pays 7 bucks an hour I might as well hold out and get a job that is a basic career oriented job so if I could generate twice what I'm making right now, which that's not very much money, would be a good thing and that would probably ease a lot of the little bits of stress that we have here and there.

Maria noted that, although she looked forward to Bill finishing school, she felt that their arrangement was "pretty much equal" because Bill had helped her pay off some credit card bills early in their relationship and because the two shared childcare.

Uncomfortable Men, Patient Women

In contrast to the working and class-straddling couples, none of the middle class counter-conventional women are unhappy with their financial situations (because they are seen as “only fair”, temporary, or an improvement over past situations). However, most of their male partners are uncomfortable being dependent and expressed a desire to become equal contributors in the near future.

One of these couples views their arrangement as equitable. Taylor and Bree explained that, since she earned the majority of the income, she pays a proportionately higher fraction of the bills. Bree explained, “Well I just made more money in my job so the first year I think I paid all of the rent and he paid all of the utilities and then he got a couple of raises and we moved and we just tried to split it kind of in relation to our salaries.” Now that the two are engaged, they share a joint account. Bree added, “I don’t even track whose money is whose anymore.”

Two other couples view their arrangements as temporary- one until the male partner finishes school, and the other until the male partner sells a piece of real estate. The women did not comment on their financial arrangements, but the men did. Jeremy, a 29 year old student, noted, “I don’t like to live for free. I like to pay my own way. I’d like to be able to pay my own way but I can’t so I don’t like that [laughs].” Drew’s (35) comments about paying for the “traditional” expense of evenings out shows his reluctance to have Tara (28) pay most of the bills. He said, “I give money where I need to and then she doesn’t really have to give me money, but I assume she might if I keep having this house [on the market]...Of course me being the guy, I always pay for dates and gas and stuff...”

Only Kirsten and Mason are unsure if their financial situation will ever change. Still, Kirsten is satisfied that Mason contributes money to the household when he can, because she notes that it is better than before Mason moved in. She said,

I used to make him dinner almost all the time when we were dating and then whenever he moved in it got a lot easier as far as like I have more groceries in my house. Before it was like he was eating all of MY food but it's actually easier now, and since we stay in more we're not spending as much money.

Still, having no end in sight to their financial arrangement seems to be destabilizing to their relationship. Mason mentioned several times how tumultuous their union was, but added that he felt obligated to stay because Kirsten was supporting him. He said, "It's a little weird because I feel slightly kept and like there's an obligation to be more than civil..." For the working, middle, and straddling classes, feelings about financial arrangements, then, appear to be guided by a sense of fairness (both in terms of proportionate shares of finances and in terms of other desired qualities, such as shared childcare), a view of the arrangement as temporary or permanent, and by overall relationship quality.

The female partners in all of these counter-conventional couples are the primary financial supports for their households. The working class and class straddling women are dissatisfied with their arrangements, perhaps because their male partners downplay the situations. Middle class men, however, are uncomfortable being supported and explain their situations as temporary, which may be why their female partners are all satisfied with the way in which their households currently share financial obligations. If the female partners are providing a larger proportion of the income, do they also get greater power over the household finances?

Financial Control

Two systems of financial control predominate among the 11 counter-conventional couples. Some couples maintain autonomous control over their individual financial contributions or discuss purchases jointly. For other couples, however, the female partner has the greatest amount of control over the couple's income. This latter system is much more common among the working and straddling classes. Still, despite the fact that the women are able to limit their partners' spending money and determine their household budgets, the men are often contributing very little to the common pool. Therefore, in some cases, the women are actually providing allowances to their partners from their own earnings.

Female Control

Among working class and class straddling counter-conventional couples, the female partner is the person most likely to assume greater control over the household coffers when control is not shared equally. The women's higher (or sole earnings) and feelings that they are more financially responsible than their male partners lead them to take control of all of the household income, then dole out spending money to the men. This arrangement was not seen among the middle class counter-conventional couples.

Twenty-eight year old Marta, for example, explained, "He gives me his check and I give him an allowance." Vanessa's higher education and greater knowledge of financial matters may give her greater power to dole out her and Robert's household income. She said of their situation,

...sometimes Robert isn't always there all the time, like he doesn't do good with responsibilities or anything like that. Like I say, the bills are in his name, but they might as well just be in my name because he gives me his check when he's

done with work, I cash it and I pay the bills and I give him an allowance 'cause he doesn't like to manage money, or if I give him money he'll bring home like a television or something. He won't pay any bills or anything and look at me all crazy like, "Bills? What are bills?" He's not really responsible and that's sort of weird 'cause I never--- I guess going back to the question about how I imagined my life when I was a kid, I never in all my life thought that I would be the one that would be responsible for things like that, but I am so, go figure.

Still, because these working class counter-conventional men are frequently unemployed or employed only part time in low wage jobs, these women have control over very little actual income. Marta's partner, Harry, for example, occasionally worked at fast food restaurants, but was not working at the time of his interview. The "allowance" that Marta gives Harry, then, comes from her own earnings. Robert helps Vanessa with her business, so the only checks he gives to Vanessa come from her to begin with. This experience is quite different than that of the conventional men who have greater financial power to either curb their partners' spending or spend more discretionary income themselves.

In one of the four middle class couples, the female partner relayed an experience of having more control over finances, but her display of control was that she had greater power over a major purchase decision, not that she took over all of the household income. Tara, a computer programmer mentioned that she recently won an argument with Drew, who is in internet securities, over building a deck. Still, Tara's sole ownership of the couple's home rather than her gender may have led to her greater decision-making power. It is unclear what would have happened if both partners had owned the home.

Each Controls His/Her Own Income

Among some working class and most of the middle class counter-conventional couples, the most common situation was for each partner to control his or her own income, or to discuss and mutually decide upon joint purchases. Terrell (a 23 year old

dock worker), for example, explained that neither he nor Aliyah (a 20 year old administrative assistant) could stop one another from making what they considered major purchases. When asked if she could influence his purchasing decisions, he providing an example, saying,

No[t] if I really wanted it. Like she said when the *Madden 2005* [video game] came out and I wanted it, “You ain’t getting it” and I’m like, “OK, OK, all right.” The day it came out, I had it so, you know. If it’s something she really want[s] she’ll go get [it] or I’ll go get it, [if it’s] something I really, really want.

Three of the middle class couples also noted that neither partner has greater financial control. Both Bree and Taylor, for example, noted that they would discuss major purchases with one another, but that neither partner could “veto” the other’s purchases. Bree, for example, was asked what would happen if she wanted to make a major purchase that Taylor did not agree with. She said,

He’d make me think about it more I guess but I don’t know. We both try to keep our spending pretty reasonable so we haven’t really had that issue too much. He did that once. He bought an \$80 pair of flip flops and I gave him crap for it. But we haven’t really had any big financial discussions or anything and even with the house we kind of just both agreed on it.

Taylor, when asked if either partner has more financial control, added, “No. I mean we have a couple of joint accounts and we have a couple of personal accounts and we talk about most of the major decisions.” While each partner has some influence on the other’s purchases, ultimately, the decision is up to each individual.

Many of these couples maintain autonomous control over each partner’s income. However, a few couples (particularly among working and class straddling couples) have given the female partners greater control over the household coffers. Because the men are often contributing very little (or nothing) to the common pool, the income these women

control is often just their own. If the female partners have greater earnings and financial control, are these couples truly counter-conventional? That is, do their male partners do more domestic labor to “make up for” the women’s higher earnings?

Feelings about Housework Arrangements

The household divisions of labor among the counter-conventional couples differ by social class. The middle class couples nearly all have traditional divisions of labor in which the female partner does the majority of the indoor chores and the male partner does most of the outdoor chores. Since these couples are all homeowners with a significant amount of outdoor tasks that need completed, they feel that their divisions are equitable. In contrast, half of the working class and the one class straddling couple have divisions of labor in which the female partner does the bulk of the housework. The women in these arrangements are very dissatisfied with doing so; their male partners are more matter-of-fact and provide a variety of reasons for performing a lesser share of the work. Among the other three working class couples, the male partners are either not employed or are working part time. As a result, they do the majority of the household chores, counter to Brines’ (1994) findings. Still, their female partners do not view household labor as equivalent to paid work and hope the men become employed or secure better employment in the near future.

Traditional Divisions

The four counter-conventional middle class couples all have divisions of household labor that disproportionately disadvantage the female partners. Three of the couples have traditional divisions of labor in which the male partner does the majority of the “outdoor” chores and the female partner does the majority of the “indoor” chores.

Because these couples are all homeowners, the number of “outdoor” chores is significant enough for each partner to feel that their arrangements are fair. The final middle class couple claims to share housework equally, but their description of tasks make it appear that the female partner is carrying the bulk of the load.

Taylor, for example, explained,

...we have a house now. She probably does more of the laundry and the dishes and the cooking, that sort of thing. I probably get stuck with a lot more of the house type stuff, like painting walls, garage door opener, shelves, that sort of thing, and we bought a foreclosure so it needed a lot of work the first 2 or 3 months. I put in quite a few hours as far as fixing in general but when something needs to be done, all she has to do is tell me and I'll just do it.

His partner, Bree, concurred. When asked about their division of labor, she noted, “It’s kind of changed now since we just got a house, so he does all the outdoor chores and fixing stuff, and it’s hard to say but the day to day cleaning, I would say I do probably 90%.”

These female, middle class partners are doing more of the onerous, routine, day-to-day labor; however, most are very satisfied with their arrangements. This may be because, in contrast to most of the conventional working class couples who claim to have traditional “indoor/outdoor” arrangements, all three of these couples are homeowners, leading to a significant amount more “outdoor” work than accompanies apartment living. Tara explained that, because she owned her home before Drew moved in, she was satisfied with his contributions.

I’m used to doing things by myself, so I didn’t really necessarily think he would do certain tasks other than some yard work or whatever. And he’s pretty good about mowing the lawn or trimming the bushes so I mean, it’s just whatever needs done, whoever is kind of more capable of doing it does it. Or sometimes we trade off, like we could both mow the lawn even

though it takes me like twice as long. I'll do it some weeks and he'll do it other weeks.

Tara noted that Drew normally did the outdoor work, but, like the other three women in her situation, was happy because occasionally each partner “helped out” in the other’s realm. Only Taylor noted that Bree was sometimes unhappy with his lack of “indoor” contributions. He said,

She’s pretty understanding on most parts. If the house isn’t cleaned up or she gets stressed out sometimes when there’s a lot of cleaning to do and we have company coming over in 2 hours and that sort of thing, I’m oblivious because I’m sitting on the computer over in a corner somewhere. She might get upset at that point, and she’ll let me know. Then I get off the computer and I start cleaning.

Bree did not reveal that she was dissatisfied with their division, and instead noted that she had always expected to do the majority of the housework. She explained, “I guess I just always realized that his threshold for dirt was a lot higher than mine was. I get frustrated with dirt a lot faster. I just figured I’d do most of the cleaning and that’s kind of the way it goes unless I pointedly ask him to do something. Then he does.”

The final middle-class counter-conventional couple each claimed that the housework was shared equally. However, their elaboration upon the actual tasks that they do portrayed the female partner as doing more of the chores. Mason felt that his contribution was fairly equal because he did more of the dishes than Kirsten did, but explained that, “If it weren’t for dishes, it’d be 90-10 her.” Kirsten said that the division was fairly even because her partner occasionally cleaned. She rationalized,

Well that can’t be fair like 50-50, but I do a good amount of cleaning. But, I can’t say he doesn’t clean because he’s cleaned the bathroom a couple of times when I haven’t. He’s cleaned up the upstairs, so it’s about a fair share sometimes. It just depends. He might do more some times than I do.

Even though their actual division does not appear to be as equal as they put in words, both Mason and Kirsten, like the other middle class counter-conventional couples, are generally satisfied with their household division of labor.

Working Class Women's Dissatisfaction

In contrast to the middle class, many of the working class and the class straddling counter-conventional women voiced their discontent over the way in which their chores were divided. In the class straddling and two working-class couples, the female partners were doing the majority of the household chores. In another couple the female partner claimed to do most of the housework but her partner felt that the division was equal; an examination of the chores each listed doing revealed that the female partner consistently does more time-consuming and routine chores. All of these women felt that the division was unfair. Their male partners provided a litany of excuses about why they were not doing more around the house, particularly noting that the women should have expected the unequal division. Their ideas about housework as “women’s work” seem to shape what they view as “fair” (John, Shelton, and Luschen 1995).

Sandra, for example, said that if she asked Shane to do any housework that “He’d bitch and moan and complain...I’m like, ‘you’re a lazy bastard!’” Patty and Vanessa expressed their frustrations but had all but given up at establishing an equal household division of labor. Patty, a barista, noted that because Josh’s apartment was clean before the two lived together, she expected that he would help keep things clean once the two moved in with one another. However, that was not the case. She explained,

I’m a really clean person too, so I expected, “Great! We both like to clean. That will be great! We can both clean things. It will be wonderful. It’ll be like everything really nice. It will be awesome to live with someone else that’s just

like me that likes to clean.” Not the case. We move in together and he’s a total pig about everything. It’s not even so much a pig, he doesn’t make messes, but if a mess gets made he’s not even going to offer to help clean it or anything, and if he does it’s, I’ll ask, “Can you put the dishes away?” and he’ll put like 3 away and then he’s like, “Tada! Didn’t you see I put the dishes away?” I’m like, [sarcastically] “I wash the dishes everyday. Like, thanks.”

Patty noted that she was very frustrated because, “...for some reason I am the nominated cleaner and the cooker because I’m the girl, which bothers me.” but had stopped trying to get Josh, a library clerk, to do more around the house. Likewise, Vanessa, who had a BA while Robert did not, noted that she had given up. When asked about their division of labor, she said,

He doesn’t do any labor and I do it all (laughs). I mean he doesn’t wash dishes or if he washes, I have found that just asking him to wash dishes or doing any type of housework is like pulling teeth. He doesn’t like to do that, so I mean, now the division of labor is I clean, sometimes he’ll clean if he sees that I’m just really mad or frustrated at him, but I basically do all of it to avoid arguments now.

The four working and class straddling counter-conventional men whose partners were doing the majority of the housework provided a variety of reasons why they were not doing more housework. Most commonly, they explained that the women should have expected the current division or bragged about those chores they do complete. Robert’s comments brought these two themes together. He explained that part of the reason he initially moved in with Vanessa is because, “She would rub my back. She would have dinner ready. She would have the house clean. I wouldn’t have to do anything. I wouldn’t have to lift a finger” He explained that the system was similar to when he was a child and noted that he is happy with the chores he does do, saying,

And when I was younger, my mom would just do all the dishes and clean everything. So I’ve never really had to clean. I’ve never had to do all that stuff.

So it's hard for me now. Every little bit I do I feels like it's a lot. I say-“Well I did the dishes! I took out the trash!”

Josh matter-of-factly noted, “She probably does a little bit more work around the house than I do”, but added, “Mainly she does more dishes than I do. But she knew I hated doing dishes going into this whole thing (laughs).” Shane explained that, as the smoker in the household, he made sure that he cleaned the smoke film off of the television and computer screen. He did not seem to realize, however, that this was just cleaning up after himself rather than cleaning the joint aspects of the household. Although this is a small number of men, their responses provide some hints about what may be occurring for some cohabiting couples. The majority of these couples are quite young and in their first co-residential unions. The men seem to feel that explaining what chores they will or will not do at the outset of the union constitutes “fair”. In addition, Robert's quote demonstrates that, in some cases, the women may be contributing to this inequity. Because she did the majority of the housework at the onset of their union, Robert felt that Vanessa was setting a precedent for the rest of their relationship. Once she began requesting a more equitable arrangement, everything that he did felt excessive to him.

Working Class Men doing Most of the Housework

One pattern that did not appear among the middle-class or class straddling counter-conventional couples but that was evident among the working class counter-conventional cohabitators was that, in three instances, the working class men were doing the bulk of the household chores. Only Adam was unhappy with his arrangement, but Terrell's satisfaction may have hinged on the fact that he saw the situation as temporary. Their female partners were very matter-of-fact about the arrangement, but still hoped that

the men would become gainfully employed in the future as they did not view the men's greater shares of household labor as a substitute for earning an equal share of the household income. Two of these three men were unemployed, and one was working part time.

Harry, for example, noted that he was definitely the cleaner of the two adults in he and Marta's household. He said, "I've always been clean 'cause like I said, I was a military brat. I know how to fold underwear into a square this small. I've always been [clean]. I'm sure somewhere [during her interview] Marta's called me a neat freak." Terrell explained that his partner asked him to take on a greater share of the labor while she finished school, noting that he thought the division was temporary. He said, "Probably [our current division] is gonna stay that way...at least until she graduates from school, 'cause she taking the last 3 quarters. I've had to pick up the pace because she's been taking 22 credit hours, so I really carry the load of the house." It is unclear what will happen once Aliyah finishes school.

Like the counter-conventional men whose partners do the majority of the housework, these men's partners were very matter-of fact about the men doing the majority of the chores. Marta, for example, when asked about their division of labor simply said, "I cook, because I can and he can't. And he does all the housework." Still, the women all noted that they would prefer for the men to become gainfully employed or procure better jobs in the near future. Structural factors and individual difficulties (unemployment / underemployment) rather than a desire to upend gendered norms or balance relative household contributions (since their partners were generally earning the bulk of the household income) seem to have led to these working class counter-

conventional men doing more of the household labor. Perhaps because all were working full time or full time students, none of the middle class counter-conventional men decided to shoulder the bulk of the responsibility at home.

Although a few unemployed or part-time working male, working class partners are doing more of the housework, most of the working and class straddling women are doing the bulk of the household labor as well as paying the majority of the bills. Most of the working and class straddling women are very dissatisfied with their situations. In contrast, the middle class couples have more traditional divisions of labor in which the male partner does the “outdoor” chores and the female partner does the “indoor” domestic work. Because these couples are homeowners who have a significant amount of “outdoor” chores, they consider their divisions equitable.

Work Orientation

The work orientations of the counter-conventional couples vary widely, but two patterns predominate. Among the working class couples, most individuals do not have clear ideas about what employment opportunities they wish to pursue. Although most of the working class women are somewhat more goal-driven than their male partners, most are unclear about how they intend to reach their somewhat muddled goals. Since cohabitators often have poor employment histories, these hazy occupational goals are not unexpected (e.g., Sassler and McNally 2003). For the middle class couples, variation in work orientation is the norm. This may be because some view themselves as in the midst of career transitions or had difficulty finding work in their fields following their college graduations.

Uncertainty in Work Orientation

Among the counter-conventional couples, the majority of the working class men were unclear about their work orientations. Shane, for example, worked as a pizza delivery man, and, upon his female partner's request, picked up a second job as a stock boy. He possibly wanted to get his GED, but is not sure how to go about doing so. When asked what he viewed himself doing in the future, he matter-of-factly said, "Couldn't really tell you.", but went on to elaborate that his dream job was, "Prob[ab]ly like, maybe video game director, producer, something like that.... but I just don't know how I'd go about doing that for a career." Similarly, Josh, a part time library clerk was asked about his future plans for work. He explained,

I see myself doing probably a job similar to what I'm doing now. Not necessarily at a library, but at a desk and a computer, like data entry, that sorta thing. That's what I see myself doing. I'd like to go into a science of some sort. I don't know what exactly though. That's what I'd like to do though, but I don't think that'll happen just because I don't feel I'm motivated enough.

Even Bill, a lab assistant and most focused career-wise of these working class men, has a work orientation that does not appear to match his educational goals. Bill returned to college following a long string of jobs, including military member, security guard, postal employee, free lance web designer, photographer, and fish tank cleaner and appears poised to achieve a bachelor's degree in marketing and digital communications,. When asked what he planned to do once he graduated, he noted, "...probably dealing with if I can get into the PR community, preferably crisis management or something dealing with the entertainment industry", adding that his long term goal is "to get into politics".

Some of these men's female partners have somewhat clearer plans, but they still lack much of the knowledge of how to execute their goals. For example, Aliyah, a working

class mother, hopes to eventually do pharmaceutical sales because she will be able to work autonomously part of the time and wear a professional wardrobe; she also hopes to open her own graphic design business or publish a book of poetry, but the ways in which these paths fit together is unclear. Likewise, Sheryl (29) is working toward an associate's degree in hotel/tourism management. When asked about her future goals, she explained, "Well I'm going right now, just for my associates, which hopefully I'll have. I have three more quarters after this if I can fit it all in, but I wanted to talk to my advisor about getting some more schooling. Maybe going for business. I'm really not sure." She added

...my goal right now in the long run, I'd like to open up a Bed and Breakfast Resort, and also thinking about, my instructor was talking about people she knows that are the concierge of hotels, and it really sounds like something I'd like to do. Make good money, 'cause I gotta have both. I couldn't make tons of money and hate it. I can't do that.

Vanessa has a bachelor's degree while her partner, Robert attended some college. She was not working in the field she received her bachelor's degree in (criminology), but sold used textbooks online and braided hair instead. She explained that she may want to become a nurse, but when asked about her future plans for work, she explained, "I mean I'll say that really I haven't thought that much ahead. I'm sort of, I don't know. That's probably a bad thing." Many of these working class and the class straddling counter-conventional couples may have unclear work orientations because they are quite young. Those who are older have begun or are returning to community college as non-traditional students, making their paths more challenging as those who delay entry into college are less likely to complete their degrees (Calcagno, Crosta, Bailey and Jenkins 2007; Choy 2002). Trying to support their families, work, and attend school at the same time may be what leads to some of their initial confusion as they seek career paths that they enjoy but

which will also integrate smoothly into the lives they have built for themselves and their children.

In contrast, the work orientations of the middle class counter-conventional couples are much more varied. Like their working class counterparts, one of the four middle class men and two of the four middle class women have unclear work orientations. Mason and Kirsten are one couple who both are uncertain about their future careers. Mason has a bachelor's degree in business, but has been working for the past several years as a bartender and construction worker. When asked what he planned to do in the future, he replied,

God, I don't know but not this. I'll be honest. Physically I can do this maybe this kind of pace, this 60 hours a week, maybe like 10 years and then I'm gonna be a decrepit old man and I don't want that... If I knew what I wanted to do I'd like to think I'd be doing it, or at least be working towards it.

Mason's partner, Kirsten, explained that she does not enjoy her job as a market research assistant, but, like Mason, has no idea what she wanted to do in the future. When asked about her future career plans, her reply was nearly identical to Mason's. She said, "Honestly I don't know. If I knew, I'd probably be doing it."

Middle Class Steady, but No Desire to Advance

Other middle class counter-conventional couples have solid occupations, but, unlike most of the conventional men, they have no desire to advance within their jobs. Tara and Drew typify this situation. Drew has worked in internet securities for six years, but would prefer to switch careers to that of his major, advertising, saying, "I'm not really a computer person, so I'd like to do something more." He elaborated, "I could be one of those guys on a team that comes up with slogans or promos or do whatever... Even music

or movies or comedic stuff; I like writing comedy stuff.” Still, he has made no attempt to pursue a career that he sees as more favorable in the past six years. His partner, Tara, was made a computer programmer after beginning a job with a major corporation as a temporary administrative assistant. She enjoys the financial remunerations of her job, but has no desire to advance. When asked about her future occupation, she said,

I don’t know. I was just talking with my mentor about this. I don’t know. I think something definitely operational-related. I don’t see myself being some big supervisor person or somebody in a leadership role who’s deciding what direction the company’s gonna take in the future. I don’t see myself that way. Don’t know if I wanna do something with management at all. I have no experience managing people and I’m very--- I think it’s the middle child thing. I don’t like to make waves. So it’s very hard for me to tell somebody when they’re doing something wrong or stand up for myself, so I don’t know. If for some reason we hit the lottery or we’re rich, I would probably do something with animals, I just don’t know what.

Middle Class Advancement

Still one other middle class counter-conventional couple has a work orientation that is similar to those of their conventional counterparts. Jeremy used to be an accountant but is currently living off of his savings and works a part time sports magazine stringer job while he pursues a second career in sports journalism. He currently earns less than \$2,500 per year. However, he has a clear plan for moving up in his occupation and believes that, because of the nature of his job, his partner will have to move with him for his career. His partner, Caryn (24), seems to agree that Jeremy’s planned career is most central for the couple. She just finished her master’s degree in school counseling, but when asked how her career fit in with the fact that her partner would need to move for his job, she replied,

Well with the school counseling jobs, they are one year contracts and so it would work out actually perfectly if I got a job for the fall and it would go until June, but the only thing is you have to be licensed in every state that you're gonna be a counselor in. So I told him that I'd like to pick a couple states that we're gonna look at, so I can try to get licensed this year for next year. 'Cause he wants to live around DC area, so. Maryland, Virginia, you know.

The more varied work orientations of the middle class may result from the fact that, for some, their situations appear to be temporary. Jeremy and Caryn, for example, are currently counter-conventional because she supports the two of them, but they will likely become more conventional once he finishes school. In addition, even Mason, who is unclear about his future profession, mentioned that his top priority was figuring out exactly what he should do for a career. If he is able to do so and gain the motivation necessary to pursue another field, he has the educational credentials necessary to do so.

Among the working class counter-conventional couples, few individuals have the desire or knowledge of how to advance within their professions. This is particularly true of the male partners within these couples. The work orientations of the middle class couples are much more varied, due in part to the fact that some are working steadily in fields that they do not plan to advance in or have returned to school for a second degree. Although their work orientations are varied, the middle class counter-conventional couples and their working and class straddling counterparts are all currently supported by the female partners. Despite their nonconventional arrangements, a number of these couples have experienced changes in their domestic and financial obligations over time, and expect to become more conventional in the future just as many of the other groups have.

The Process of Change among Counter-Conventional Couples

Many of these couples detailed the ways in which their divisions of labor have evolved over time. Primarily these changes were due to the male partner's work/school or the female partner's insistence on greater equality. Although in some cases these couples have experienced changes that would make their relationships somewhat more equitable, in most cases their relationships became less conventional. In the future, however, the majority of these couples plan on their unions becoming much more conventional than they currently are. While the middle class couples often have clear plans and timelines for these changes, the working and class straddling couples hope things will change in the future, but these changes seem unlikely.

Like the conventional and contesting couples, work and school were major sources of changes in couples' divisions of labor. For the counter-conventional couples, it was generally the male partners' bouts of unemployment or returning to college that changed the ways in which these couples divide the economic and domestic responsibilities. Some contesting women (particularly those in the middle class) were able to make their divisions of labor more equal through insisting that their partners contribute more to the household. Here, four counter-conventional women have insisted that their partners contribute more to the household coffers and/or do a more equal share of the housework, but only half of these women are satisfied with the resulting (and still unequal) divisions of labor.

Changes due to Employment/School

Five couples (two middle class and three working class) experienced changes in their divisions of labor as a result of the man's unemployment or reduced employment

and/or his entering school. Other men have always worked, but have been chronically underemployed throughout the duration of their relationships.

At the time these couples moved in together, all of the men were employed. In fact, two of the working class men were even viewed as the couples' primary providers. Bill, for example, explained that when Maria moved across the country to live with him that, "When she moved here she was in debt heavy so I paid off all her debt, credit card bills. I paid that. I paid off all her stuff and so since she was debt free she could start building her credit and then we got her a new car and everything was going ok..." Sheryl and Adam met at a 12-Step meeting. She was living in a halfway house, so he worked and saved up money to pay the deposit and first month's rent so that she would have some place to live. Since then, however, both of these men have returned to school full time; Bill works part time and Adam intermittently, alternating semesters of work with semesters of attending school. For now, Maria and Sheryl are the primary providers for their families. Adam and Bill have taken on greater shares of housework than they did previously, though no mention was made of doing so to "make up for" their lack of income. Instead, both associated their cleanliness with spending time in the military or as a military brat, thereby "masculinizing" the chores they do (Coltrane 1996).

Other men have been underemployed from the beginning of their relationships. Taylor, a middle class computer repairman waited to move in with Bree until he got his first job. He explained, "I wasn't able to support myself and I didn't want to be mooching off of her. [Our relationship] had been progressing so I waited until I got a job in order for it to go anywhere else." Still, Taylor noted that when he moved in, he was unable to afford to pay half of the bills, something that he noted Bree was very understanding of.

Still, when he subsequently spent six months unemployed, Taylor noted that he tested Bree's patience. He said, "Between Company X and working for Company Y, I didn't have a job for I think 6 months or so and as we moved into the new apartment she kind of gave me an ultimatum." Rather than a single bout of unemployment, Harry (who works primarily in the fast food industry) and Mason (a construction worker) have gone without paid work multiple times since moving in with their partners. Mason, who has a bachelor's degree in business, has worked a variety of jobs in his past including bar manager, grants administrator, and mortgage sales. However, he was working construction when he and Kirsten moved in together. Since then, he has experienced numerous bouts of unemployment due to the nature of his job. During those times, Kirsten pays even more of the household expenses. She explained, "...[Mason] sometimes has bouts where he doesn't have work and that is really tough on both of us, so usually it's my expense if we go out or I buy groceries when he's not working..." Jeff and Taylor did more work around the house while unemployed. Taylor, for example, explained, "...when I was unemployed I would try and do a lot of the chores because I was really really bored and I needed something to do, so I would do a lot of the chores when I was unemployed..." Neither Mason nor Kristen mentioned if they changed the way in which they did chores when he was unemployed. None of the men who have had employment difficulties nor their partners mentioned that taking on a greater share of the household labor was an acceptable substitute for paid labor.

Changes due to Female Insistence

Similar to Bree's ultimatum that Taylor get a job following his six months of unemployment, three other couples (two working class and one class straddling)

experienced changes in their household divisions of labor due to the female partner's insistence on change. In most cases, however, the changes that the men made were very small. The women's dissatisfaction and the men's confusion over being asked to "change the domestic and financial rules" after living together for a while seem to lead to a great deal of instability within these unions.

Vanessa, for example, originally did not charge Robert any rent when he moved in and required no housework of him. Since then, however, he has begun working for her selling used textbooks online and occasionally contributes to the household chores, though his contributions are minimal. Similarly, Patty got Josh to contribute a bit more to the household finances than he had previously, but their division still disproportionately disadvantaged her. Asked about the changes that have taken place during their relationship, she said, "I feel like I've gotten a lot more aggressive with him." When asked to elaborate, she sighed and explained,

Just like with bills and things. He's so lacking in taking responsibility for his part that I at first had tons of money and I was working two jobs, busting my butt 50 hours a week, never saw him, but had money for everything. He's so used to having it, his parents paid for everything up until he moved in with me 'cause all of his college fund money was gone then, so I'm the person that got stuck with picking up the slack where he never had responsibility. And that was really hard because at first I would just let him trample all over me like, "OK, whatever. I'll pay for this but you owe me" or "You'll get me back later." And the more I let that go on, the more it's like he knows that I am crippled by this and I just let it happen so he takes advantage of it and I recently have had to get really aggressive with him to the point where it's a lot of tension between us, and I know he thinks I'm being a total bitch, but I really think that he's being really irresponsible for his age especially. It's hard to see that I'm 18 and I'm more responsible at 18 than he is at 22. I feel bad because I have to act like his mom and be like, "I need this. I need you to help me." I feel like babysitting more than dating half the time and that's changed a lot. I used to think that he was so together and one of those people that was just able to take care of themselves, and when he was living with his other roommates I guess those things I didn't really know or I knew but I didn't think about it because it wasn't

me. I wasn't the one living with him and so that's changed a lot. I think we struggle a lot because of that and it's hard to say anything to him without him getting offended about it and I feel like he's always taking the "Oh poor me" you know? I just get irritated and it causes a lot of stress because of that and that's changed a lot 'cause I know when I first met him he was just real easy going and everything was just, "Oh, whatever, whatever" and now he feels uptight around me 'cause I've had to just be a real bitch and just be like, "I need help!" and be aggressive about it, and he's not used to seeing me like that. I'm usually just passive and whatever happens, happens and just no big deal. It was just to the point where I was being trampled.

The frustration these women feel comes, in part, from the fact that when they have tried to change their divisions of labor, they were met with little cooperation from their male partners. The women are left wondering why their partners never seemed to "grow up" and take financial and domestic responsibility, but the men are left wondering why their partners suddenly decided to change the rules of their relationships after living together for a while. Not surprisingly, these relationships seem quite unstable. Only Aliyah has been able to get Terrell to take on a greater share of the chores. Since she is taking an overload of classes and working part time, she asked him to do the majority of the housework. Although he began their union by leaving all of the chores to Aliyah, Terrell now does the lion's share of the chores. He views the situation as temporary, however. Terrell and Aliyah's story illustrates that, although female cohabiting partners may desire more equal unions, ultimately, the men have to cooperate in order to affect any real change.

Unlike their conventional, contesting, and equalitarian counterparts, most of the counter-conventional couples (particularly the working and class straddling couples) are not planning on permanent futures with their current partners. Most of those who are planning on marrying in the future anticipate that their divisions of labor will change

before tying the knot. As a result, most have not yet contemplated changes that will occur after marrying; instead, they discussed changes that they would like to see happen in their financial or housework divisions in order to remain in their current relationships or begin thinking about future union transitions.

Sandra, for example, explained that she would want Shane to get a better job in order to consider marriage. She said,

...in order for me to get married to him he'd have to settle down and get a good job and stick to it for a while. I mean that's one of my requirements. I'm not gonna be supporting you for the rest of my life, 'cause I've been supporting him 'cause he just started at American Eagle Outfitters like a month ago.

Marta's comments echoed Sandra's. When asked what would need to happen before she and Harry's planned nuptials took place, she explained, "Harry getting a good job (laughs)." She added, "...he needs to have a job in the next two weeks!" When asked what would happen if he did not get a job, she replied, "If he doesn't, he is going to do something. He is going to sell every one of his movies, because he's got a mini-*Blockbuster* going on. And he will sell stuff for me to be able to make the house work. We need power, we need electricity. I need internet for school." While two couples did not anticipate any changes occurring in their relationships in the future, most planned on their relationships becoming more conventional than they currently are over time.

Becoming More Conventional than they Currently Are

Three middle class and four working class couples, and an additional two working class women, all plan on becoming more conventional in the future with the male partner eventually assuming the provider role or at least becoming a more equal contributor. The clearer paths the middle class have toward changing their divisions of labor may result

from the fact that, for some, their situations appear to be temporary. The pathways toward these changes are more readily apparent for the middle class couples.

Caryn and Jeremy, for example, will likely become more conventional once he finishes school. Jeremy explained that sports journalists often have to move to wherever a job is available. Both noted that Caryn is planning on becoming his “trailing spouse” Jeremy explained,

See we talk about this a lot, Caryn and I, because this is a problem, especially with journalism because it's such a small field, and I'm not gonna get a journalism job in Columbus. It's just not gonna happen. There's *The Dispatch* and that's it and they won't hire me, so basically I have to cast a real wide net and then hopefully I'd land something. A lot of it's gonna depend on how easy it is for her to get her license and be a counselor in whatever states I apply to get a job at basically and then it's gonna be just a lot of us talking about “Where can we afford to live? What's gonna be easiest on us?” that kind of stuff.

Caryn mentioned something similar during her interview, explaining that she was planning her career around wherever Jeremy moves. Similarly, Drew plans to pay an equal share of the finances once he sells his house. He already pays for most of his and Tara's extras because “he's the man”. Tara explained that their relationship would likely get even more conventional once they have children because she would like to be the stay at home parent. When asked how she planned to balance work and family, she noted,

I don't know, it's tough, I actually make more than he does. So I'm kinda the breadwinner so it's—I would like to stay at home and I know that's traditionally. I mean, there are stay at home dads, but traditionally it seems like the women are the ones that stayed home. And I would like to do that, but we need to be at a point where we could make that work financially. So ideally, yeah, I would stay at home.

The middle class women's greater satisfaction with their current counter-conventional arrangements may stem from the fact that a more conventional arrangement that they find more suitable to their personal desires is within their sights.

In contrast, those working class couples and individuals who hope to become more conventional in the future often have less clear ideas about how those goals might be achieved. This is because many of the working class men have unstable work histories or unclear occupational paths. More solid career paths are necessary to achieve the kind of financial stability the men need in order to become the primary providers for their families. For example, Adam and Sheryl both look forward to him providing for the family again in the future once he finishes college, but he anticipates that his engineering degree will take him a minimum of seven years to complete since he often alternates between quarters of attending school and quarters of working. Sheryl will likely be the financial mainstay for their family for several more years. Aliyah noted that Terrell has been working more steadily recently, but that only having one car made things difficult for them, saying “He is working, finally got a permanent job and it’s only for I think 26 hours a week and he’s been trying to find another job but with our car situation it’s hard.” She added, “He’s been at this job for almost 2 months now. It’s helping, but 40 hours would do a lot better.” Terrell also hopes to become the primary provider. He explained that he paid all of the bills when he and Aliyah first moved in together, which was in line with his personal beliefs about gender, but after moving to a more expensive complex, she had to begin paying more of the bills. When asked why, he explained,

Cause I be the man! This moving together, you know, you gotta be macho. The man gotta be manly, got to be macho. I always say I’m the king of the house, I’m the man of the house so I was acting like the man of the house. When she get her little checks I’d say, “Go on and do what you wanna do with your check. You wanna go shopping and get your hair and nails done? Go on and do it.” But then after we moved to [the more expensive apartment complex] it’s a different story now. [I say to her], “You better get that check. You better go pay one of them credit card bills.”

He explained that he hopes to return to being the “king of the house” in the future. Aliyah also wanted him to take on this role and for her to find a family-friendly job so that she can be home with their young daughter more often. However, since Terrell has been continually postponing completing a three week real estate course and also hoped to pursue a dream of being a professional bowler, it is unclear when he will finally do so. Even if Terrell completes his real estate course, it is doubtful that he will devote much time to the pursuit due to what he said about his desired occupational goal. When asked about his “dream job”, Terrell said,

My dream job? To do nothing is my dream job. I mean that’s why I feel like my heart is really saying go to real estate or realtor ‘cause I feel you do 10 years of hard work and in 10 years you should accumulate enough money where you could start your own business or you could do your own thing, just work for yourself or just work where you want to work ... I’d say I work 10, 15 years doing realtor I should build up enough money where I could just do nothing.

Two other working class women may also learn that their partners’ work ethics and occupational experiences make a more equal or a conventional division of labor unlikely unless the men make some major changes. Neither Josh nor Shane anticipates making any changes to their relationships in the future in terms of the way they divide their household and paid work. Their partners, Patty and Sandra, however, are trying to encourage the men to at least contribute a more equal share. Patty, for example, explained how she had been strongly encouraging Josh to get a full time job for the last several months since he’s been going to community college on an extremely part time basis for the past three years, saying, “Right now his parents think he’s trying to get a job. They for some reason are totally clouded by the smoke or something and don’t realize that he’s obviously not trying or he would have gotten a job by now. We live in a very big city

with a lot of places.” Similarly, Sandra has been attempting to get Shane to get his General Equivalency Diploma, but noted that he did not want to take the test because it was eight hours long, saying,

It’s frustrating. It gets really--- he’s very unmotivated and I try so hard, like I got the application, found out about it, filled it out, found a notary, I got him to go with me to the notary, that was hard. He’s frustrating sometimes but I mailed it in, his mom paid for it, and then I’m like, “OK, all you’ve got to do is call and schedule it!” He’s like, “I don’t know if I want to take this eight hour test.”

Unless the men want to make changes, it is unlikely that these couples’ counter-conventional divisions of labor will be any different in the future. Middle class counter-conventional couples have clear timelines for making their relationships more equal or, in some cases, conventional. For working and class straddling counter-conventional women, however, cohabitation appears to be a site of prolonged inequality in which male partners contribute little to either housework or household finances despite the women’s attempts to make their relationships more equitable.

In sum, six working class, one class straddling, and four middle class couples have counter-conventional arrangements in which the female partner pays the bulk of the household expenses and usually does more of the domestic labor, as well. These couples seem to be divided into two groups with the working and class straddling couples distinct from the middle class couples. For example, most of the working class and class straddling counter-conventional couples are unsure of their future work orientations while the middle class exhibit a wider variety of work orientations, perhaps because those who are students or working at the lowest levels of their careers view their situations as temporary and plan to advance in the future. All of the counter-conventional women are paying the majority of the bills, but while most of the working and class straddling

women are dissatisfied with their arrangements, the middle class women view their arrangements as temporary (until the man is more established in his career) or as equitable (when they out earn their male partners). Middle class counter-conventional women are also happier with their household division of labor than are the working class and class straddling women who are “doing it all”, likely because most of the middle class are homeowners, so a conventional division of labor seems equitable to them. Due to their greater level of satisfaction, the middle class counter-conventional women appear to be more advantaged than their working class counterparts, but in other ways, the working class counter-conventional women appear to be more advantaged. Three of the working and class straddling counter-conventional women maintain control over a greater share of the household income and three of the working class counter-conventional men do the bulk of the housework. Still, the economy of gratitude (Hochschild 1989) does not appear to be operating for these working class counter-conventional couples; couples (particularly women) do not view the men’s contributions at home and ceding control over the household income as “balancing out” their lack of employment. While some of these couples’ divisions have gotten more equal over time due to changes in the male partner’s work or school and the female partner’s insistence, most expect their divisions of labor to become more conventional over time.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This group of 61 working class, middle class, and class straddling couples displayed a wide variety of gendered behaviors, ranging from taking on specialized roles, to attempting to forge more equal paths, to displaying an effortless egalitarianism, to reversing some conventions. Their satisfaction with their divisions of labor often vary as widely as their ways of doing (and undoing) gender within their unions. Here I will summarize my findings, expand upon whether couples' relative resources or their ideas about equality/equity leads these conventional, contesting, equalitarian, and counter-conventional couples to shape their relationships in particular ways, and detail some unexpected results. I conclude by addressing some of the limitations of this sample and examining what the findings mean for the future of the American family.

Class-Based Differences

The 61 couples in this analysis (27 middle class, 26 working class, and 8 class straddling) fell into one of four typologies. Counter to what the literature suggests about cohabiting couples having fairly egalitarian divisions of labor (e.g., Brines and Joyner 1999; Shelton and John 1993; South and Spitze 1994), 22 of these couples (36%) displayed a conventional division of labor. Of those 25 couples who do have somewhat more equal divisions of labor, most include at least one partner who is continually challenging conventionally gendered behaviors. Among these contesting couples (41%), it is most often the female partner who is trying to create a more equal relationship. Only

three middle class couples, 5 percent of the entire sample, share household and financial obligations equally without having to continually negotiate their arrangements. These equalitarian couples have always had an effortless equality within their unions. In the final 11 counter-conventional couples (18%), the female partners pay the bulk of the household expenses. Far from being an otherwise equitable arrangement, the majority of the working and class straddling counter-conventional women are also doing most of the domestic labor as well.

Class Straddling Couples

A relatively small group, the eight class straddling couples in this sample “did gender” (West and Zimmerman 1987) within their unions in a variety of ways. More than half ($n = 5$) adopted a conventional division of labor, two included at least one partner who contested such conventions, and one formed a counter-conventional union. Overall, which partner (male or female) was the degreed member of the relationship did not seem to matter for the type of division of labor the couple formed. However, nearly all of these class straddling couples were quite satisfied in their unions. This may be attributable to the fact that most moved in together very rapidly after initiating dating and have lived together for a reasonably short period of time, leaving them in the “honeymoon phase” of their relationships. Alternatively, degreed partners, like those among the middle class, may feel more comfortable directly discussing issues surrounding the division of labor, leading to more satisfying divisions. Further research on these class straddlers that includes larger, longitudinal samples, should examine the roles each individual (degreed and non-degreed) plays in determining household and financial responsibilities.

Working Class Couples

Many working class cohabiting couples in this sample had divisions of labor that were counter to the fairly egalitarian behaviors much of the older, quantitative literature on cohabitators might suggest (e.g., Brines and Joyner 1999; Clarkberg et al. 1995; Denmark et al. 1985; Shelton and John 1993; Scott and Spitze 1994). A sizable number of couples (n=9) had adopted divisions of labor which were quite conventional, both in terms of paid work and domestic labor. In addition, a large number of working class men were abiding by traditional ideals and behaviors while their female partners attempted to increase the equality within their unions. Contesting men (n=11) often resist changes in the division of household labor; they are content to have their female partners earning relatively similar incomes and paying a substantial or equal proportion of the household bills, but often refuse to contribute more labor themselves within the home. In contrast, contesting women persist in trying to equalize the gendered division of labor. These working class couples, then, are not yet the fairly egalitarian pairings presumed by prior quantitative research. Instead, they may be a variant on what Lavee and Katz (2002) and Greenstein (1996) term “transitional families.” While Lavee and Katz (2002) and Greenstein (1996) refer to married couples in which at least one partner’s gendered beliefs are somewhere between conventional and egalitarian, leading to a clash between ideology and behavior, these cohabiting American couples stretch the definition of “transitional” to those in which one partner is fairly content with convention while the other argues for greater equality. Exploring the differences between those families in which only one partner has transitional attitudes and those in which both partners have

similar attitudes will tell us more about the changes American families are undergoing in the midst of clashing ideologies about gendered behaviors.

A third, and somewhat surprising, group of working class couples also emerged from the data. Although their behaviors are unconventional, their divisions of labor are likely far from the egalitarian possibilities envisioned by those who assumed cohabitation couple be a site in which greater gendered equality could be expressed in intimate relationships (see for example, Cherlin 2004). These counter-conventional couples (n=6) are those in which the male partner has willingly abandoned or never adopted the provider role, once considered a hallmark of masculinity (e.g., Bernard 1981; Brescoll and Uhlmann 2005; Martin 2003; Ridgeway 1997; Townsend 2002; Ward 2004). Many also refuse to do much of the household labor, leaving their female partners to unhappily do the lion's share of both the bill-paying and housecleaning. Some of these men, who share children with their partners or are living with their partners' children, do perform the bulk of the housework and/or childcare, but doing so is not viewed by their female partners as a substitute for financial contributions. Here, it is the women who are hoping for greater convention, at least in terms of financial responsibilities, once the men complete adult education or non-traditional degree programs. Those women who see no hints of change in their divisions of labor are clearly dissatisfied, but have remained in their relationships for a significant period of time and show no signs of leaving. This may provide some evidence that "the good provider role" (Bernard 1981) is lessening in importance, at least among some young, working class women. Having a partner who contributes at least something to their union (be it a few dollars here or there, an

occasional completed chore, or even just emotional support) may be seen as a better alternative than sleeping alone.

Few working class couples intentionally set out to create truly equal relationships, with only one of the 26 sharing housework and financial obligations relatively equally. Rather than couching their behaviors in the language of feminism as “equality of rights and responsibilities for (all) men and (all) women”, though, the couple refers to their equal division of labor simply as the result of necessity and personal preferences within the confines of their individual relationship. In essence, they have adapted the behaviors of egalitarianism without necessarily espousing the belief system.

Frequently among the working class, one partner (generally the female) is hoping for greater equality, particularly in the realm of housework, while the other is content with living a more conventional lifestyle. Because working class women are often paying an equal (or greater) share of the household bills but their male partners often do not do an equal share of the domestic labor, cohabitation may be a union type that actually increases, rather than decreases, inequality for some working class women, disadvantaging them from their middle class peers in yet another way (see also Ellwood and Jencks 2004; White and Rogers 2000).

Middle Class Couples

A sizable number of middle class couples, too, chose to replicate conventional divisions of labor (n=8). Like the conventional working class couples, these couples were satisfied with the ways they were “doing gender” in their relationships. Although quantitative literature from data collected in the 1980’s and 1990’s shows that cohabitators are fairly egalitarian both in terms of behavior and beliefs (e.g., Brines and Joyner 1999;

Clarkberg et al. 1995; Denmark et al. 1985; Shelton and John 1993; Scott and Spitze 1994), perhaps since a larger swath of the population has been living together before marriage, a wider array of gendered beliefs and behaviors will be represented among cohabitators. For working and middle class couples who choose to cohabit, then, at least some are doing so with the intentions of living in marriage-like relationships, both in terms of the economies of scale and conventional financial and household divisions of labor.

Although four middle class couples are engaging in counter-conventional behaviors in which the female partner pays most of the household bills, their situations are very dissimilar to those of their working class peers. All four couples intend to join the ranks of the more conventional in the future and are actively taking steps toward achieving their goals. These couples all have traditional divisions of labor in which the male partners do the bulk of the “outdoor chores” while the female partners do more “indoor chores”. Because these couples are all homeowners, rather than apartment dwellers, and have a significant amount of yard work/maintenance that needs completed, all are satisfied with their apportionments of chores. Most are also satisfied with their current financial arrangements because they view them as equitable. In these couples, the female partners currently out earn the male partners, generally because he has changed careers or the male partners are progressing through a second-degree or graduate program that they believe will eventually benefit the couple as a whole. Because they can feasibly envision their unions becoming more conventional in the future, they feel that their current divisions are equitable.

A number of middle class men, like their working class peers, are also engaging in fairly conventional behaviors (at least in terms of household labor) while their female partners struggle for greater equality. Unlike the working class women, these middle class contesting women (n=12) have been more successful at getting their male partners to take on a more equal share of the domestic chores, but, similar to Risman's (1998) findings among married couples with near-equal divisions of labor, it falls upon the women's shoulders to ensure that the division remains (somewhat) equal. Still, that the middle class contesting men are more willing to share in the household responsibilities and that some of the conventional men took on a few more household responsibilities when they recognized how unequal their divisions were, despite their personal preferences, may illustrate that middle class cohabiting men are more conscious of the need to participate more fully at home as their female partners participate more fully in the workforce. Sayer, Cohen, and Casper (2004) note that more highly educated men and women often have more similar divisions of paid and domestic labor than their less educated counterparts. However, they also note that women's lives have undergone more changes than have men's since women are participating in the paid labor sphere more frequently but men's housework performance has lagged behind. This generation of cohabitators may represent an intermediary one in which men's behaviors at home begin to change significantly as well, with a bit of prompting from their female partners. Although the evidence from the working class suggests that the less-institutionalized nature of cohabitation itself (Cherlin 2004) may not be enough to induce egalitarian changes in intimate relationships, the less-institutionalized nature of cohabitation in addition to the liberalizing effect of higher education (Myers and Booth 2002) may lead to significant

changes in the state of future families. I suggest that this generation is intermediary because many only intend to extend their fairly egalitarian behaviors so far; a significant number plan to become more conventional upon the birth of a child. However, there are a few middle class couples for whom their beliefs in gender equality are so strong that they do not anticipate a change.

Myers and Booth (2002) discussed “gender forerunners”, those whose belief systems were at least one standard deviation more egalitarian than their peers. The three middle class equalitarian couples in this sample would surely fit their criteria in terms of behavior. The smallest group of couples in this sample is distinguished by equality in every aspect of their divisions of labor. None of the members of these three middle class equalitarian couples have clear work orientations, though each has completed his or her bachelor’s degree. Couples control their own income and share their bills equitably, according to the percentage of the household income that each earns. In addition, each partner does half of the housework based upon personal preferences and shared desires for the level of cleanliness in their homes. Unlike their contesting counterparts who must continually struggle to negotiate or resist more equal or equitable roles, these equalitarian couples seem to assume that egalitarian fairness will be the ruling variable within their relationships. These couples may prove to be the “new” face of equality. Far from the “power couples” profiled by some who study equal unions (e.g., Blaisure and Allen 1995; Risman 1998), these equalitarian couples draw their similarity from the fact that none of the partners have yet to achieve (or appear to have a clear plan for) achieving a career pathway. It is unclear, however, whether these couples have the divisions that they do because all are recent college graduates who have lived with roommates in the near past

and view their romantic unions in a similar light in the absence of what they consider to be their “adult careers”, or whether they have so internalized egalitarian norms that they take them for granted.

A select few middle class couples and individuals have gone even farther than just practicing equality within their own unions. Unlike the equal working class couple who attributes their division of labor to personal preferences, these middle class couples have intentionally created egalitarian unions as an expression of their feminist belief systems. The middle class, then, represents a much wider spectrum of gendered behaviors than do their working class peers. Working class couples most frequently engage in conventional divisions of labor or those in which the female partner is struggling to get their male partners to participate more fully in terms of housework and/or financial responsibilities. Overall, these middle class cohabiting men and women do have more similar divisions of labor relative to one another (see Sayer, Cohen, and Casper 2004). While sizable proportions of the middle class still engage in conventional divisions of labor or those in which the female partner is attempting to create a more equal union, others simply take equality for granted or even try to provide a model of an equal division of labor for others to emulate.

Relative Resources or Gender Theory

Although some individuals were assigned to particular groups (such as the conventional and counter-conventional groups) based upon which partner pays a larger share of the household bills, it is possible to examine partners’ individual incomes and education levels to see if their relative resources are related to the ways that they divide their bills and household labor. In many cases, ideas about gender, rather than relative

resources, appear to guide their behaviors. In a few instances, however, cohabitation appears to be a site that some couples can use to “undo” conventionally gendered behaviors. Sixteen of the 61 women have higher education levels than their male partners (e.g., in some couples she has some college education while he has only a high school diploma or she has a master’s degree and he has only a bachelor’s degree), nine men are more educated than their female partners, and 36 couples have the same level of education. Over half of the men with higher levels of education are paying greater than 60% of the household bills, but when women have higher education levels than their male partners or when they have the same education level, couples display a wide variety of financial divisions with no one clear pattern. They are nearly equally as likely to have the male partner pay most of the bills, the female partners pay most of the bills, or couples to share them equally. Because women often earn less than men, it may be that women’s higher levels of education do not necessarily translate to significantly higher earnings, leaving couples to divide the bills on a case by case basis using relative income, rather than relative education, as a guide for doing so.

When women have more education than their male partners, the most common patterns in the household division of labor are for women to do the majority of both the indoor and outdoor chores or the couple to have a traditional division of labor in which the female partner does most of the scrubbing, vacuuming, and dusting while the male partner takes out the trash and does the yard work. Sixty-three percent of these couples utilize one of these two divisions. These same two patterns are also most common among couples who have equal levels of education; over half engage in one of the two arrangements. For these couples, conventional ideas about gender, rather than relative

education, appear to condition their household divisions of labor, supporting gender theory more than relative resources. Among five couples who have the same level of education, however, the male partners are responsible for the lion's share of the domestic chores. Still, these men consider their situations temporary, are dissatisfied with the arrangements, or link them to their own or their fathers' experiences in the military, thereby masculinizing their performances (Coltrane 1996). Interestingly, those couples in which the male partner has a higher level of education than his female partner most often share household chores equally. In two thirds of these couples, each individual does between 40 and 60 percent of the housework. All but one of these men have at least a bachelor's level education, so the men's own high levels of education, rather than their levels of education relative to their partners', may lead them to feel that equal divisions of housework are most fair (Myers and Booth 2002). For the middle class cohabitators, then, neither gender theory nor relative resources may adequately explain the domestic division of labor. Instead, men's levels of education may condition their relative housework performance, regardless of the education levels of their female partners.

Few women (n=9) earned greater than 60% of the household income; 24 of the 61 couples earned similar amounts of money, and in 28 couples the male partners earned at least 61% of the household income. Those couples in which one partner earned a larger share of the money divided their financial obligations in the expected ways. Two-thirds of the women and nearly 80% of the men who out earned their partners paid more than 60% of the bills. The rest of these couples shared financial obligations equally. Interestingly, when couples earned similar amounts, over half (58%) shared household expenses equally, but nearly 30% relied upon the female partner to pay the majority of

the household bills. Among the working class couples who claim to be earning near equal amounts but in which the female partner is paying most of the bills, it appears that the men are overstating their income since most admit to being unemployed or working very few hours per week in jobs such as retail stocking and kitchen work while their female partners are employed much more consistently and for more hours per week. Social norms that encourage men to be the primary providers (e.g., Bernard 1981; Potuchek 1994, 1997), or at least to pay their own way, may have led the men to over report their actual earnings. The middle class men who earn equal amounts but whose partners pay the majority of the household bills generally consider their financial arrangements to be temporary- one man, for example, had put his condominium up for sale after moving in with his partner but was still responsible for the mortgage; both partners anticipate that he will pay an equal share of their joint household bills as soon as his condominium sells.

Again, when female partners have the higher relative resource- in this case, income- they often still continue to do a large share of the household chores. Forty-four percent of the women who out earn their partners do a greater share of the chores; another third share them equally with their partners. Among working and middle class cohabiting women, then, it does appear that a sizable number are doing a larger share of the housework in order to “make up for” their higher earnings (cf. Brines 1995; Tichenor 1999). Women also most often do a larger share of the domestic chores if the male partner has the highest relative earnings. In over half of these couples (57%) the women do the lion’s share of the domestic labor; only 25% share the chores equally. Finally, among those couples who earn equal amounts, similar numbers share the housework equally or rely upon the female partner to do most of the chores. Here, gender theory,

rather than relative income, appears to better explain housework performance for most couples.

Equality/Equity

Rather than utilizing relative resources to determine their shares of the financial obligations and household chores, these couples may be focused more strongly on creating divisions of labor that they feel are equal or equitable. Whether individuals hope to achieve equal unions (in which each partner does half of the housework and is responsible for half of the financial obligations) or equitable ones (in which each partner feels that their division of labor is “fair”) differed based upon their current divisions of labor and, in some cases, gender and social class.

Conventional couples (working, class straddling, and middle class) may have specifically chosen or adapted their divisions of labor because they are most concerned with being in unions that are equitable. For most conventional couples, the male partner paid the majority of the household bills and, in turn, was given a number of privileges afforded to married male breadwinners, such as having his job privileged by the couple or being able to “buy out” of the most onerous household chores. In turn, the female partners did the majority of the domestic labor. Although some individuals occasionally wished their divisions of labor were slightly different, on the whole these couples were very satisfied with their specialized divisions of labor and felt that their arrangements were fair.

So too was the case for the middle class counter conventional women. These women were paying the majority of the household bills and often did the lion’s share of the housework. However, they were satisfied with their divisions of labor and felt that

they were equitable for two reasons. First, most owned homes and their male partners did the majority of the lawn care and household maintenance, leading them to feel that the men were contributing equally to the domestic duties. Second, most of these women were measuring equity based upon relatively long time horizons. Most of their male partners had begun second careers or returned to school for second degrees. The men were apologetic about their current lack of financial contributions, but most couples viewed their situations as temporary and anticipated that they would become more balanced or even more conventional sometime in the future.

In contrast, the majority of the working class counter conventional women often felt that equality was more important than equity. Even if their male partners did a sizable share of the household chores or, in some cases, childcare, these women did not view the men's domestic and reproductive labor as "making up for" their lack of financial contributions. They expected the men to contribute equally both at home and at work. While some of these women's viewpoints may be colored by strong norms that require men to actively engage in the workplace (e.g., Bernard 1981; Potuchek 1994, 1997), when discussing their dissatisfaction with the men refusing to work, most focused on individual-level reasons rather than describing gendered norms. They explained that their boyfriends should be contributing financially because they were tired of shouldering the financial load alone rather than discussing men's expected roles as family providers.

Contesting women, a few middle class contesting men, and equalitarian couples all felt that equality, rather than equity, should be the ruling variable in their divisions of labor. Contesting women, in particular, felt that they should pay equal amounts of the household bills and, in turn, their male partners should take on a more equal share of the

household chores. A few middle class contesting men agreed with this philosophy and shared in the housework when asked, albeit somewhat reluctantly. However, most contesting men did not share their partners' beliefs to the degree that they were consistently willing to engage in a more egalitarian division of labor, even if they acknowledged that their current divisions were unfair to the women. Future research should focus on the reasons behind couples' choices and their long term relationship trajectories based upon whether they desire equity, equality, or have different systems for creating and evaluating their divisions of labor.

Limitations

Certainly, these 61 middle class, class straddling, and working class couples living in the greater Columbus, Ohio area in the early part of the 21st century do not represent all cohabitators. At the time they were interviewed, jobs in Columbus were plentiful; unemployment rates were low and jobs in service, skilled labor, and professional sectors were widely available. In addition, the presence of a state university, large community college, several trade schools, and a number of private, liberal arts colleges meant that those who were interested in furthering their educations had numerous options. Similar studies completed in areas of the country with fewer economic and educational opportunities may yield somewhat different results. Still, when compared to a nationally representative sample of cohabitators from the National Survey of Family Growth, Columbus and national couples' similarities are much greater than their differences.

Despite the limitations of the sample, the experiences of these couples can add to our understanding of the changing nature of the American family. This study was the first

in-depth qualitative examination of the gendered behaviors of cohabiting couples. The focus on working and middle class couples, in particular, allowed me to capture a segment of the population whose union formation behaviors are changing rapidly (Bumpass and Lu 2000; Cohen and Casper 2000; Manning 2001; Sassler and McNally 2003) but who are often overlooked in the literature in favor of more affluent (e.g., Blair-Loy 2003; Hewlett 2002; Risman 1998) or more disadvantaged couples (e.g., Anderson 1999; Edin 2000; Edin and Kefalas 2005; Edin, Kefalas and Reed 2004; Gibson, Edin, and McLanahan 2004; Reed 2006). My finding that many of these couples are simply replicating conventionally gendered divisions of labor or include only one partner (generally the woman) who is striving to create a more equal relationship demonstrates that quantitative research from the late 1980s/early 1990s which contrasted cohabiting couples with their married peers may no longer accurately depict the contemporary experiences of couples. Conceptualizing cohabitators as “egalitarian” (in opposition to “conventional” married couples) is too simplistic. Instead, a more nuanced range of experiences (as demonstrated by the four typologies that emerged from these data) which often change over time in response to personal desires and structural factors is more accurate. These experiences can only be fully understood through in-depth interviews with both members of a relationship.

As cohabiting becomes an increasingly normative experience, a wider swath of the population, including working class and middle class couples, will enter into these types of unions. The ways that they do (or undo) gender through their divisions of labor will likely have consequences both for their future relationships and for any children that they may have. Although cohabitation is a “less institutionalized” relationship form

(Cherlin 2004), many of these couples are replicating conventional patterns within their unions.

Ideologies that require men to be the sole or primary breadwinners may be weakening (Loscocco and Spitze 2007). However, the vast majority of these working and middle class cohabiting men find that their partners are not satisfied with them taking on the bulk of the domestic labor and/or childcare in lieu of financial contributions. Instead, the men find that they are judged quite harshly if they do not provide similar shares of the household income or are not actively working toward furthering their incomes (such as through school completion). Working class men, in particular, who find their employment prospects dwindling with the economic downturn, may have an increasingly difficult time earning at least half of the household income. All but the most conventional cohabiting men may also experience some confusion at their partners' expectations that they share fairly equally in the domestic duties given many of their initial expectations that the women would take on the bulk of the household labor. These men find themselves in relationships that, in some ways, still require them to uphold the principles of conventional relationships by participating at least equally in the work force, but in others expect them to take on new responsibilities in the household. Although women's roles have been changing faster than have men's over the past few decades (Sayer, Cohen, and Casper 2004), these cohabiting men find themselves a part of a transitional generation in which their partners' strong expectations for equality at home impact their lives as well.

In contrast to many of their working class counterparts, most well-educated, middle class women have been able to negotiate the kinds of relationships that they want,

whether those are guided by equality or equity. Those women who are less educated are more likely to experience out of wedlock births, less likely to marry, less likely to be satisfied within their marriages, and more likely to divorce in the future (Ellwood and Jencks 2004; White and Rogers 2000). If they are also less likely to be able to negotiate the divisions of labor that they desire within cohabiting unions, cohabitation may become yet another site in which the bifurcation of family outcomes may be evident. Until less educated women gain more power and less educated men agree to contribute more equal shares of household labor, cohabitation may become another site for reproducing, rather than eliminating, some forms of social-class based inequality, even as it offers greater gender equality to the more educated.

Table A.1: Demographic Characteristics of Cohabiting Couples

Variables	Measures	Whole Sample	Working Class	Class Straddlers	Middle Class
Number	Number	61	26	8	27
Age	Mean Age: Men	27.3 years	26.3 years	28.1 years	28.1 years
	Mean Age: Women	24.8 years	24.5 years	25.5 years	24.9 years
Relative Age	Man > 4 years older	27.9%	19.2%	37.5%	33.3%
	Woman > 4 years older	6.6%	7.7%	12.5%	3.7%
	Both within 4 years	65.6%	73.1%	50.0%	63.0%
Educational Attainment	Both high school or less	1.6%	3.8%	0.0%	0.0%
	One \leq HS, one some college	8.2%	19.2%	0.0%	0.0%
	Both some college	32.8%	76.9%	0.0%	0.0%
	One BA, one Some College	13.1%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
	Both BA	23.0%	0.0%	0.0%	51.9%
	One BA, one MA	16.4%	0.0%	0.0%	37.0%
	Both MA+	4.9%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%
Relative Schooling	Man has more education	21.3%	3.8%	37.5%	18.5%
	Woman has more education	26.2%	23.1%	62.5%	18.5%
	Equal levels of schooling	52.5%	73.1%	0.0%	63.0%
Race/Ethnicity	Both White	60.7%	42.3%	62.5%	77.8%
	Both Hispanic	3.3%	3.8%	0.0%	3.7%
	Both Black	9.8%	15.4%	12.5%	3.7%
	Mixed	26.2%	38.5%	25.0%	14.8%

continued

Table A.1: Continued

Variables	Measures	Whole Sample	Working Class	Class Straddlers	Middle Class
Couple-Level Income ^a	Mean couple income	\$52,885	\$37,447	\$54,051	\$67,406
	Earnings Ratio:				
	Male/Female	58.6%	56.6%	63.9%	58.4%
	\$15,000-\$24,999	14.8%	30.8%	0%	3.7%
	\$25,000-49,999	41.0%	50.0%	50.0%	18.5%
	\$50,000 - \$74,999	27.9%	15.4%	50.0%	44.4%
	\$75,000 - \$99,999	11.5%	3.8%	0%	22.2%
	\$100,000 or more	5.0%	0%	0%	11.1%
Relative Earnings	Man earns more	44.3%	46.2%	37.5%	48.1%
	Woman earns more	14.8%	19.2%	12.5%	11.1%
	Each partner earns within 40-60% of the income	41.0%	34.6%	50.0%	40.7%
Marital Status	Both never married	82.0%	76.9%	100.0%	81.5%
	One never married, one previously married	18.0%	23.1%	0.0%	18.5%
Parental Status	Both no children	70.5%	46.2%	87.5%	88.9%
	Both share children	11.5%	19.2%	12.5%	3.7%
	Man has children (not woman)	13.1%	23.1%	0.0%	7.4%
	Woman has children (not man)	3.3%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%
	Each has a child from a prior relationship	1.6%	3.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Duration to Cohabitation	0 – 6 months	36.1%	46.2%	75.0%	14.8%
	7 – 11 months	19.7%	23.1%	0.0%	22.2%
	12 – 23 months	27.9%	19.2%	12.5%	40.7%
	24 – 35 months	11.5%	7.7%	0.0%	18.5%
	3 years or more	4.9%	3.8%	12.5%	3.7%

continued

Table A.1: Continued

Variables	Measures	Whole Sample	Working Class	Class Straddlers	Middle Class
Duration of Cohabitation	3 – 6 months	31.1%	23.1%	50.0%	33.3%
	7 – 11 months	6.6%	7.7%	0.0%	7.4%
	12 – 23 months	27.9%	19.2%	25.0%	37.0%
	24 – 35 months	18.0%	23.1%	12.5%	14.8%
	3 years or more	16.4%	26.9%	12.5%	7.4%
Plan to Marry Partner	Yes	57.4%	50.0%	75.0%	59.3%
	No	1.6%	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%
	Maybe	9.8%	19.2%	0.0%	3.7%
	Never Marry Anyone	9.8%	15.4%	0.0%	7.4%
	Disagree	21.3%	15.4%	12.5%	29.6%
Engaged	Yes	51.6%	19.2%	25.0%	33.3%
	No	63.9%	65.4%	75.0%	59.3%
	Never Marry Anyone	9.8%	15.4%	0.0%	7.4%

^a Couple level income is determined by summing each partner's reported individual income. One man in the working class and one man and one woman in the middle class refused to report their income. Their partners' reports were used to determine their couple-level income. In another instance, neither partner reported a middle class man's income. It was set to the mean of men's income for his social class.

^b In two working class couples the partners share a child and the male partner also has a child from a previous relationship

Table A.2: Racial/Ethnic Differences among Couples

WORKING CLASS		
Number	Male Partner	Female Partner
2	White	Black
1	White	Hispanic
1	White	Asian
1	White	White and Native American
2	Hispanic	White
2	White and Native American	White
1	White and Pacific Islander	White
CLASS STRADDLING		
Number	Male Partner	Female Partner
1	White	Black
1	White and Native American	White
MIDDLE CLASS		
Number	Male Partner	Female Partner
1	White	White and Asian
1	White	White and Black
1	Other	White
1	White and Asian	White

Only one of those who identified as partially Native American noted that she participated in tribal activities, and one of the white/Native American men stated that he identifies primarily as “white”. The middle class male partner listed as “Other” wrote in “Arabic” for his race/ethnicity

Table A.3: Differences between Working Class Groups

Variables	Measures	Whole Sample	Conventional	Contesting	Counter- Conventional
Number	Number	26	9	11	6
Age	Mean Age: Men	26.3 years	28.3 years	24.3 years	26.8 years
	Mean Age: Women	24.5 years	24.5 years	24.4 years	24.7 years
Relative Age	Man > 4 years older	5	22.2%	27.3%	0.0%
	Woman > 4 years older	2	0.0%	18.2%	0.0%
	Both within 4 years	19	77.8%	54.5%	100.0%
Educational Attainment	Both high school or less	1	11.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	One \leq HS, one some college	5	0.0%	27.3%	33.0%
	Both some college	20	89.0%	72.7%	66.7%
Relative Schooling	Man has more education	1	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%
	Woman has more education	6	22.2%	18.2%	33.3%
	Equal levels of schooling	19	77.8%	72.7%	66.7%
Race/Ethnicity	Both White	11	44.4%	36.4%	50.0%
	Both Hispanic	1	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%
	Both Black	4	22.2%	9.1%	16.7%
	Mixed	10	22.2%	54.5%	34.0%
Couple-Level Income	Mean couple income	\$37,447	\$37,638	\$43,890	\$25,350
	Earnings Ratio: Male/Female	56.6%	78.3%	46.6%	37.2%
	\$15,000-\$24,999	8	33.3%	9.1%	66.7%
	\$25,000-49,999	13	44.4%	54.5%	33.3%
	\$50,000-\$74,999	4	22.2%	27.3%	0%
	\$75,000-99,999	1	0%	9.1%	0%

continued

Table A.3: Continued

Variables	Measures	Whole Sample	Conventional	Contesting	Counter-Conventional
Relative Earnings	Man earns more	12	88.9%	27.3%	16.7%
	Woman earns more	5	0.0%	27.3%	33.4%
	Each partner earns within 40-60% of the income	9	11.1%	45.5%	50.0%
Marital Status	Both never married	20	88.9%	81.8%	50.0%
	One never married, one previously married	6	11.1%	18.2%	50.0%
Parental Status	Both no children	12	50.0%	63.6%	33.3%
	Both share children	5	16.7%	9.1%	33.3%
	Man has children (not woman)	6	33.3%	18.2%	0.0%
	Woman has children (not man)	2	0.0%	9.1%	16.7%
	Each has a child from a prior relationship	1	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%
Duration to Cohabitation	0 – 6 months	12	50.0%	54.5%	33.3%
	7 – 11 months	6	16.7%	18.2%	33.3%
	12 – 23 months	5	16.7%	27.3%	16.7%
	24 – 35 months	2	8.3%	0.0%	16.7%
	3 years or more	1	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Duration of Cohabitation	3 – 6 months	6	41.7%	27.3%	0.0%
	7 – 11 months	2	0.0%	9.1%	16.7%
	12 – 23 months	5	0.0%	27.3%	33.3%
	24 – 35 months	6	25.0%	9.1%	33.3%
	3 years or more	7	33.3%	27.3%	16.7%

Table A.3: Continued

Variables	Measures	Whole Sample	Conventional	Contesting	Counter- Conventional
Plan to Marry Partner	Yes	13	91.7%	18.2%	50.0%
	No	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Maybe	5	0.0%	27.3%	33.3%
	Never Marry Anyone	4	0.0%	36.4%	0.0%
	Disagree	4	8.3%	18.2%	16.7%
Engaged	Yes	5	25.0%	9.1%	16.7%
	No	17	75.0%	54.5%	83.3%
	Never Marry Anyone	4	0.0%	36.4%	0.0%

Table A.4: Differences between Middle Class Groups

Variables	Measures	Whole Sample	Conventional	Contesting	Counter-Conventional	Equalitarian
Number	Number	N = 27	N = 8	N = 12	N = 4	N = 3
Age	Mean Age: Men	28.1 years	28.5 years	28.2 years	28.8 years	26.3 years
	Mean Age: Women	24.9 years	25.8 years	26.5 years	25.3 years	25.7 years
Relative Age	Man > 4 years older	9	50.0%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%
	Woman > 4 years older	1	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Both within 4 years	17	37.5%	75.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Educational Attainment		14				
	Both BA		62.5%	25.0%	75.0%	100.0%
	One BA, one MA	10	25.0%	58.3%	25.0%	0.0%
	Both MA+	3	12.5%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Relative Schooling	Man has more education	5	12.5%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%
	Woman has more education	5	12.5%	33.3%	25.0%	0.0%
	Equal levels of schooling	17	75.0%	41.7%	75.0%	100.0%
Race/Ethnicity	Both White	21	75.0%	75.0%	75.0%	100.0%
	Both Hispanic	1	0.0%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%
	Both Black	1	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Mixed	4	12.5%	16.7%	25.0%	0.0%
Couple-Level Income	Mean couple income	\$67,406	\$72,031	\$71,628	\$68,571	\$36,490
	Earnings Ratio: Male/Female	57%	75.0%	53.2%	35.8%	55.0%
	\$24,000-\$49,999	6	22.2%	9.1%	25%	100%
	\$50,000 - \$74,999	12	44.4%	27.3%	25%	0%
	\$75,000 - \$99,999	6	1.1%	36.4%	50%	0%
	\$100,000 or more	3	1.1%	9.1%	0%	0%

continued

Table A.4 Continued

Variables	Measures	Whole Sample	Conventional	Contesting	Counter- Conventional	Equalitarian
Relative Earnings	Man earns more	13	100%	33.3%	0.0%	33.3%
	Woman earns more	3	0.0%	16.7%	25.0%	0.0%
	Each partner earns within 40-60% of the income	11	0.0%	50.0%	75.0%	66.7%
Marital Status	Both never married	22	87.5%	91.7%	50.0%	66.7%
	One never married, one previously married	5	12.5%	8.3%	50.0%	33.3%
Parental Status	Both no children	24	87.5%	91.7%	75.0%	100.0%
	Both share children	1	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Man has children (not woman)	2	0.0%	8.3%	25.0%	0.0%
Duration to Cohabitation	0 – 6 months	4	0.0%	16.7%	50.0%	0.0%
	7 – 11 months	6	37.5%	16.7%	0.0%	33.3%
	12 – 23 months	11	25.0%	41.7%	50.0%	66.7%
	24 – 35 months	5	25.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	3 years or more	1	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Duration of Cohabitation	3 – 6 months	9	12.5%	41.7%	25.0%	33.3%
	7 – 11 months	2	0.0%	8.3%	50.0%	0.0%
	12 – 23 months	10	50.0%	33.3%	0.0%	33.3%
	24 – 35 months	4	25.0%	8.3%	25.0%	33.3%
	3 years or more	2	12.5%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Plan to Marry Partner	Yes	16	62.5%	66.7%	50.0%	33.3%
	No	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Maybe	1	0.0%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%
	Never Marry Anyone	2	12.5%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%
	Disagree	8	25.0%	16.7%	50.0%	66.7%
Engaged	Yes	9	25.0%	41.6%	25.0%	33.3%
	No	16	62.5%	50.0%	75.0%	66.7%
	Never Marry Anyone	2	12.5%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%

Table A.5: Differences between Class Straddling Groups

Variables Number	Measures Number	Whole Sample N = 8 28.1	Conventional N = 5	Contesting N = 2 27.5	Counter- Conventional N = 1
Age	Mean Age: Men	years	28.8 years	years	26 years
	Mean Age: Women	25.5 years	26.4 years	23.5 years	25 years
Relative Age	Man > 4 years older	3	40.0%	50.0%	0.0%
	Woman > 4 years older	1	20.0%	50.0%	0.0%
	Both within 4 years	4	40.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Educational Attainment	One BA, one Some College	8	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Relative Schooling	Man has more education	3	60.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Woman has more education	5	40.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Race/Ethnicity	Both White	5	80.0%	50.0%	0.0%
	Both Black	1	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%
	Mixed	2	20.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Couple-Level Income	Mean couple income	\$50,051	\$61,688	\$44,406	\$35,152
	Earnings Ratio: Male/Female	62%	67.0%	67.0%	29.0%
	\$25,000-\$49,999	4	20.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	\$50,000 - \$74,999	4	80.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Relative Earnings	Man earns more	3	40.0%	50.0%	0.0%
	Woman earns more	1	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Each partner earns within 40-60% of the income	4	60.0%	50.0%	0.0%

continued

Table A.5: Continued

Variables	Measures	Whole Sample	Conventional	Contesting	Counter-Conventional
Marital Status	Both never married	8	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	One never married, one previously married	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Parental Status	Both no children	7	100.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	Both share children	1	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%
Duration to Cohabitation	0 – 6 months	6	80.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	7 – 11 months	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	12 – 23 months	1	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	24 – 35 months	0	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%
	3 years or more	1	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Duration of Cohabitation	3 – 6 months	4	60.0%	50.0%	0.0%
	7 – 11 months	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	12 – 23 months	2	20.0%	50.0%	0.0%
	24 – 35 months	1	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	3 years or more	1	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Plan to Marry Partner	Yes	6	100.0%	50.0%	0.0%
	No	1	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Disagree	1	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%
Engaged	Yes	2	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	No	6	60.0%	0.0%	100.0%

Appendix B: Differences between the Columbus Sample and a Nationally Representative Sample

In order to compare the Columbus sample to a nationally representative sample with similar characteristics, I used the women's sample from the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth. In this sample, women were asked to detail their own and their currently cohabiting male partner's characteristics. To make the most accurate possible comparison, I limited the NSFG sample using the same screening criteria as I used to select the Columbus sample: couples had to have lived together for at least 3 months, both partners had to be between the ages of 18-34, and earn a minimum combined income of \$15,000. The NSFG sample was further divided into working class, class straddling, and middle class couples based upon their levels of education (like the Columbus sample, working class couples each had less than a bachelor's degree, middle class couples each had a bachelor's degree or higher, and class straddling couples were those in which one partner had a bachelor's degree or greater and the other partner had completed some college or less.)

Overall, the Columbus sample (n=61) is more highly educated than the NSFG sample (n=198), because a concerted effort was made to recruit nearly equal numbers of those with and without college educations among the Columbus sample. However, among the NSFG sample, a much higher proportion of couples include a woman who is more educated than her male partner (42.5% of the NSFG women but only 26.2% of the Columbus women have are more educated than their partners). In terms of race/ethnicity,

Columbus sample includes a slightly higher proportion of white couples and slightly lower percentage of Hispanic couples than the NSFG sample, reflecting the characteristics of both Columbus and Ohio as a whole (U.S. Census Bureau 2008). Finally, the Columbus sample included a higher percentage of couples who had lived together for a very short period of time (3-6 months) and a lower percentage of couples who had lived together for three or more years.

The working class NSFG (n=131) and Columbus (n=26) samples differed in some similar ways to the overall sample. The Columbus working class sample was more educated, with a much higher percentage of couples who both had some college experience. This is likely a function of having recruited participants at a local community college. The Columbus sample also includes a greater proportion of couples in which the female partner has more education. Racially, the Columbus working class sample includes fewer white and Hispanic and more black and mixed race couples than the NSFG sample. Further, reflecting the fact that cohabitators tend to have relatively low incomes (Bumpass and Lu 2000), the NSFG sample included a smaller proportion of couples who were within the lowest income bracket (earning anywhere from \$15,000-\$24,000 per year). Finally, the nationally representative sample included a greater share of couples in which the male partner was four or more years older than his female partner.

It is difficult to compare the Columbus class straddling sample to their nationally representative peers because there are so few couples in the Columbus sample in which one partner had a bachelor's degree or more while the other had some college experience or less (n=8 in Columbus and n=44 in the NSFG 2002 sample). Nonetheless, among the

NSFG sample, a greater proportion of couples were more homogamous in terms of age than among the Columbus sample. Although the Columbus sample remains more highly educated than their peers in the NSFG, among the Columbus sample it is more often the female partner who is more educated; the opposite is true of the NSFG sample.

Finally, the middle class Columbus sample (n=27) differed from the NSFG 2002 middle class sample (n=23) in several ways. Overall, larger proportions of couples in the NSFG sample had completed equal levels of schooling. The Columbus middle class sample also includes fewer minority couples and a larger number of couples in which one partner has been previously married than the NSFG sample. Finally, like the working class and class straddling groups, the Columbus sample includes a greater proportion of couples who have lived together for less than six months. It may be that couples who have just moved in together are more excited to share their experiences with others, making them more likely to respond to requests for study participants.

Although the Columbus sample differs from a nationally representative sample of working class, class straddling, and middle class couples in that the Columbus sample is intentionally more highly educated (due to sampling design) and contains a higher proportion of white couples and lower proportion of Hispanic couples, overall, the two groups are much more similar than different. Individuals among both samples are similar in age, income, prior marital status, and, with the exception of those couples who have lived together for 3-6 months, time cohabiting. The purpose of qualitative research is to explore in-depth information about group characteristics and processes rather than to be able to draw nationally-representative conclusions. However, there is no reason to

suspect that the experiences of this sample of working class, class straddling, and middle class couples from the Columbus, Ohio metropolitan area represent an anomaly.

Table B.1: Comparison of Columbus Sample to NSFG Sample

Variables	Measures	WHOLE SAMPLE		WORKING CLASS	
		Columbus	NSFG 2002	Columbus	NSFG 2002
Age	Number of Couples	61	198	26	131
	Mean Age: Men	27.3 years	26.9 years	26.3 years	26.2 years
	Mean Age: Women	24.8 years	25.0 years	24.5 years	24.1 years
Relative Age	Man > 4 years older	27.9%	29.3%	19.2%	32.8%
	Woman > 4 years older	6.6%	6.6%	7.7%	6.1%
	Both within 4 years	65.6%	61.1%	73.1%	61.1%
Educational Attainment	Both high school or less	1.6%	31.3%	3.8%	47.3%
	One HS or less, one SC	8.2%	22.2%	19.2%	33.6%
	Both some college (SC)	32.8%	12.6%	76.9%	19.1%
	One BA, one HS or less	0.0%	6.6%	0.0%	0.0%
	One BA, one SC	13.1%	13.1%	0.0%	0.0%
	Both BA	23.0%	6.6%	0.0%	0.0%
	One MA, one SC or less	0.0%	2.5%	0.0%	0.0%
	One MA, one BA	16.4%	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Both MA+	4.9%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Relative Schooling	Man has more education	21.3%	19.9%	19.2%	13.9%
	Woman has more education	26.2%	42.5%	23.1%	41.7%
	Equal levels of schooling	52.5%	37.6%	57.7%	44.4%
Race/Ethnicity	Both White	60.7%	53.0%	42.3%	48.9%
	Both Hispanic	3.3%	10.6%	3.8%	15.3%
	Both Black	11.5%	12.1%	15.4%	12.2%
	Mixed	24.6%	22.7%	38.5%	23.7%
Couple-Level Income	\$15,000-\$24,999	14.80%	17.7%	30.8%	19.8%
	\$25,000-49,999	41.00%	66.1%	50.0%	51.2%
	\$50,000 - \$74,999	27.90%	22.9%	15.4%	13.7%
	\$75,000 or more	16.5%	15.6%	3.8%	10.7%
Marital Status	Both never married	82.0%	79.3%	76.9%	77.1%
	One never married, one previously married	18.0%	15.7%	23.1%	17.6%
	Both previously married	0.0%	5.1%	0.0%	5.3%
Duration of Cohabitation	3 – 6 months	31.1%	17.2%	23.1%	16.8%
	7 – 11 months	6.6%	14.7%	7.7%	13.0%
	12 – 23 months	27.9%	24.2%	19.2%	21.4%
	24 – 35 months	18.0%	16.2%	23.1%	17.6%
	3 years or more	16.4%	27.8%	26.9%	31.3%

continued

Table B.1: Continued

Variables	Measures	CLASS STRADDLING		MIDDLE CLASS	
		Columbus	NSFG 2002	Columbus	NSFG 2002
Age	Number of Couples	8	44	27	23
	Mean Age: Men	28.1 years	27.9 years	28.1 years	28.4 years
	Mean Age: Women	25.5 years	26.8 years	24.9 years	26.4 years
	Relative Age				
	Man > 4 years older	37.5%	20.5%	33.3%	26.1%
Relative Age	Woman > 4 years older	12.5%	11.4%	3.7%	0.0%
	Both within 4 years	50.0%	68.2%	63.0%	73.9%
Educational Attainment	Both high school or less	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	One HS or less, one SC	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Both some college (SC)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	One BA, one HS or less	0.0%	29.5%	0.0%	0.0%
	One BA, one SC	100.0%	59.1%	0.0%	0.0%
	Both BA	0.0%	0.0%	51.9%	56.5%
	One MA, one SC or less	0.0%	11.4%	0.0%	0.0%
	One MA, one BA	0.0%	0.0%	37.0%	26.1%
	Both MA+	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	17.4%
Relative Schooling	Man has more education	37.5%	58.1%	18.5%	8.7%
	Woman has more education	62.5%	41.9%	18.5%	17.4%
	Equal levels of schooling	0.0%	0.0%	63.0%	73.9%
Race/Ethnicity	Both White	62.5%	56.8%	77.8%	69.6%
	Both Hispanic	0.0%	2.3%	3.7%	0.0%
	Both Black	25.0%	13.6%	3.7%	8.7%
	Mixed	12.5%	20.5%	14.8%	21.7%
Couple-Level Income	\$15,000-\$24,999	0.0%	11.4%	3.7%	13.0%
	\$25,000-49,999	50.0%	27.3%	18.5%	21.8%
	\$50,000 - \$74,999	50.0%	45.5%	44.4%	26.1%
	\$75,000 or more	0.0%	15.9%	33.3%	39.1%
Marital Status	Both never married	100.0%	79.5%	81.5%	91.3%
	One never married, one previously married	0.0%	13.6%	18.5%	8.7%
	Both previously married	0.0%	6.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Duration of Cohabitation	3 – 6 months	50.0%	15.9%	33.3%	21.7%
	7 – 11 months	0.0%	18.2%	7.4%	17.4%
	12 – 23 months	25.0%	25.0%	37.0%	39.1%
	24 – 35 months	12.5%	13.6%	14.8%	13.0%
	3 years or more	12.5%	27.3%	7.4%	8.7%

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Cohabitation

Rev. 4/15/05

Questions in italics only asked of the middle class sample

Pre-Tape Recorder Introduction

What's the study for?

Discussion of procedure: questions, tape recorded

Signed Consent Form

Thank you for participating in this study. This interview is part of a project that examines changes affecting the family. We want to know more about how people decide to start living together, and also what happens with the relationship after they start sharing a home. I will be asking questions about your life before you moved in with your partner, and how it is now. Your participation is **completely voluntary and confidential**. If we come to any questions that you do not want to answer, just let me know and we'll move on.

The interview should take about an hour and a half of your time. I'm going to tape record the interview, so that I can concentrate on what you're saying. After the interview, the tape will be transcribed and erased. Your interview will then be identified by a number, and your name removed. Your name, or your partner's name, will never be identified in the study.

In order to ensure that your privacy is protected, to demonstrate that we've discussed this before the interview, and to give you the number where you can reach the Project

Director if you have further questions, I'll need you to sign this **consent form**. One copy is yours to keep, and the other copy goes in our locked files.

START INTERVIEW: **Turn on tape.**

This is an interview with _____.

Are you currently working or in school? Ask for **Age**.

I. Family History (Try to draw a time line)

I'd like to start off by getting a brief history of your family as you were growing up.

GET TIME LINE: ask for **AGE/DOB. FOLLOW UP TO PRESENT TIME.**

1. Where were you born?? Who did you live with while you were growing up? (Probe: What did parents do? *How did you feel about mom's work?*) Were you living with **both** parents? How did it change?

People to Cover: biological parents, step-parents or parent's partners, sibs, step/half-sibs, grandparents who lived with/cared for them. **Pay particular attention to marital history of parents.** *Start Time Line.*

2. When you were little what kind of **FAMILY** did you picture having when you grew up?

II. Current Life: School and Work History

What were you doing after you turned 18? And what are you doing **now**?

1. Did you continue **SCHOOL**? How far would you like to go? (Degree?) How do you pay for it???
2. What about **WORK**? What kinds of jobs did you have? Different people want different things out of their jobs. What are things you yourself feel are most important in a job? Why? What do you see yourself doing in the future? *What things have lead you to want to be a ____? (Probe: past work experiences, people, educational experiences) If you could arrange things just the way you wanted, what would you prefer to be doing- working at your present job, working at another job, or not working at all? Why?*
3. Where do you see **FAMILY** fitting into your life? What do you want as far as family goes? *How do you (intend to) balance work and family? How would you ideally like to balance them?*
4. Do you have (any more) plans for **CHILDREN**?
5. What about **MARRIAGE**?

6. **What would you say is your #1 PRIORITY right now?**

III. Dating History / Relationship Progression

We're going to talk now about your relationships.

1. Before your current relationship, have you ever lived with anybody else?
2. How did you meet your partner? Where was it? (Try for month, year)
Who initiated dating?
3. How did you spend time together? How often in a given week? (Probe: Were you seeing other people at the time? Did you talk about just seeing each other? When? What kinds of things did you do (interests?) When did sex and come into the picture? Who initiated sex?)
4. How long had you known each other before you decided to move in together? Who brought up actually living together? (**PROGRESSION:** Was it initially staying over a few nights (#), more than a few (i.e. 7)? Whose place? What about clothes, space? How quickly, in their words did the relationship progress?)
5. Why did you decide to live together?
6. Were there other things going on at the time that influenced your decision?
7. Where did you two first live together? Did you move into a new place together, did you both keep your own places, did one person move into the other's space? Is the lease in one person's name, or both?
8. Did you and your partner discuss any plans for the future when you moved in together? If Yes, **who** brought it up? Did you both agree in **words**?
9. Did you discuss marriage? (Did you want to? If Yes, who brought it up?)

IV. Relationship Expectations/ Satisfaction with Cohabiting

1. A. What did you think living together would be like?
B. Was it like what you thought it would be? (How different?) [Time together, Division of Labor, Expectations, Responsibilities to partner, Sex]
2. What chores do you actually do? What chores does your partner actually do?
3. Have there been changes in your relationship with ____ since you moved in

together? (Intent: to determine how the relationship closeness changed, new things learned about the partner that were liked, disliked)

4. From your point of view, what are the **BEST** things about **LIVING TOGETHER** (rather than still dating or being married)?
5. What are the **WORST** things about **LIVING TOGETHER** (rather than dating or being married)
6. How do you think your life would be different if you were **dating** but **not living with** your partner? (Probe: Would things be different in terms of: Freedom to do what you want? Your sex life? Financial security?)
7. Who controls the money in your home? How do you know you/partner controls it? Do either of you have veto power over the other one's purchase? (Probe: What if you wanted to buy X? What would your partner do? What would you do if your partner wanted to buy something you thought was completely frivolous?)
8. How do you think your life would be different if you were **married** to your partner? (Probe: Would things be different in terms of: financial security? Control over money? Division of labor? Freedom to do what you want?)
7. What does "Marriage" mean **for you personally**?
8. Has living together changed the way you think about marriage? **HOW SO?**

IF LIVING WITH BIOLOGICAL CHILDREN OF BOTH PARTNERS

9. Tell me a little about what happened when you/your partner found out that you/they were pregnant. (Probe: Was the pregnancy planned or a surprise? What was their first reaction? Their partner's? Did they feel ready? Did their partner? Was abortion considered? Was marriage considered?)
10. (Either before or after you/your partner became pregnant with X (name of child),) have you/your partner been worried that you/she was pregnant, or thought she might be? Tell me a little about that.
11. Do you feel like you're ready to have (more) children with your partner? Why or why not? When do you think is the ideal time for having more children?

If No: Go to 13

If Yes: Go to 12

12. Are you and your partner trying to have children now?

If No: Go to question 13

If Yes: Skip 13 and 14, go to 15

13. Many couples in relationships use birth control when they're not sure about having kids. Are either of you using birth control right now? When did you last talk with your partner about birth control? Tell me about that When did you first talk about birth control? Tell me about that
14. Even when people use birth control it sometimes fails. If you (your partner) got pregnant right now, how do you think you would react? How do you think your partner would react? Have the two of you talked about what you would do? Probe: Would you think about marriage?
15. Do you think people should be married before having children? Why or why not? (Probe: Did having a child outside of marriage change their views at all and how so? Is it better for children if their parents are married rather than cohabiting?)
16. What about your partner? What do they think?
17. What do you see as the main differences between cohabitation and marriage?
18. What is marriage for? Why marry? Does marriage mean different things for women as opposed to men? Why or why not? What does it mean for each?
19. What would have to happen for you two to get married? (Probe: When do you think this might happen? Who should propose? Intent: Find out if the female would actually propose and/or how the man would react to it. Don't want to press if they aren't thinking they will and let you know!)

Let them know you are reaching the end of the interview: Last few questions.

20. Over the last few months, how have you and your partner covered your living costs? you getting any kinds of assistance? (Probe: informal from family or friends; informal/under the table work; formal assistance like TANF, WIC, or food stamps; child support/alimony)
21. How satisfied are you with your relationship right now? WHY?
22. Where do you see your relationship going in the future? Do you think your partner feels the same way?

Do they want to add anything else?

Addendum: Cohabitors living with a biological child from a previous relationship
(ask throughout the interview)

Parent of the child:

1. Does having _____(child) living with you affect how you view cohabitation?
(Probe: what have you learned about (partner's) parenting abilities since you've lived together? So, how good of a parent do you feel they would be? Why? Intent: Are they testing partner to see if they would be a good a parent?)
2. How does your partner get along with _____(child)? (Probe: How does this affect the relationship?)
3. Have you and your partner ever disagreed on things that have to do with _____(child)? (Intent: Is having a child in the home a source of stress on the relationship?)

Not parent of the child:

1. Does living with your partner's child affect your relationship? How so? (Probe: How does this affect the relationship? i.e. time for each other, financially?)
2. How do you get along with _____ (partner's child)?
3. Do you contribute to the care of _____ (partner's child)? (Probe: child care, financially, activities with child?)
4. Have you and your partner ever disagreed on things that have to do with _____(child)? (Intent: Is having a child in the home a source of stress on the relationship?)

Table D.1: Typologies by Social Class

	Working Class	Middle Class	Class Straddling	TOTAL
Conventional	9	8	5	36.1%
Contesting	11	12	2	41.0%
Equalitarian	0	3	0	4.9%
Counter-Conventional	6	4	1	18.0%
TOTAL	42.6%	44.3%	13.1%	N = 61

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