

# Bringing the Breadwinner Back In:

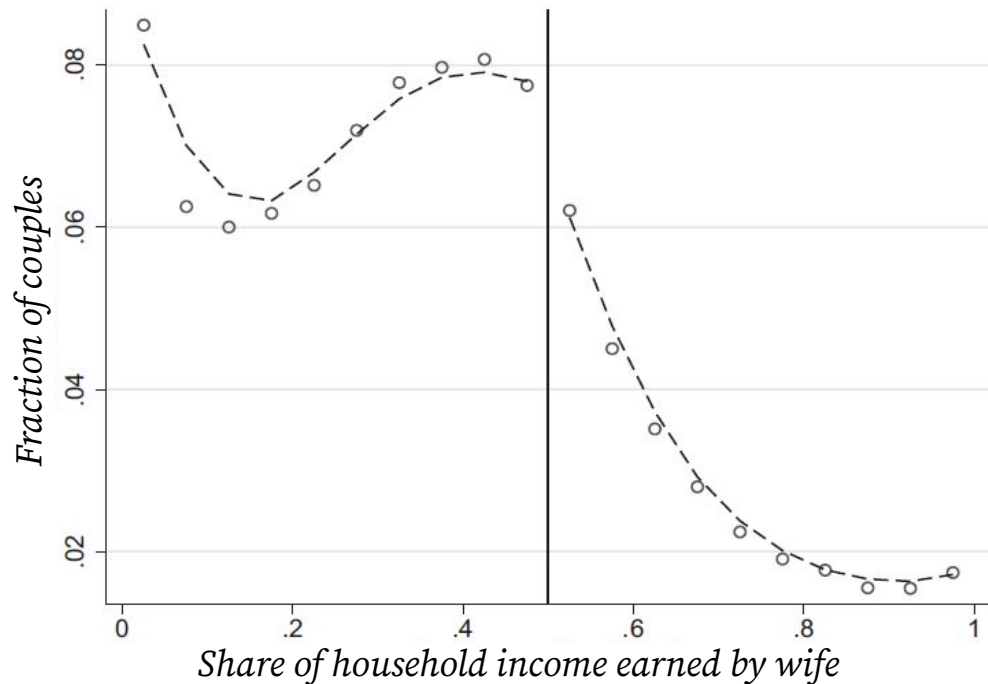
*Relative Wages and  
Diseases of Despair*

Avra Janz



# Motivation

**Fig. 1: Distribution of Income Between Partners in Heterosexual, Married Couples**

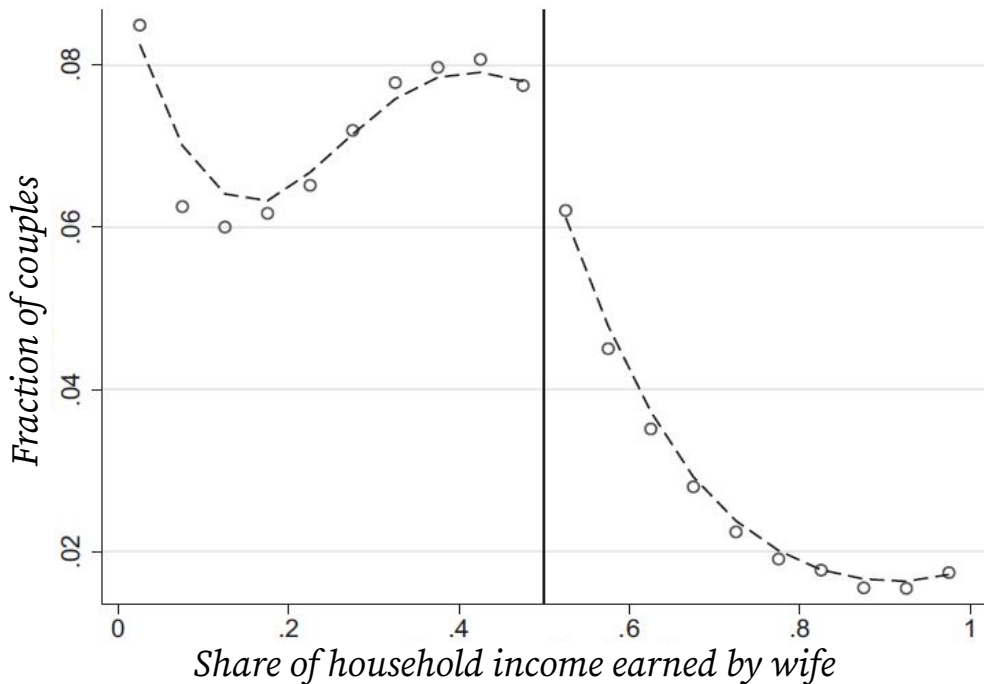


Adapted from: Bertrand, M., Kamenica, E., & Pan, J. (2015). Gender Identity and Relative Income within Households. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 130(2), 571–614.

# Motivation

- Gender identity norms
  - Male breadwinner role
- Couples in which women outearn husbands...
  - Less happy
  - More likely to have marital problems
  - More likely to divorce

**Fig. 1: Distribution of Income Between Partners in Heterosexual, Married Couples**



Adapted from: Bertrand, M., Kamenica, E., & Pan, J. (2015). Gender Identity and Relative Income within Households. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 130(2), 571–614.

# Research Question and Approach

# Research Question

- **Does violating gender identity norms lead to health problems?**
  1. Does lacking breadwinner status increase the likelihood that men have health problems?
  2. Does *losing* breadwinner status increase the likelihood that men have health problems?
- Diseases of despair

# Data

- 15,463 married, heterosexual couples
  - Average of 4.36 years of data per couple
- Examine their health between 2003 and 2017
  - Serious mental illness
  - “Good” subjective well-being
  - Health better or worse than two years ago?
  - Obesity
  - Hypertension
  - Binge drinking

# Empirical Approach

# 1: Fixed-Effects Analysis

- Are people healthier when they're the breadwinner than when they're not?
- Controls for all of the unique, time-constant traits of individuals

$$\begin{aligned} \ddot{Health}_{it} = & \beta_1 \ln \ddot{FamIncome}_{it-1} + \beta_2 \ddot{Unemployed}_{it-1} + \beta_3 \ddot{Breadwinner}_{it-1} + \\ & \beta_4 \ddot{Breadwinner}_{it-1} * \ddot{Unemployed}_{it-1} + \beta_5 \ddot{X}'_{it} + \beta_6 \ddot{Y}'_{it-2} + \ddot{u}_{it}, \end{aligned}$$

where variables have been time-demeaned such that  $\ddot{Health}_{it} = Health_{it} - \overline{Health}_{it}$ , etc.



## 2: First Differences Analysis

- Do immediate changes in breadwinner status lead to changes in health?
- Looks at changes in breadwinner status over two consecutive years

$$\begin{aligned}\Delta Health_{it} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \Delta \ln FamIncome_{it-1} + \beta_2 \Delta Unemployed_{it-1} + \\ & \beta_3 \Delta Breadwinner_{it-1} + \\ & \beta_4 \Delta Breadwinner_{it-1} * \Delta Unemployed_{it-1} + \\ & \beta_5 \mathbf{X}'_{it} + \beta_6 \mathbf{Y}'_{it-2} + \epsilon_{it}\end{aligned}$$

# Findings

## Findings: Men

1: Among employed men, how does *lacking* breadwinner status affect health?

2: Among employed men, how does *losing* breadwinner status affect health?

	1: Fixed Effects	2: First Differences
<b>Serious Mental Illness</b>	+*	
<b>“Good” Subjective Well-Being</b>	-***	<b>Stayed Poor: +</b> <b>Improved: +</b> <b>Declined: +</b>
<b>Health Better or Worse?</b>		<b>Better: -</b> <b>Worse: +***</b>
<b>Hypertension</b>	+	
<b>Obesity</b>	-***	
<b>Binge Drinking</b>	+***	<b>Continued: +**</b> <b>Started: +</b> <b>Stopped: +*</b>

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p <0.05, \* p<0.1. Odds ratios > 1 are represented as “+”; <1, “-”.

## Findings: Women

1: Among employed women, how does *lacking* breadwinner status affect health?

2: Among employed women, how does *losing* breadwinner status affect health?

	1: Fixed Effects	2: First Differences
<b>Serious Mental Illness</b>	-	
<b>“Good” Subjective Well-Being</b>	-***	
<b>Health Better or Worse?</b>		<b>Better: +**</b> <b>Worse: +</b>
<b>Hypertension</b>	+	
<b>Obesity</b>	-	
<b>Binge Drinking</b>	-	<b>Continued: -</b> <b>Started: +</b> <b>Stopped: -</b>

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p <0.05, \* p<0.1. Odds ratios > 1 are represented as “+”; <1, “-”.

# Conclusion

- Breadwinner status *does* affect health
- Effects vary between men and women

## Future research

- When and why does breadwinner status affect health?
- How might other variation in intrahousehold income distributions affect health?

