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Great Expectations? Working- and Middle-Class Cohabitators' Expected and Actual Divisions of Housework

Young adults often express preferences for egalitarianism but often find themselves in conventional household arrangements. Using interview data from 122 working-class and middle-class cohabitators, the authors applied Komter's (1989) concepts of manifest, latent, and hidden power to examine the ways that contemporary young adults reinforce and modify gender norms surrounding the division of housework. Cohabiting women more often expect equal housework arrangements than men, regardless of class, yet middle-class women achieve equal divisions more often because they are better able to exercise manifest power than their working-class counterparts and because middle-class men appear more willing to cede to their partners' demands. In contrast, working-class women's desires to achieve equality are frequently rebuffed as they face greater resistance or defer to their partners' competing wishes. Although the exercise

of manifest power is central to arranging housework, the hidden power of gender conventions pervades across class, leading many couples toward traditional arrangements.

Expectations for intimate relationships have changed over the past few decades. Not only are individuals more likely to prefer equal partnerships in which they share responsibilities for both paid and unpaid labor (Gerson, 2010; Pedulla & Thébaud, 2015), but they are also more likely to live together outside of marriage (Kennedy & Bumpass, 2008; Schoen, Landale, & Daniels, 2007). Today, nearly 60% of young women have cohabited with a romantic partner (Schoen et al., 2007).

Despite these changes, some norms remain deeply entrenched. Although they desire egalitarian unions, young people note that achieving such relationships is difficult, if not impossible, especially as it relates to sharing domestic labor (Gerson, 2010). Not only do young adults fail to find institutional supports for achieving equality (Risman, 2004), but they must also contend with a cultural milieu that reinforces the essentialism of gender differences tied to the division of labor (Brines, 1994; Gager, 1998; Komter, 1989; Tichenor, 2005). A growing body of literature is examining how gender inequality in housework is maintained, focusing on how gender organizes couples' behaviors, interactions, identities, and

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expectations in ways that reinforce gender conventions and male power and privilege (Ferree, 2010; Komter, 1989; Risman, 2004; Tichenor, 2005) as well as the ways this differs by social class (e.g., Miller & Sassler, 2012; Shows & Gerstel, 2009; Usdansky, 2011).

Most of these studies, nonetheless, focus only on the outcomes of gendered power (e.g., what percentage of the housework each partner does) rather than the process of establishing the division of labor or individuals' feelings about their arrangements. Furthermore, they often examine married couples only. Cohabitation is often discussed as a relationship form that allows couples more freedom to create domestic arrangements with fewer gendered social constraints than those experienced by their married peers (Cherlin, 2004). But it is uncertain how contemporary cohabitators expect to divide domestic labor with their partners, whether their actual arrangements conform to those expectations, and how they react to their divisions.

In this study we expand on the canon of research on gender and domestic labor by using qualitative interview data from 122 working-class and middle-class cohabitators to examine gender and class differences in how power shapes the division of housework. Specifically, we used Komter's (1989) concepts of manifest, latent, and hidden power to examine how individuals reinforce and modify gender norms related to housework. Our findings reveal meaningful and differential experiences by both gender and social class in the ways that power is exercised within intimate unions.

BACKGROUND

Household divisions of labor have become more egalitarian over time, with women decreasing and men increasing their time spent on housework (Bianchi, Sayer, Milkie, & Robinson, 2012). Nonetheless, research has generally found that married women continue to do more hours of housework than married men, even when they devote similar amounts of time to paid labor and earn as much or more than their partners (Lincoln, 2008). Indeed, even among today's young adults with preferences for egalitarian couplings, progress on the home front has stalled (England, 2010).

A great deal of research on the division of housework in couples has focused on gender ideology, time availability, and relative earnings

to account for couples' domestic arrangements (e.g., Domínguez-Folgueras, 2013; Davis, Greenstein, & Marks, 2007). Although all are important factors that contribute to couples' housework divisions, they cannot fully explain women's persistent responsibility for housework. To this end, scholars have drawn attention to gender as an organizing feature of couples. As Ferree (2010) noted, gender is "a social relation characterized by power inequalities that hierarchically produce, organize, and evaluate masculinities and femininities through the contested but controlling practices of individuals, organizations, and societies" (p. 424). Most studies that examine gender in intimate unions have focused primarily on the outcomes of gendered power (e.g., sharing of housework); however, scholars have called for researchers to also examine the specific ways in which power is enacted and how it might be used to challenge or reaffirm conventional gender norms and male privilege (e.g., Ferree, 2010; Gager, 1998; Komter, 1989; Tichenor, 2005; Zvonkovic, Greaves, Schmiede, & Hall, 1996).

Komter (1989) developed a model for assessing gendered power within intimate unions by examining individuals' preferences for, discussions about, and feelings regarding the household division of labor. This approach provided a fuller picture of the ways couples construct the division of housework and identified three dimensions of power that operate within intimate relationships. According to Komter, the first, *manifest power*, is the ability to get another to bend to one's will and is witnessed in visible outcomes such as change in and conflict over the division of household labor. *Latent* or *covert power*, conversely, is evident when no change or conflict is observed despite differences in desires. This is because latent power is exercised when issues are not raised because of fear of destabilizing the relationship, the anticipation of the wishes of the more powerful member, or because previous attempts at altering outcomes failed. Third and last is *invisible* (or *hidden*) *power*, which does not result in overt behavior, per se, but rather in an ideological consensus between dominant (men) and subordinate (women) groups. Within heterosexual couples the hidden power of gender convention was exercised in several ways. For example, it emerged when traditional household arrangements were not challenged because they were seen as natural, inevitable, and unavoidable. Hidden power

was also seen when there was apparent consensus for a conventional division of labor. This occurred when one claimed to prefer a conventional division of labor because of adherence to gender norms even though she or he did not actually desire it personally.

Applying this typology of power, Komter (1989) found differences in Dutch marital relationships by both gender and social class. She found, for example, that, in general, wives desired more change in the division of labor than did their husbands, although both upper class employed wives and their husbands desired more change than did their lower class counterparts. Nonetheless, women's attempts at getting men to take on more housework were largely ineffective. Upper class husbands, for example, more often convinced their wives that their demands for equality were unreasonable as a manifest strategy to maintain the status quo; in contrast, lower class husbands often reverted to ignoring their partners' requests to exercise manifest power. Still, overt conflict was not as prominent for the lower class. Lower class husbands' latent power led wives to resign themselves to their arrangements and kept them from raising the issue again once an edict had been issued. Hidden power, in contrast, was more prevalent among the upper class. Upper class husbands were most likely to be biased regarding their relative contributions and offer more legitimations that conventional arrangements were natural, necessary, and inherent.

Komter's (1989) findings suggest that the role of power in shaping housework arrangements varies across social class; nonetheless, the larger body of housework research is divided on the exact nature of the relationship between the household division of labor and social class. Similar to Komter, one body of literature has found that members of the working class (especially working-class men) have historically held the most conventional beliefs about the household division of labor (e.g., Rubin, 1994). Concomitantly, these attitudes portended conventional behaviors as working-class women were assigned primary responsibility for the housework even as they worked more hours, earned more money, or had more education than their male partners (Brines, 1994; Gupta, 2007; Legerski & Cornwall, 2010; Miller & Sassler, 2012). In contrast, middle-class women more often desired an equal sharing partner in the home, or, at least, they wished to outsource the

domestic labor in order to maintain their own careers (Blair-Loy, 2003; Brewster & Padavic, 2000; Usdansky, 2011), and highly educated men were more likely than their working-class peers to share in the domestic labor with their partners (Sullivan, Gurion, & Coltrane, 2008).

In contrast to these findings, a second body of research provides evidence for what Usdansky (2011) termed the *gender-equality paradox*. Although this scholarship also found that the working class has more conventional gender attitudes than the middle class, it found that working-class couples were more egalitarian than middle-class couples in how they actually divided the domestic labor. This paradox stemmed from familial economic dependence on the female partners' incomes that gave working-class women greater power within their households and conventional gender norms that led working-class couples to simultaneously understate the real amount of household labor performed by male partners (Ferree, 1984; Garey, 1999; Silva, 2013; Williams, 2010). At the same time, some middle-class couples, especially those who were parents, found themselves replicating traditional arrangements whereby women were responsible for housework and child care (Blair-Loy, 2003). Even though college-educated women were more likely to be employed than their working-class counterparts (Damaske, 2011; England, Garcia-Beaulieu, & Ross, 2004), they faced difficult choices about remaining in the workforce, especially as their professional husbands worked increasingly long hours and participated less in routine family and household chores than working-class men (Cha, 2010; Shows & Gerstel, 2009; Stone, 2007).

Although research focusing on gender as a social process has illuminated how a gendered division of labor is maintained and how this varies across class, questions about these processes remain. For instance, although, as Komter (1989) noted, attempts to enact changes in an already-established division of household chores may be an important site for examining relational power, the initial establishment of the household division of labor may be equally important. Nonetheless, this has rarely been a focus of research. In addition, the degree to which Komter's findings regarding gender, class, and power still apply a quarter of a century later is unclear. A sole focus on gender inequality and power among married individuals now seems antiquated, as cohabitation has become

an increasingly common (and increasingly more diverse) union type (Manning & Cohen, 2012). Cohabitation, therefore, is an important context in which to investigate the dynamics of gender, class, and power because these unions are, for most individuals, the jumping off point for future marital relationships and may be a place where gender norms and conventions have less control over individuals' behaviors and ideas (Cherlin, 2004).

Data collected primarily in the late 1980s indicated that cohabitators had more egalitarian attitudes about gender and shared household chores more equally than did married individuals (e.g., Davis et al., 2007; Domínguez-Folgueras, 2013; Shelton & John, 1993; South & Spitze, 1994). Nonetheless, cohabiting women did more housework than cohabiting men (Domínguez-Folgueras, 2013; Shelton & John, 1993; South & Spitze, 1994), suggesting that traditional gender scripts still pervaded to at least some degree. However, cohabitators are not a homogeneous group. Research has shown that working-class and middle-class couples often chose to live together for different reasons (Sassler & Miller, 2011), and in many instances the outcomes of their cohabitations (e.g., breaking up, remaining cohabiting, or marrying) and how they felt about advancing their relationships differed as well (Lichter, Sassler, & Turner, 2014; Miller, Sassler, & Kusi-Appouh, 2011). These differences aside, we know little about what cohabitators expect regarding housework arrangements upon moving in together, whether their actual arrangements are consistent with these expectations, or how they feel about their arrangements once formed. Although data collected on married couples may help illuminate these processes, it is difficult to determine exactly how cohabitators may differ.

In this study, then, we asked the following questions: Given changes in recent decades in young adults' family formation behaviors and stated desires for egalitarianism (Gerson, 2010; Pedulla & Thébaud, 2015) how does power operate among cohabiting men and women today? Are there gender and class variations in the demonstration of power among working- and middle-class cohabitators? Finally, how does the demonstration of power affect individuals' feelings toward and satisfaction with their housework arrangements?

METHOD

To provide an in-depth account of individuals' expectations for and satisfaction/disappointment with the division of household labor, we used information from semistructured qualitative interviews (Charmaz, 1983). The data for this project are part of a larger examination of working-class and middle-class cohabiting couples. Individuals were asked to detail their divisions of labor, the stories of their relationships, and their fertility and contraceptive experiences as well as their future relationship and family plans. The sample was limited to 18- to 36-year-olds (the prime family-formation years) who had been living together for at least 3 months, which gave couples time to establish domestic patterns.

Data

Couples were recruited in Columbus, Ohio, between 2004 and 2006. Working-class couples were recruited primarily from signs primarily posted at and around a very large community college, although many individuals who were nonstudents were told of our study by friends who saw the advertisement. Middle-class couples were recruited primarily from signs posted at coffee shops, gourmet grocery stores, and an online community message board.

A minimum couple-level income of \$15,000 was required to be included in the sample, as one partner may have been staying home with children, though such an arrangement was very rare among our sample. However, determining social class, in particular with a relatively young sample, is always challenging because individuals may not yet have completed their education or be permanently situated into their occupations. This is especially true when data are initially collected at the couple level. In keeping with past analyses of these data and given the age of the sample, we used education as the primary determinant of social class, followed by occupation among those couples who were educationally heterogamous. As a result, the vast majority of the middle-class individuals held at least a bachelor's degree; those who did not were employed in autonomous positions, primarily as successful small business owners and coupled with partners who were credentialed. The working-class members of this sample overwhelmingly had some college education or less; four individuals

among their ranks did hold bachelor's degrees but were employed in fields that do not require a college education (e.g., telemarketing) and had partners who had less than a college education.

For this project, the first author and two additional researchers conducted open-ended semistructured interviews, each lasting between 1 hour and 2.5 hours, with 122 individuals (30 working-class and 31 middle-class couples) regarding their expectations for and feelings about the domestic division of labor. Each partner was interviewed separately but simultaneously in order to preserve complete confidentiality. Because most of their expectations were determined without consulting their partners, our primary level of analysis in this study was the individual. Nonetheless, many individuals mentioned their partners during their interviews, to brag (or complain) about them, for example. We include those discussions here when appropriate. Participants were asked to recall their expectations for how they envisioned dividing the housework before they moved in together and to discuss their feelings about their current divisions of household labor as well as changes that have occurred in their divisions of labor over time and the ways that they felt about those changes. Following in the tradition of Hertz (1995), we present information about the household division of labor as each individual sees it, especially in light of the fact that perceptions of fairness in domestic labor seem to be far more closely linked to individual satisfaction than actual divisions of labor do (Frisco & Williams, 2003).

Sample Information

On average, middle-class participants were somewhat older and more educated than their working-class counterparts. The mean income was \$22,045 for working-class men and \$17,427 for working-class women. Middle-class men earned, on average, \$39,812; their female counterparts had a mean income of \$26,731. The differences between groups in education and occupation helped clarify their income differences; working-class individuals frequently worked in retail, as waitstaff, or in computer support, and middle-class individuals were employed in professions such as architecture, education, and master's-level allied health fields. Among the entire sample, 76.6% identified as White, 6.6% identified as Black, 11.5%

identified as Latino or Hispanic, and the remainder of the sample identified as multiracial. Compared to the working-class sample, the middle-class sample included a higher proportion of those who identified as White. Finally, the middle-class couples followed a more traditional family formation pathway in that few had children. At least one partner had children among 12 of the working-class couples and four of the middle-class couples.

Analytic Strategy

All interviews were transcribed verbatim from digital recordings with all identifying information changed to protect respondents' privacy. Transcripts from working-class couples were coded by the first author and an additional researcher; transcripts from middle-class couples were coded by both authors. In each instance, areas of disagreement were discussed until a consensus was reached.

All transcripts were first open coded line by line to generate broad themes such as overall domestic expectations or the general level of satisfaction with the household division of labor (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Throughout our analysis we induced codes that emerged from repeated readings of the transcripts (e.g., we discovered that some individuals felt "tricked" because their partners were quite tidy when living alone, then became messier after merging households) and use both *a priori* and *juxta vivo* concepts to extend and refine previous research, such as Komter's (1989) theory of power as it pertains to the division of household labor (LaRossa, 2012). We worked reflexively, rereading transcripts, for example, to find examples of latent power, as well as laying Komter's three types of power over our induced codes (e.g., "particular chore refusal") to examine whether the quotes contained within those themes illustrated any of the three forms of power. Next, the data were coded axially in order to look at linkages between topics as well as the variability within codes (e.g., the range of reasons why individuals may be satisfied with their current domestic arrangements.) During this stage we created tables of codes to examine how often each theme emerged among individuals by gender and social class (e.g., working-class women or middle-class men), then used repeated readings of those categories to identify the similarities and differences in content among their

responses. Finally, we used selective coding to refine categories and relate them to other concepts. In so doing we focused our efforts in constructing a narrative based on the relationship between variables (LaRossa, 2012); that is, we sought to understand the overall story line that explained the ways cohabitators use manifest, latent, and hidden power in the household division of labor and how those strategies were similar or different by gender and social class.

RESULTS

We began by examining some overall patterns in cohabitators' expectations for dividing the housework and the degree to which these expectations coincided with individuals' actual housework arrangements. As shown in Table 1,

expectations for egalitarian and conventional divisions of housework were equally common among cohabiting men and women—a finding that contrasts somewhat with observations made by Gerson (2010) and others that egalitarian preferences dominate among young adults and cohabitators. Expectations nonetheless appeared to vary by both gender and class. Not surprisingly, the women in our sample more often expected egalitarian arrangements than did the men, regardless of class (45.9% of all women vs. 32.8% of all men). Although similar numbers of women within both classes had expectations for an egalitarian housework arrangement (43.6% vs 48.4%), more middle-class men expected to share the housework equally than did working-class men (39.7% vs. 27.7%).

Table 1. *Individuals Expected and Actual Divisions of Housework*

Household divisions	All individuals		Working-class individuals		Middle-class individuals	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Initial expectations for housework						
<i>n</i>	61	61	30	30	31	31
Expected she'd do majority	29.5%	41.0%	26.7%	33.3%	32.3%	48.4%
Expected he'd do majority	8.2%	6.6%	10.0%	10.0%	6.5%	3.2%
Expected to share it equally	32.8%	45.9%	26.7%	43.4%	38.7%	48.4%
No initial expectations	29.5%	6.6%	36.7%	13.3%	22.6%	0.0%
Actual division of housework						
<i>n</i>	61	61	30	30	31	31
She does majority	55.7%	57.4%	66.7%	66.7%	48.4%	51.6%
He does majority	11.5%	9.8%	16.7%	20.0%	6.5%	0.0%
Shared equally	32.8%	32.8%	16.7%	13.3%	45.2%	48.4%
Actual division of housework for those who expected they'd share housework equally						
<i>n</i>	20	28	8	13	12	15
She does majority	35.0%	46.4%	62.5%	61.5%	16.7%	33.3%
He does majority	5.0%	3.6%	0.0%	7.7%	8.3%	0.0%
Shared equally	60.0%	50.0%	37.5%	30.8%	75.0%	66.7%
Actual division of housework for those who expected she'd do majority of housework						
<i>n</i>	18	25	8	10	10	15
She does majority	83.3%	68.0%	87.5%	70.0%	80.0%	66.7%
He does majority	5.6%	8.0%	12.5%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Shared equally	11.1%	24.0%	0.0%	10.0%	20.0%	33.3%
Actual division of housework for those with no initial expectation						
<i>n</i>	18	4	11	4	7	0
She does majority	55.6%	75.0%	54.5%	75.0%	57.1%	0.0%
He does majority	22.2%	25.0%	27.3%	25.0%	14.3%	0.0%
Shared equally	22.2%	0.0%	18.2%	0.0%	28.6%	0.0%

On the surface, our interviews suggested that middle-class women and men more often expected conventional housework arrangements than did the working class. This, however, is somewhat misleading. When situations were unclear (as in the case of the nearly three in 10 men who stated that they had no initial expectation for how housework would be divided), individuals often reverted to hegemonic behaviors (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). Therefore, when we considered both couples with no initial expectations and those who expected the female partner to do the housework, we saw no class differences in expectations among women, but working-class men more often adhered to gender conventions for housework than did middle-class men (63% vs. 55%).

In terms of actual divisions of housework, the majority of cohabitators—~56%—reported that the female partner was responsible for the majority of housework. Just under one third reported that housework was shared equally, and around one in 10 reported that the male partner did most of the housework. The prevalence of particular arrangements nonetheless appeared to vary by class. On the whole, middle-class individuals were roughly equally divided as to whether they shared the housework equally with their partners (~46%) or whether the female partner did most of the domestic labor (~50%). In contrast, two thirds of working-class individuals reported that the female partner did the majority of the housework, with a much smaller percentage noting that they divided it equally (~18%). The working class, nonetheless, more often noted that the male partner did the majority of housework than did the middle class. This arrangement was, however, very rare.

In addition to class differences in expected and actual arrangements, we observed variation in respondents' abilities to meet their expectations for the division of household labor. Expectations that the female partner would perform most of the housework were more often met than egalitarian ideals. Approximately three quarters of the individuals who expected the female partner to do the majority of housework had a conventional housework arrangement. In contrast, individual expectations for equality were attained only half of the time. Although the ability to meet expectations for a conventional division of housework did not vary by class, middle-class participants more often met expectations for an equal division of housework

than did working-class participants (~70% vs. ~35%). In many instances among the working class in particular, traditional arrangements were the outcome despite egalitarian expectations. Although we explored time availability and relative resources (results not shown but available on request) as possible explanations for these differences, neither appeared to be shaping class differences in couples' housework arrangements. Therefore, we turned to an examination of manifest, latent, and hidden power to explain cohabitators' expected and actual arrangements for the household division of labor.

Manifest Power

Manifest power, or the ability to get another to do as you wish, was more often exercised successfully by men in our sample. Nonetheless, we also found that the middle-class cohabiting women we interviewed seemed to assert a good deal of power of their own. Working-class women's attempts to induce change within their households were less often effective. There is little to no indication that manifest power was tied to paid work arrangements in the home; instead, it was tied to class with respect to the frequency and manner by which it is exercised.

Expectations for dividing domestic labor. Power was evidenced among a few of these cohabitators in the ways they arrived at their expectations for the domestic labor. Very few of these individuals ($n = 6$ working class and 6 middle class) noted that they had conversations with their partners about household expectations before moving in together. Of those who did talk about the division of labor, the discussions of the middle class (in particular, the middle-class women) were much more specific and directive than those of their working-class counterparts. Vickie, a full-time, working-class pharmacy technician, for example, explained how her arrangement with Howard was relatively vague. She said, "Basically from day one we both, like with the whole house we'd said, 'any mess you make you clean up' like, nobody was assigned to dishes or anything like that." In contrast, Kristina, a full-time architect, provided a response that was typical of middle-class respondents. She said that she knew that she would take on most of the housework, then clarified:

But I also laid down rules. I'm like, "Look if we're going to move in together, you're doing the dishes. You're cutting the grass ..." We actually sat down and I said, "OK, I'll do this, this and this but I'm not going to do it by myself."

Other middle-class women, like Amy, a full-time speech therapist, did not necessarily address their expectations with their partners before moving in together, but had them clearly delineated in their own heads. She explained,

I knew he would not ever clean a bathroom and I knew I would be doing like most of the cleaning kind of things but I expected him to do his own laundry and take out the trash and help. I do all the cooking so I do expect him to help clean up the kitchen, like do the dishes and things like that, not solely or every night, but to have some part in that stuff.

A large share of women, especially among the middle class, expected to do most of the housework. However, college-educated women were also much more assertive and forthright in setting limits on what they would do (as well as what they expected of their partners).

Actual division of domestic labor. In the actual division of domestic labor, middle-class women successfully used manifest power more than their working-class counterparts. They were also more satisfied with their divisions of housework. This may be because they more often had their initial expectations (especially those of equality) met or ended up with a "better deal" than they originally expected (e.g., they expected to do most of the housework but ended up sharing it nearly equally with their partners). This suggests that either middle-class women had more power than their working-class counterparts to get the arrangements they want or that middle-class men were more willing to cede to their partners' stated wishes. We found that it was a bit of both. Alisha, for example, a full-time, college-educated pricing analyst, expected, on the basis of her observations of Jared's parents, that she would have to do most of the housework. She said, "I was kind of nervous because ... 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." Asked if their division turned out like she expected, she said,

It actually is better. There still are some times where he'll say stuff that if I was his grandma or his mom [I] would be expected [to do], and I'll look at him and politely say, "I'm not your grandma and I'm not your mom." She added, "It didn't turn out like [I expected] but I had that fear."

Alisha's manifest power, like that of other middle-class women, was apparent in the way she directly confronted Jared's veiled attempt to remind her that her desires for arranging the housework were disruptive to tradition. She had gotten her way; nonetheless, she noted, as at the time of their interviews, Jared automatically did the dishes if she cooked dinner.

Like Jared, the middle-class men in this sample were generally willing to help with domestic chores when asked, yet they (and, to a lesser degree, middle-class women) also exercised manifest power by refusing to complete their most dreaded chores. Evan, a full-time salesman, for example, was willing to make a number of concessions to accommodate his partner's greater desire for cleanliness, but he explained, "I don't do floors. If it has to scrub, I don't do it. I'll Swiffer, I'll vacuum. I do not scrub." Similarly, middle-class Sabrina, a full-time student and part-time cashier at a gourmet grocery store, said, "We talked and I said 'I'm not very clean and if the house is messy I'm OK with that.'" She explained that her partner always cleans the bathrooms, saying, "I don't because I'm not willing to do it. If it was up to me there would be grime in the sink. The toilet would be clean, but everything else would be gross."

Working-class women, too, hoped their partners would "help" around the house. However, their pleas were more often ignored, or the men's added contributions were frequently minimal. Jackie, for example, got Chad to regularly take out the trash—his only consistent chore to date. Sandra, the shift manager at a pizza restaurant, explained that Shane would now place his garbage in the recycling bin but that she still had to take it to the curb. She said, "It took me 4 years to get him into that, but he's doing it so I just have to make sure that when [the bins] are full I take them out." Why did the working-class women experience so much more difficulty getting their partners to take on a bit more of the domestic labor? Three factors appeared to be at play: (a) working-class women's lack of assertiveness, (b) working-class men's attitudes toward housework, and (c) working-class women's subscription to hegemonic gender norms.

Unlike many of the middle-class women who were direct about their expectations for their partners, working-class women less often clearly and directly voiced their desires. For example, Brittany, a veterinary technician, had hoped to avoid arguments about chores by posting a chart on the refrigerator for Spencer to see. She imagined that when he saw all of the boxes that she had initialed that he would realize that he should do a bit more, but she did not want to risk being seen as a nag when her relatively few requests were not met. She said, "I wish that he would do more because neither one of us have a lot of time to dedicate to cleaning," then clarified:

Every once in awhile I'll ask him if he can do this while I'm at work and sometimes when I get home from work and it's not done I don't nag him or anything but I just say "You just watched TV the whole time?"

At the same time, working-class men in this sample more often expressed their own manifest power through the use of rationalization. They explained why they could not or would not take on additional household chores, noting that they were already doing more than they expected to have to do around the house, that housework was more difficult for them than it was for their partners, or that they simply had no desire to do it. Chad, who worked full time installing telecommunications systems, explained, "I've actually wound up doing more than I expected that I would do. I'm still not great just because I have a hard time seeing when stuff's out of order." Similarly, Robert, who hung gutters full time, was asked how much housework he did. He answered, "Nothing. I mean, really, I don't do anything. She'll spend hours on it and I'll spend like half an hour." He explained why he did not do more housework when asked, saying,

When I was younger, my mom would just do all the dishes and clean everything. So I've never really had to clean, you know, I've never had to do all that stuff. So it's hard for me now, you know, I'm like, every little bit I do I feel like it's a lot.

It is not surprising, then, that many working-class women were very unhappy with their household divisions of labor compared to middle-class women, particularly if they found themselves doing most of the housework—whether they had expected to or not. Even when

working-class women expected to do most of the housework, they often did not anticipate taking on quite as large of a share as they were actually performing. Dissatisfaction seemed especially strong for women who had expected to share the housework equally but found themselves doing the majority of it, especially because two thirds of these dissatisfied working-class women were working and/or in school at least as often as—and, in many instances, more hours per week than—their male partners. These women strongly believed that the partner who had more time available should be taking on a larger share of the housework, making the disconnect especially disconcerting.

A third factor, their own beliefs about gender, may have kept these working-class women from pushing more strongly for a more equal division of labor. Although they were not routinely asked to explain this behavior, Dawn's interview may shed some light on the issue. She explained that she dealt with her dissatisfaction because Eric, "puts up with my crap," which she explained meant providing reassurance whenever she doubted his love for her. She then added,

You know, we see all these ads in papers of how we should look and society puts such a role on you. I mean, you're kind of brought up that way. Plus, I mean, I hate to say it but you still want to please the guy. We're still kind of in that homemaker kind of phase of cleaning and taking care of the kids and stuff. So really in the long run, the women [are] working just as much as the men, getting paid less, doing all of the housework, taking care of the kids. So the men are sitting on their butts, watching the football game.

Although further study is clearly required, social norms for conventional roles, even if a somewhat more equal division is desired by women like Dawn, may have affected working-class women more strongly than their middle-class counterparts. Just as Alisha was able to reject this model (and clearly told her partner that she had done so), Dawn felt that subscribing to this model, even if it is less than ideal for her, was part of keeping her partner happy. But men's latent power may have also discouraged working-class women from voicing their dissatisfaction.

Latent Power

Being able to table an unwanted discussion or keep one's partner from ever raising an issue

entirely are forms of latent power. Among our sample of contemporary cohabitators, latent power rarely arose. We saw the impact of latent power only in feelings about the actual division of domestic labor both when a few working-class women admitted to “giving up” trying to get help with the housework and when women of both social classes failed to question why their male partners suddenly reduced the amount of housework they did upon moving in together.

Feelings about the actual division of domestic labor. Although relatively uncommon, a handful of working-class women (most of whom were extremely dissatisfied with their divisions of labor) had initially challenged, then given up on, getting their partners to take on a more equal share. Jackie, for example, a full-time social work paraprofessional, explained that she was reluctant to ask Chad to take on chores because “I don’t want to feel naggy.” However, upon further probing, it seemed that Chad’s reactions also played a role in her reluctance to ask him to do more. Asked to detail their situation, she said,

Like at first it was a really big issue. ... Our first couple issue was chores, and I just explained like “I’ve got a lot going on. I’m working, I’m going to school. I’m going to pull my hair out if I have to do all this work” and that I need him to help me out, and he was very understanding about it and he helps, he does, but he just he doesn’t understand my level of cleanliness. It seems ridiculous to him. He thinks I’m crazy.

At the time of her interview, rather than risk another fight or have Chad think she was “crazy” for her demands, Jackie typically just did the chores herself. Vanessa, who resold textbooks full time, explained that she and Robert used to have arguments about the division of chores “every single day.” She elaborated, saying

We’d be throwing stuff at each other. I mean like, it got to the point where I asked him to move out but by that point he was getting mail and (laughs) everything there, and he didn’t want to leave, and he’d talk about “This is my house too.” ... We just got over that and just developed a new system.

The new system, according to Vanessa, was that “He doesn’t do any labor and I do it all. ... I basically do all of it to avoid arguments now.” These working-class men exercised latent

power through implying their partners’ demands were outrageous or by staging heated arguments, therefore keeping the women from raising the topic again.

Latent power was also exercised by men in this sample of cohabitators when women failed to question their partners about the reasons why they dramatically decreased their housework performance upon moving in together. A small but nontrivial number of the women of both social classes in this sample reasoned that, because their partners were so tidy when they lived separately, the same would be true after moving in together. That was not the case. For example, Patty, who worked as a barista 30 hours per week, noted that when her partner lived with male roommates he was always complaining about how messy they were. She said,

I was expecting “Great! We both like to clean. That will be great! We can both clean things. It will be wonderful ...” Not the case. We move in together and he’s a total pig about everything.

A few men, like Tyrone, a full-time, working-class postal worker, noticed that they fell into this pattern. He noted how amazed his partner Sherry was when she first saw his (solo) apartment:

For some reason, it’s easier for me to keep my place clean when I stay by myself. ... When she first used to come over to [my] house she was like, “God!” she was like, “How is this [possible] ...?” I mean I got my crib, my house, decorated nice like a woman lives there or something, you know, and for some reason it’s easier to keep it like that when I’m by myself. I don’t know why.

Women like Patty and Sherry never questioned their partners about the large (and disappointing) changes they underwent. It is unclear, however, whether this was because they did not wish to upset their partners or whether they privileged the men’s desired arrangements. Failing to question one’s partner about why he decreased his level of housework upon moving in together is a form of latent power. One reason why this decrease may have happened in the first place is due to cultural messages about gender that affect their partners’ behaviors and individual relationships. These cultural expectations for male and female behavior within intimate relationships are a form of hidden power that shapes the division of household labor.

Hidden Power

Within our sample we saw several ways that hidden power—in this case, hegemonic ideals about gender-appropriate behavior—affected individuals' expectations, feelings, and behaviors surrounding housework. Hidden power appeared in these unions in the forms of both perceptual bias (the over- or underestimation of one's own or one's partner's housework contributions) and apparent consensus (agreement on housework arrangements, even as the female partner also simultaneously expressed greater discontent with that arrangement). Furthermore, we found that the hidden power of essential gender difference varied subtly by social class. Working-class men relied more often on the expectation that women were the cooks and cleaners by default because of their "natural proclivities," and working-class women made similar assumptions due to men's assumed incompetence. In contrast, hidden power emerged among middle-class men and women in the form of supposed "personality traits" and their failure to recognize that these are gendered. Finally, some middle-class men and women seemed to express a *de facto* belief that housework was primarily a woman's responsibility through the language of men "helping" with household chores.

Expectations for dividing domestic labor. A surprising number of men ($n = 18$), most of whom were working class, often noted that they had never personally considered, let alone discussed with their current partners, how they would divide the domestic labor before moving in together, saying things like, "I don't know. I guess I didn't think about it." This failure to consider which partner would do the housework was a form of masculine privilege and therefore is a representation of hidden power, as individuals often default to conventional roles when situations are unclear (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). In essence, because convention dictates that men are not the ones responsible for the bulk of the housework, they did not have to think about the details of arranging it. In fact, in these instances their female partners often ended up doing the majority of the household labor.

Other working-class men who expected their partners to do most of the housework either noted their partners' penchants for cleanliness or, in a few instances, explained, rather matter-of-factly, that certain chores were better performed by persons of a particular gender. For

example, Simon, a full-time carpenter, said that he felt that masculine and feminine proclivities would lead him and Laura, who worked 30 hours per week as a waitress, to each do particular chores. He said, "I think laundry is typically more feminine," elaborating, "I think women are just very particular. Women have a certain way they want things folded, a certain amount of how they wash things, how they treat their stains." He went on to explain that taking out the garbage is a masculine chore given the weight of the trash bags and the fact that they must be taken out in the cold weather. Terrell, a full-time dock worker, was more straightforward. Asked about his expectations about the housework, he simply said he expects "Her to do everything." When asked why he felt that way, he replied, "Because she's a woman."

Working-class women, too, discussed male and female natural proclivities to explain their expectations for their housework arrangements. Working-class women focused not on what their male partners would do but rather on concerns about how the men might "mess up" certain chores. Valencia, for example, who had recently left her retail job, was worried about how her partner would do the laundry. She said, "I got like nervous that he's going to put the red with the whites or something and it's going to bleed everywhere, so I [was] like, 'No, I'll just do it.'" These narratives demonstrated hidden power that allowed men to avoid housework through cultural assumptions about male housework incompetence.

In contrast to the hidden power of gender convention expressed most frequently by the working class, a number of middle-class individuals (especially men) drew on their personal philosophies of egalitarianism to explain their expectations for shared housework responsibilities. For example, Justin, a middle-class full-time salesman, said, "I'm trying to set an example for men that 'Hey, your wife can be equal to you.' ... We're definitely trying to lead by example." Similarly, Jack, a full-time financial planner, alluded to himself as a modern man when he discussed his expectations. He said, "I'm pretty domesticated and open minded. I don't mind sharing responsibilities ..." These individuals rarely used the words *feminist* or *egalitarian* to express their desires to be non-traditional, but they made it clear that sharing the housework was very important to their self-concepts.

Clearly, not all middle-class individuals expected an egalitarian division of labor, however. Rather than explaining that one gender is just “better at” or “should do” particular chores in general, middle-class men and women who expected female partners to shoulder the largest share of housework drew on individualized personality traits to explain expectations for their relationships. The hidden power of gender norms operated among middle-class men and women in their failure to recognize that their rationale for their housework expectations occurred because of gender socialization. For example, Katherine, a full-time research coordinator, explained, “Oh I knew that [our division] 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.” Middle-class Evan, who worked in sales full time, explained that Juliana would be doing most of the housework because she was neater than he was. He said, “I’m a guy; I’m sloppy to some extent. Having her around, [she’s the] complete opposite.” At least in terms of justifying their expectations, these individuals seemed unable to recognize the invisible gender norms and socialization that lead to these differences in skills or preferences.

Actual division of domestic labor. The hidden power of hegemonic gender ideals was further evidenced among the middle class in their characterization of men’s housework performance as “helping.” The language of “helping one’s partner” implies that chores are still primarily a woman’s responsibility (see also Legerski & Cornwall, 2010). Middle-class Natasha, who owned a fitness center, said of Greg, who owned a construction company,

He helps out if he can, or I’ll leave the vacuum out and say, “Hey can you empty that and vacuum?” And he’ll do it. Whatever I ask him to do he has no problem doing it. He’s very helpful. I wouldn’t trade him for anything (laughs).

This “help” seems to explain in part why middle-class women were more satisfied than their working-class counterparts, even if they were doing more housework than they initially expected. That these college-educated men were willing to provide assistance when asked (despite often working more hours per week

than their working-class male counterparts) may have made some of the burden seem lighter for the women. In this vein, middle-class men listened and responded to their partners in a way that working-class men did not. Although this helping gave middle-class women a modicum of manifest power, it nonetheless primarily served to maintain middle-class men’s general housework privileges and perpetuated inequality. Moreover, because of this frame, middle-class women perceived housework inequality as equitable because there is the real, or at least illusionary, sense that if she wanted a reprieve (from what are considered—but never discussed as—“her” responsibilities) it was available. We observed this theme of “helping” much less often among the working class; instead, working-class men ignored and rationalized away their partners’ requests; at the same time, their partners often avoided engaging in a direct dialogue about the issue.

Feelings about the actual division of domestic labor. A final indicator of the hidden power operating within unions was apparent consensus. For the most part, the couples we interviewed who had achieved their expected division of housework were quite satisfied with their housework arrangements. Yet in numerous cases respondents reported feeling frustrated or unhappy despite having achieved the division of housework they desired. In nearly all cases it was working-class employed women who were unhappy, and this was universally in situations where they were doing the majority of the housework. Asked about their division of labor, for example, Dawn, who earlier acknowledged that she did most of the housework in part because of societal expectations, said simply, “It sucks, man. I do almost all of it.” Asked if their unequal division of labor was what she had anticipated, she explained that even though she had expected to do most of the work, “I thought it would be a little bit better than what it is.” These discrepancies highlight the hidden power of gender convention. Each of these women’s deep dissatisfaction with their arrangements demonstrated their real desires for equality, yet none felt as though they could reasonably expect to have their desires fulfilled. In many ways, their interviews revealed that this handful of working-class women, despite their own desires, deferred to their male partners’ preferences—a

clear sign of male privilege operating within each of these unions.

DISCUSSION

Despite young adults' stated desires for egalitarian unions (Gerson, 2010; Pedulla & Thébaud, 2015), women, on average, often take on a larger share of household responsibilities than their male partners (e.g., Bianchi et al., 2012; Shelton & John, 1993; South & Spitze, 1994). In this article we have used cohabitators' actual words to explain how various forms of power are expressed in formulating expectations for and actually dividing household labor. In doing so, we provide evidence of how gender and class shape the way power operates within these unions to not only contest gender conventions but also to frequently maintain male privilege and women's responsibility for housework. Overall, we found that, although there were few class differences in anticipation regarding the division of housework, middle-class individuals reported more equal arrangements in practice, and middle-class women were more satisfied with their divisions, even if they were quite conventional.

Using a three-part conceptualization of power, we examined the ways that these working- and middle-class cohabiting individuals used and were affected by manifest, latent, and hidden power in their relationships. We found that manifest power was most often used by men, although in different ways; working-class men rationalized why they could not or would not take on a larger share of the household chores, and middle-class men frequently refused to complete particularly dreaded household tasks. Middle-class women also refused specific tasks and clearly requested that their partners take on particular responsibilities. When working-class women attempted to get their partners to take on a larger share of the household chores, they were less direct and their attempts were often ignored, or their partners made only minimal changes. Although latent power rarely emerged among this sample, we did find that hidden power operates differently across social class as well. Hidden power was seen most clearly in the persistence of gendered beliefs about men's and women's natural housework proclivities and abilities and in middle-class men's willingness to "help"

with (women's) housework, but was also evident in apparent consensus about conventional housework sharing, especially among employed working-class women. Hidden power appeared as well in the sizable share of working-class men who moved in with their partners with no expectations about how to divide household labor.

In all, our findings provide evidence of at least some changes over time in the way that these three forms of power are used. Latent power, for example, featured prominently in Komter's (1989) sample, especially among lower-class men, but it rarely appeared in our own. Komter primarily discussed the use of manifest power by men, but we found that middle-class women, too, are able to successfully wield this form of power in their relationships, setting clear expectations for their divisions of labor. Yet our results are also able to speak to more contemporary debates about social class, the household division of labor, and the relationship between beliefs and behaviors. Whereas some research has found that conventional beliefs among the working class result in conventional household divisions of labor (e.g., Brines, 1994; Gupta, 2007; Legerski & Cornwall, 2010; Miller & Sassler, 2012; Rubin, 1994), others have found that, although the attitudes of the working class toward gender are more conventional, their actual domestic divisions are more equal than those of their middle-class peers (e.g., Shows & Gerstel, 2009; Usdansky, 2011; Williams, 2010). Our findings are more consistent with the former than the latter. Although a handful of working-class men in our sample had taken on the largest share of the household labor, far more often they espoused views that housework is "women's work." Working-class women more frequently gave up challenging their partners, even when it was clear that they disagreed with them. In contrast, although many college-educated cohabitators expected and crafted conventional divisions of labor, a larger number of middle-class men, in particular, had expectations for equality, and a few middle-class individuals pointedly tried to create egalitarian unions based on their personal beliefs about gender or feelings about fairness. It is not surprising, then, that a higher number of middle-class individuals reported having an egalitarian division of labor and that middle-class women were far more satisfied than their working-class counterparts.

Some evidence suggests that the increasing importance of working-class women's paychecks for their household coffers and the decline of working-class male employment in recent decades should lead to their more equal sharing of household labor (Sum, Khatiwada, McLaughlin, & Palma, 2011; Usdansky, 2011; Williams, 2010). So why did the working-class women in this sample seem to have had so much difficulty getting the arrangements they desire? Three factors seemed to operate. First, working-class women often used less assertive communication methods to request that the men take on what they felt was a more equitable share of the work. Because it is through clear and overt discussion that a consensus regarding labor decisions emerge (Komter, 1989; Zvonkovic et al., 1996), the directness demonstrated by middle-class men and women in setting clearer limits led not only to achieving one's desired housework arrangement but also greater satisfaction with these arrangements. Of course, the successful exercise of manifest power is a two-way street requiring that one's partner cede the argument. Indeed, a second reason working-class women did not achieve their desires for egalitarian divisions of housework is that, unlike many middle-class men who were making at least some progress toward closing the inequality gap, even if they were doing less than half of the housework, a larger number of working-class men argued that doing more housework was too difficult or not their responsibility. Many of these men ignored their partners or, when that did not suffice, staged heated discussions or verbally demeaned their partners to avoid housework. At a certain point, continually requesting change to no avail comes with more costs than rewards, leading some working-class women to acquiesce to men's latent power despite their own desires. Third and finally, there are tacit hints from our data that working-class women may be affected particularly strongly by conventional gender norms, especially those regarding male privilege. Although many of the women interviewed adhered in some form to notions of essential gender differences, only among working-class women did we observe the overt privileging of male perceptions, desires, and needs over their own. This may explain not only their lack of assertiveness in demanding housework fairness but also working-class men's latent power in

preventing their female partners from continuing to raise this issue.

Why is it that middle-class men seem much more willing to "help" their partners with the domestic labor (or even share it equally) and a greater number of working-class men hold tightly to conventional beliefs? There are a few possibilities, all of which require additional research. One possibility is that couples were under- or overreporting men's housework contributions. Although we probed as much as we could, we did not directly observe the performance of housework in this sample. Another possibility is that working-class men are "doing gender" and demonstrating their masculinity by refusing housework (Brines, 1994). Although scholars such as Williams (2010) and Shows and Gerstel (2009) have argued that working-class men engage more in family life than middle-class professionals because of their female partners' work schedules and their own commitment to family life, these arguments have centered largely around men's participation in child care. We found no evidence to suggest that this applies to housework in cohabiting relationships, perhaps because modern definitions of fatherhood incorporate nurturing and involvement (e.g., Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2000). This redefinition incentivizes men to participate more fully in child care, but no such equivalent shift has occurred in definitions of masculinity and housework. Housework, then, might be a larger threat to men's masculinity than fathering. Another reason may be that men express masculinity differently across class. For a working-class man especially, masculinity is expressed through shows of strength, invulnerability, and breadwinning (Williams, 2010). The thought of his feminized, aproned self, feather dusting the credenza as his partner works to pay bills may be especially anxiety producing for working-class men, resulting in fear of losing face among coworkers and other men who will see him as weak and feminine. Moreover, this threat is exacerbated in this sample by the fact that although a handful of these working-class men were employed in traditional blue-collar occupations (e.g., mechanics or dock workers,) the largest share were working in support roles (e.g., mortgage processing or telecommunications) or more traditionally pink-collar jobs like retail, food service, or call centers. Therefore, their jobs already limited

their ability to express masculinity, making the threat of housework to their manliness all the more ominous. For middle-class men, on the other hand, whose masculinity is expressed largely through devotion to work (Williams, 2010), housework is likely less threatening to masculinity than is child care because, unlike child care, which often requires parents to eschew work responsibilities to pick a sick child up from school or attend a dance recital, the performance of housework is more time flexible and less likely to compete with paid work.

Another possibility for class differences across men focuses on the effect of college education. Among this sample, middle-class men seemed to have more clearly thought thorough issues of gender and fairness, as evidenced by the fact that far fewer entered their unions with no expectations for how to divide the household labor. College has a liberalizing effect on men's attitudes toward gender roles (Myers & Booth, 2002), perhaps because students are exposed to ideas of egalitarianism, feminism, and gender discrimination. These men may realize, too, that their female partners, because of their own education and incomes, have greater options on the mating market (Boxer, Noonan, & Whelan, 2015). Unlike working-class women such as Dawn, for whom emotional support was enough to balance out her partner's lack of household contributions, middle-class women expect, and can command, greater equality in all aspects of their relationships. Even those middle-class men who do not do exactly half of the housework may realize that keeping these successful women in their lives requires more compromise than simply placing their own garbage in their trash bin.

The very nature of cohabitation itself (and the ways in which it differs by social class) may also help explain some of our findings. We found, for example, that working-class men in particular never considered how to divide the household labor. However, because of circumstances like the loss of a job or roommate problems, the working-class men in this sample often moved in with their partners quite rapidly compared to their middle-class counterparts (Sassler & Miller, 2011). There may simply not have been time for them to consider what their day-to-day arrangements would be like. Deliberate thought and conversation about how to share domestic

labor seem more likely to create equal arrangements; thus, "sliding" into cohabitation (Stanley, Rhoades, & Markman, 2006) may lead to a more conventional divisions of labor for the working class.

Although some aspects of cohabitation may make the reproduction of gender inequality more likely, cohabitation is often thought of as "less institutionalized" (Cherlin, 2004), which affords each entrant a greater ability to break away from conventional gender norms compared to marriage. Nevertheless, our findings do not support this perspective, given that the hidden power of hegemonic gender ideals appeared widespread among our sample. One explanation for this is that cohabitators are not, and have never been, exempt from societally entrenched beliefs about gender; cohabitators often borrow normative expectations from marriage to guide their relationships (Edin, Kefalas, & Reed, 2004). Another explanation is that, as cohabitation has become increasingly diffused throughout the population, it is now representative of a wider array of individuals with varying backgrounds, practices, and beliefs (Manning & Cohen, 2012). This means that attitudes about gender likely vary more today among cohabitators than in the past. In some sense, the normalization of cohabitation may have led to a "reinstitutionalization" of gender norms among cohabitators. Although further study is, of course, necessary, our findings portend that the education level of cohabitators, more so than the fact that they have chosen to live together outside of marriage, most strongly shapes the gendered expressions of power within their unions.

Like all studies, ours is not without limitations. First, our sample was not representative because the goal of this work was to focus on an in-depth examination of individuals' experiences. Second, given the focus on currently cohabiting couples, those most dissatisfied with their household arrangements may have been more inclined to break up rather rapidly and thus to not be included in the sample. Furthermore, because working-class interviews were completed before middle-class interviews began, we were unable to directly ask the working-class participants about themes that emerged solely among the middle class. Finally, an examination of the ways that parenting responsibilities influence these couples' household divisions of labor across class was beyond the scope of this project, although

future research should examine this important question.

The household division of labor remains one of the most often-cited pieces of evidence that conventional gender norms remain strong among heterosexual couples (e.g., Bianchi et al., 2012; Lincoln, 2008). However, much of the work on the household division of labor relies on data collected over a quarter of a century ago and focuses primarily on married couples (e.g., Davis et al., 2007; Rubin, 1994). Furthermore, most of this literature focuses on the economic resources that couples bring to the relationship or the hours they spend on particular tasks (e.g., Gupta, 2007; South & Spitze, 1994) rather than the enactment of gender and power within unions. Our study extends the limited canon of work on the ways that power is expressed within marriages to those in contemporary cohabiting unions. We found that, in terms of the household division of labor for cohabitators, there is a great divergence in the day-to-day lived relationships and relationship satisfaction between the working and middle classes. Whereas both working- and middle-class women frequently expected to share the household chores equally, middle-class women more often achieved equal divisions, both because they exercised a great deal of manifest power in their unions and because their male partners were more willing to concede to their demands. In contrast, working-class men's overt and implied expectations for conventional roles within the home, even as their abilities to provide financially have decreased (Sum et al., 2011), may have helped them maintain some of their privileges, but to the great detriment of their partners' satisfaction. Although these cohabitators generally have not "undone" conventional gender norms entirely (Butler, 2004), many middle-class cohabitators have found ways to modify them in ways related to their greater satisfaction with their arrangements. Progress in making the household division of labor more equal may be slow but, at least among many of these middle-class cohabitators, it does not appear to have stalled entirely (England, 2010). Nonetheless, for the majority of cohabitators much work needs to be done to overcome the invisible power that undermines gender equality within their unions.

NOTE

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