Career Sacrifice in Couple Formation: Social Norms or Labor Market Realities?

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Abstract

About one-fourth of U.S. couples rely on a sole earner, typically male. Social norms may help sustain this pattern by stigmatizing men who stay at home. I develop a theoretical model showing that such stigma can generate gender gaps in employment and wages, even without other gender differences. I test the channel using a novel online dating experiment in which 500 participants evaluated profiles randomly assigned signals of willingness to prioritize family. Dating intentions toward stay-at-home men decline significantly. The decline is stronger among participants without tertiary education, consistent with the model's predictions, suggesting a limited but targeted stigma.

Keywords: gender, employment, online dating, stigma.
JEL Codes: C93, J12, J16, J31.

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1 Introduction

Many couples are composed of one partner who is the primary earner—often referred to as the breadwinner—and another who plays a supportive or stay-at-home role. The Bureau of Labor Statistics documents that, in 2022, 24.5 % of couples in the United States follow this model, where one partner (usually the male) is the sole earner (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics , 2023). The ability to rely on such support at home may significantly enhance the career prospects of the working partner, particularly in demanding or high-return occupations.

Despite the importance of within-household complementarities, little is known about whether there are systematic gender differences in preferences over these roles—especially the willingness to sacrifice one's career for the benefit of a partner's, or to form a relationship with someone who expresses that willingness. A better understanding of these preferences can shed light on persistent gender disparities in earnings, promotions, and occupational choices.

This paper fills that gap by combining a theoretical model with a novel online dating experiment. In the model, I draw the implications of social norms penalizing stay-at-home males but not stay-at-home females for the wage gender gap and the gender gap in labor force participation. I show that those social norms are sufficient to cause the female gender gaps in modern labor economics. In the experiment, I evaluate the significance of stay-at-home stigma in an online dating experiment. Participants evaluated potential romantic partners presented through structured dating profiles. At random, some profiles included a sentence indicating a willingness to give up one's own career to support that of a partner. This design isolates the causal effect of this career-sacrifice signal on partner desirability and allows us to estimate gender-specific preferences toward such intentions.

Across many societies, cultural expectations continue to associate masculinity with labor market success and femininity with caregiving roles. Men who express a willingness to stay at home are often perceived as violating a deeply entrenched norm that associates male identity with being a provider. Ridgeway and Correll (2004) argue that gender beliefs act as "diffuse status characteristics," shaping expectations about competence and value in both public and private domains. In the context of intimate relationships, these expectations translate into a preference for men who can signal economic stability and ambition, while women are

more likely to be valued for nurturing traits (Corrigall and Konrad , 2009, Thomae and Houston , 2018). These normative expectations can also lead to psychological consequences for men who violate traditional breadwinner roles. For example, stay-at-home fathers report experiences of social isolation, diminished masculinity, and reluctance to seek psychological support, highlighting the stigma still attached to men who depart from conventional gender scripts (Caperton et al. , 2020). These norms may not only affect dating and mate selection but may also generate long-term consequences for household specialization and labor market inequality, in light of the connection between health, family and economic production.

In the first part, I present a theoretical model to study whether social norms that discriminate stay-at-home males are enough to genderate gender gaps in wages and employment. The model features individuals who differ in their willingness to become or accept a stay-at-home partner and introduces a penalty term that captures the asymmetry in how women and men evaluate stay-at-home partners. I show that even in the absence of any productivity or discrimination differences, the equilibrium generates gendered labor supply outcomes and earnings gaps.

The central feature of the model is an asymmetry in how people evaluate stay-at-home partners. Specifically, women are modeled as incurring a penalty—whether social, psychological, or reputational—if their male partner does not work. In contrast, men do not experience a comparable penalty if their female partner stays at home. This asymmetry is intended to capture persistent social norms about gender roles within couples(West and Zimmerman, 1987, Ridgeway and Correll, 2004, Thomae and Houston , 2018). Notably, the model assumes that men and women are otherwise identical in their productivity, preferences, and treatment in the labor market. There is no discrimination and no innate advantage tied to gender. Nonetheless, the model shows that equilibrium outcomes are systematically gendered: women are more likely than men to reduce their labor supply or exit the labor force entirely.

The labor supply decisions of each partner are determined jointly through a system of equations that link individual effort, household income, and preferences over work. This system does not admit a simple closed-form solution. Therefore, I first prove that a solution always exists. In light of the existence of a solution, I show, with comparative statics, that the solution produces gender gaps in employment and wages. The advantage of my framework

is the preservation of tractability.

The model is then extended to allow both men and women to experience disutility when their partner does not work. This is done by introducing two separate parameters, one for women and one for men, which represent how strongly each gender values a working partner. The difference between these two parameters captures the degree of asymmetry in gender norms. The extended model shows that the gender gap in labor supply becomes larger as this asymmetry increases. This provides a theoretical explanation for a key empirical finding: gender gaps in employment tend to be smaller among more educated individuals, who are more likely to hold symmetric expectations about work within couples. For instance, Goldin (2006) and Goldin (2014) document that college-educated women have higher and more stable labor force attachment, especially in more recent cohorts.

Having established that those social norms are theoretically relevant, I analyze data coming from a novel online dating experiment that I designed to establish the economic and statistical magnitude of stigma for staying at home males at couple formation. Are males that want to become stay-at-home partners less desirable or do they have a harder time to date, as opposed to females? Online dating has become a dominant way for heterosexual couples to meet. By 2017, approximately 39 percent of new U.S. couples met online—surpassing traditional introductions through friends or family—and by 2021 that figure had risen to over 50 percent (Rosenfeld, Thomas, and Hausen , 2019). Despite its growing social importance, online dating has received limited attention in the economics literature.[1] Online dating offers a powerful opportunity for survey experiments: researchers can randomly vary a sentence or signal within a dating profile while holding other elements constant. Randomly varying sections of a communication is in the spirit of what Gerber and Green (2000), Pérez-Truglia and Cruces (2017) and Pérez-Truglia and Troiano (2018) did in letters sent by researchers. In my experiment, I exploit this structure to isolate how signals of willingness to support a partner's career—such as staying at home—affect romantic evaluations, independently of attractiveness or other fixed traits.

I test whether men who express a willingness to become stay-at-home partners face stigma in dating markets. In a randomized online dating experiment, I find either precisely esti-

[1]Hitsch, Hortaçsu, and Ariely (2010) is a relevant study in mechanism design about online dating: they show how online dating is a mechanism that does not seem to give incentives to participants to exhibit strategic preferences.

mated zero effects or economically small ones. For most outcomes, I can rule out negative effects larger than 0.5% of a standard deviation. The only statistically significant result in the baseline specification—a profile's perceived dating intent—is affected by just 0.3% of a standard deviation. In the low education sample (the sample that theoretically should matter more) three out of the five outcomes are statistically significant, but the magnitudes remain small. These findings suggest that social norms at the couple formation stage are unlikely to explain persistent gender gaps in the labor market.

A possible concern is that signaling career support may be perceived as a proxy for attractiveness or social desirability, rather than a genuine expression of supportiveness. In particular, experimental evidence shows that women reward fairness and generosity more when the male partner is physically or socially attractive (Shang and Zhang , 2024). My randomized design controls for this by holding constant physical attributes across profiles, isolating the effect of career-sacrificing signals from confounding attractiveness cues.

Studying my question with a survey experiment comes at the cost of external validity. However, the alternative of observational data may have bigger costs. While many policies aim to reduce gender gaps in the labor market, their effects depend critically on the cultural and institutional context in which they are implemented. For example, Givati and Troiano (2012) show that maternity leave mandates—intended to support working women—can backfire in countries with discriminatory norms, where employers react by avoiding hiring women. In more egalitarian societies, however, the same policy benefits women. Troiano (2025) show that political institutions can influence the decision of labor supply of women. Gender norms are endougenous to policies, to beauty and socio-economic status. To this end, a randomized survey experiment in the online dating context allows me to isolate the effect of signaling career sacrifice—such as willingness to be a stay-at-home partner—on romantic preferences, free from personal, labor market and policy-side noise.

This paper contributes to several strands of literatures. First, it speaks to the gender gap literature by identifying an understudied mechanism rooted in relationship preferences and intra-household dynamics (Blau and Kahn , 2000, Goldin and Katz , 2002, Greenwood et al. , 2005, Goldin and Katz , 2008, Blau and Kahn , 2017). Second, it contributes to the growing literature on dating and mate selection, which has documented gender differences in partner preferences and their economic and psychological implications (Campbell , 1999, Fisman et

al. , 2006, 2008, Hitsch, Hortaçsu, and Ariely , 2010, Thomae and Houston , 2018). This is arguably the first online dating experiment in economics. Third, this work contributes to the literature on social norms and gender roles, which has shown that deeply held expectations about male breadwinning and female caregiving can shape labor market behavior, marital stability, and household decision-making (Fortin , 2005, Givati and Troiano , 2012, Giavazzi, Schiantarelli and Serafinelli , 2013, Bertrand, Kamenica, and Pan , 2015, Bursztyn, Fujiwara and Pallais , 2017). I contribute to this literature by showing that gender norms, important for maternity leave settings or divorces, seem to be less important for couple formation.

The paper proceeds as follows. In Section 2 I present the model. In Section 3 I present the experiment. In Section 4 I describe the empirical strategy. In Section 5 I present the results. In Section 6 I conclude.

2 Model

The framework builds on the marriage market and household decision-making models pioneered by Becker (1973) and Becker (1981), where preferences over spousal characteristics and specialization within the household jointly determine equilibrium labor supply outcomes. I consider a two-person heterosexual household composed of a man (m) and a woman (f). Each individual chooses their own labor supply $L_i \in [0, 1]$ to maximize utility, taking their partner's labor supply as given. Individuals value consumption and dislike labor, and women's utility is also affected by their partner's work status due to a social norm. The interpretation of L_i is the fraction of time worked, what payrolls usually call "Full Time Equivalent" (FTE).

2.1 Preferences

Each individual $i \in \{m, f\}$ has utility:

$$U_i = u(C) - v(L_i) - d \cdot L_f \cdot \mathbf{1}(L_m = 0) \cdot \mathbf{1}(i = f) \tag{1}$$

where: C denotes total household consumption; $u(C)$ is the utility from consumption, assumed to be a standard CRRA utility function:

$$u(C) = \frac{C^{1-\sigma}}{1-\sigma}, \quad \sigma > 0, \sigma \neq 1$$

$u(\cdot)$ is strictly increasing, strictly concave, continuously differentiable, and satisfies Inada conditions: $\lim_{C\to 0} u'(C) = \infty$, $\lim_{C\to\infty} u'(C) = 0$; $v(L_i)$ is the disutility from labor:

$$v(L_i) = \frac{L_i^{1+\eta}}{1+\eta}, \quad \eta > 0$$

$v(\cdot)$ is strictly increasing, strictly convex, continuously differentiable ; $d \geq 0$ is a social norm parameter capturing the psychological cost that a woman ($i = f$) experiences when she is working ($L_f > 0$) while her male partner does not work ($L_m = 0$).

2.2 Budget Constraint and Wage Productivity

Let w_i denote the effective hourly wage of individual $i \in \{m, f\}$. Total consumption is equal to total labor earnings:

$$C = w_m L_m + w_f L_f$$

I allow individual productivity to depend on their partner's labor supply:

$$w_i = A_i(1 + \lambda(1 - L_{-i})) \tag{2}$$

where w_f and w_m are the individual wages, respectively, of females and males. I assume $w_m \geq w_f$. The latter parameters are treated as exogenous parameters rather than outcomes of a general equilibrium in the labor market. This modeling choice enhances tractability and allows us to isolate the role of social norms in shaping labor supply decisions, abstracting away from price-setting behavior or firm-level demand.[2] Conceptually, the model can be interpreted as representing a partial equilibrium environment in which individuals take wages as given. This assumption is especially appropriate for studying short-run decisions, or when focusing on a single side of the market (e.g., supply) in the presence of institutional or macroeconomic wage rigidities. While this framework does not endogenize wage differentials, it provides a clean lens to examine how non-market forces—such as social norms—generate gendered patterns in labor market outcomes. $A_i > 0$ is the base productivity of individual i. and $\lambda \geq 0$ captures complementarities: a person becomes more productive if their partner works less (e.g., due to help at home, child care, mental support). The intuition is that a worker is more productive at work when a partner at home takes care of the chores or the

[2]My model abstracts from joint labor supply decisions as in collective models (Chiappori , 1988, 1992), and focuses instead on individual labor choices shaped by social expectations.

child care. The intuition is that with a stay-at-home partner a worker has an easier time accepting an extra-shift, or receiving training outside of the work hours. The assumption is motivated by theoretical results that suggest that specialization is beneficial to the household: when one partner stays home, the other can focus more efficiently on work (Becker , 1981). In Greenwood et al. (2016)'s model home production can substitute for market goods and services, and, hence, time devoted to it raises household productivity. Empirically, Goldin (2014) discusses the high cost of time flexibility, and how couples often solve this by having one partner (usually the woman) absorbing the home responsibility. This implies a productivity benefit for the non-caregiving partner.[3]

2.3 Labor Supply Problem

Each individual chooses labor L_i to maximize utility (1), taking their partner's labor supply as given. Rewriting equation (1):

$$U_i = \frac{(w_m L_m + w_f L_f)^{1-\sigma}}{1-\sigma} - \frac{L_i^{1+\eta}}{1+\eta} - d \cdot L_f \cdot \mathbf{1}(L_m = 0) \cdot \mathbf{1}(i = f)$$

The woman's utility includes the social norm penalty only when she is working and the man is not.

Assuming interior solutions and differentiability, the first-order condition (FOC) for individual i's problem is:

$$\frac{\partial U_i}{\partial L_i} = u'(C) \cdot \frac{\partial C}{\partial L_i} - v'(L_i) - d \cdot \mathbf{1}(L_m = 0) \cdot \mathbf{1}(i = f) = 0$$

Since $\frac{\partial C}{\partial L_i} = w_i$, and $u'(C) = C^{-\sigma}$, this simplifies to:

$$w_i \cdot C^{-\sigma} = L_i^{\eta} + d \cdot \mathbf{1}(L_m = 0) \cdot \mathbf{1}(i = f)$$

which implicitly defines labor supply L_i^* as a function of wages and the partner's labor decision.

I now characterize equilibrium labor supply choices for both agents in a couple. Let $L_i \in [0, 1]$ denote the labor supply of individual $i \in \{f, m\}$. Recall that each agent maximizes

[3]The parameter λ allows the model to generate specialization in couples even when social norms (parameter d) are weak, consistent with real-world observations of sole-earner households. While the experiment suggests that d is small, the presence of large λ would still support non-normative reasons for specialization.

utility of the form:

$$U_i = u(C) - v(L_i),$$

where $u(C) = \frac{C^{1-\sigma}}{1-\sigma}$ and $v(L_i) = \frac{L_i^{1+\eta}}{1+\eta}$, with $\sigma, \eta > 0$, and where:

$$C = w_f L_f + w_m L_m.$$

Interior Solution Case: Suppose that both agents choose strictly positive labor supply, i.e., $L_f > 0$ and $L_m > 0$. Then, first-order conditions for utility maximization yield:

$$\begin{aligned} L_f^{\eta} &= w_f \cdot C^{-\sigma}, \\ L_m^{\eta} &= w_m \cdot C^{-\sigma}, \end{aligned} \quad \text{where} \quad C = w_f L_f + w_m L_m. \tag{3}$$

These equations define the optimal labor supply levels (L_f^*, L_m^*) as an *implicit solution* to a nonlinear system. A closed form solution is not readily available. However, with reasonable assumptios, I am able to prove that a solution exists, and, given existence, by using other types of reasoning, including comparative statics, to provide meaningful results for the gender economics literature.

Corner Solution Case ($L_i = 0$): I now analyze corner solutions, specifically when one member of the couple chooses not to work, i.e., $L_m = 0$ or $L_f = 0$. In the presence of social norm disutility, the utility specification becomes asymmetric. Recall that the woman faces an additional disutility term proportional to her labor supply if her male partner does not work.

- **Case 1:** $L_m = 0$**.** The woman's utility becomes:

  $$U_f = u(C) - v(L_f) - d \cdot L_f,$$

  where $d > 0$ captures the disutility from violating social norms when the man does not work. Her marginal utility is:

  $$\frac{\partial U_f}{\partial L_f} = -v'(L_f) - d + u'(C) \cdot w_f.$$

  When $L_f \to 0^+$:

  $$v'(L_f) = L_f^{\eta} \to 0, \quad u'(C) > 0, \quad \Rightarrow \frac{\partial U_f}{\partial L_f} \to u'(C) \cdot w_f - d.$$

Therefore, a corner solution $L_f = 0$ may be optimal if the marginal utility is non-positive, that is:

$$u'(C) \cdot w_f \leq d.$$

This condition depends on the wage, the disutility parameter d, and the marginal utility of consumption. If this inequality holds, then the woman optimally chooses not to work.

- **Case 2:** $L_f = 0$**.** The man's utility is:

$$U_m = u(C) - v(L_m),$$

with no additional social penalty. His marginal utility is:

$$\frac{\partial U_m}{\partial L_m} = -v'(L_m) + u'(C) \cdot w_m.$$

As $L_m \to 0^+$, $v'(L_m) \to 0$, so:

$$\frac{\partial U_m}{\partial L_m} \to u'(C) \cdot w_m > 0,$$

which implies that the man always has an incentive to work, i.e., the optimal L_m must be strictly positive under regular assumptions.

The corner solution $L_i = 0$ for women is possible if the marginal benefit of working is below the norm-induced disutility d. This introduces endogenous non-participation driven by social norms. In contrast, corner solutions for men are ruled out in this model unless wages are degenerate, since they face no norm penalty and their marginal utility is strictly positive near zero.

Mathematically, corner solutions must satisfy the Kuhn–Tucker condition:

$$\frac{\partial U_i}{\partial L_i} \leq 0 \quad \text{and} \quad L_i = 0.$$

This condition may bind for women (due to d), but not for men under the baseline model.

Proposition 1 *Let the utility functions be* $u(C) = \frac{C^{1-\sigma}}{1-\sigma}$ *with* $\sigma > 0$*, and* $v(L_i) = \frac{L_i^{1+\eta}}{1+\eta}$ *with* $\eta > 0$*, and let wages be defined as* $w_i = A_i(1 + \lambda(1 - L_{-i}))$ *for* $i \in \{m, f\}$*. Then, under the*

assumptions that $A_i > 0$, $\lambda \geq 0$, *and* $L_i \in [0,1]$, *there exists a pair* $(L_f^*, L_m^*) \in [0,1]^2$ *that solves the system:*

$$L_f^\eta = w_f(L_m) \cdot C^{-\sigma} \quad \text{if } L_f > 0$$
$$L_m^\eta = w_m(L_f) \cdot C^{-\sigma} \quad \text{if } L_m > 0$$
$$C = w_f(L_m)L_f + w_m(L_f)L_m$$

Moreover, the solution allows for interior or corner values of L_i, *and satisfies the Kuhn-Tucker conditions:*

$$\begin{cases} L_i > 0 \Rightarrow L_i^\eta = w_i(L_{-i}) \cdot C^{-\sigma} \\ L_i = 0 \Rightarrow w_i(L_{-i}) \cdot C^{-\sigma} \leq 0 \end{cases}$$

Thus, the solution is such that each agent supplies zero labor if and only if the marginal benefit of supplying a positive amount is non-positive at $L_i = 0$.

Proof 1 *I define the mapping* $T : [0,1]^2 \to [0,1]^2$ *derived from the first-order conditions:*

correspondence $T : [0,1]^2 \rightrightarrows [0,1]^2$, *where for each* $(L_f, L_m) \in [0,1]^2$*:*

$$T(L_f, L_m) = \begin{cases} \left([w_f(L_m) \cdot C(L_f, L_m)^{-\sigma}]^{1/\eta}, [w_m(L_f) \cdot C(L_f, L_m)^{-\sigma}]^{1/\eta} \right) & \text{if both components lie in } (0,1] \\ \left(0, [w_m(L_f) \cdot C(L_f, L_m)^{-\sigma}]^{1/\eta} \right) & \text{if } L_f = 0) \\ \left([w_f(L_m) \cdot C(L_f, L_m)^{-\sigma}]^{1/\eta}, 0 \right) & \text{if } L_m = 0) \end{cases}$$

I start by considering the interior solution case. At the end of the proof I consider the possibility of corner solution. If the mapping $T(L_f, L_m)$ *has a fixed point, the labor supply problem presented earlier has a solution.*

$$T(L_f, L_m) = \left(\left[w_f(L_m) \cdot C(L_f, L_m)^{-\sigma} \right]^{1/\eta}, \left[w_m(L_f) \cdot C(L_f, L_m)^{-\sigma} \right]^{1/\eta} \right)$$

where $C(L_f, L_m) = w_f(L_m)L_f + w_m(L_f)L_m$.

Since $w_i(L_{-i}) = A_i(1 + \lambda(1 - L_{-i}))$ *with* $L_{-i} \in [0,1]$, *I have:*

$$A_i \leq w_i(L_{-i}) \leq A_i(1+\lambda) \quad \text{for all } i.$$

Then $C(L_f, L_m) \leq A_f(1+\lambda) + A_m(1+\lambda) := \bar{C}$. *Hence,*

$$w_i(L_{-i}) \cdot C^{-\sigma} \leq A_i(1+\lambda) \cdot \bar{C}^{-\sigma},$$

so each coordinate of $T(L_f, L_m)$ is bounded above by a finite number, and under parameter restrictions (e.g., η large or σ small), this value is ≤ 1.[4] *Also, since all terms are nonnegative, $T(L_f, L_m) \geq 0$.*

The function T is continuous on $[0,1]^2$ because it is composed of continuous functions (multiplication, exponentiation, and rational functions of continuous wage expressions).

I now show that T maps $[0,1]^2$ into itself. Let:

$$\bar{w} = \max_i A_i(1+\lambda), \quad \underline{w} = \min_i A_i.$$

Then $T_i(L_f, L_m) \in \left[\left(\underline{w} \cdot \bar{C}^{-\sigma}\right)^{1/\eta}, \left(\bar{w} \cdot \bar{C}^{-\sigma}\right)^{1/\eta}\right] \subset [0,1]$ under parameter bounds. Thus, $T : [0,1]^2 \to [0,1]^2$.

T is continuous and maps the compact convex set $[0,1]^2$ into itself. By Brouwer's Theorem, T admits a fixed point (L_f^*, L_m^*).

Corner solutions *I now analyze the optimality conditions at the corner, where either $L_f = 0$ or $L_m = 0$. Let us treat each case separately.*

Case 1: Female Corner Solution ($L_f = 0$)

The woman's utility is given by:

$$U_f = u(C) - v(L_f) - d \cdot L_f,$$

where $d > 0$ represents the social norm penalty that increases with her own labor supply when the man does not work.

The marginal utility of labor for the woman is:

$$\frac{\partial U_f}{\partial L_f} = u'(C) \cdot \frac{\partial C}{\partial L_f} - v'(L_f) - d.$$

As $L_f \to 0^+$, I have:

$$v'(L_f) = L_f^{\eta} \to 0, \quad \frac{\partial C}{\partial L_f} = w_f(L_m), \quad u'(C) = C^{-\sigma} > 0.$$

[4] More formally, define $\bar{w} = \max_i A_i(1+\lambda)$ and $\bar{C} = \bar{w} \cdot 2$, and suppose the following condition holds:

$$\left(\bar{w} \cdot \bar{C}^{-\sigma}\right)^{1/\eta} \leq 1.$$

Then both components of $T(L_f, L_m)$ lie within $[0,1]$. This inequality holds, for example, when η is large relative to $\log \bar{w} - \sigma \log \bar{C}$. The full proof of the restrictions needed is available upon request.

Thus, near the boundary:

$$\frac{\partial U_f}{\partial L_f} \to C^{-\sigma} \cdot w_f - d.$$

Hence: - If $C^{-\sigma} \cdot w_f > d$*, then* $\partial U_f / \partial L_f > 0$*, and the interior solution is strictly preferred. - If* $C^{-\sigma} \cdot w_f \leq d$*, then* $L_f = 0$ *is optimal, satisfying the Kuhn–Tucker condition:*

$$\frac{\partial U_f}{\partial L_f} \leq 0, \quad \textit{with } L_f = 0.$$

Case 2: Male Corner Solution ($L_m = 0$***)***

The man's utility is:

$$U_m = u(C) - v(L_m),$$

with no social norm penalty, as assumed in the baseline model.

The marginal utility is:

$$\frac{\partial U_m}{\partial L_m} = u'(C) \cdot \frac{\partial C}{\partial L_m} - v'(L_m).$$

As $L_m \to 0^+$*:*

$$v'(L_m) = L_m^{\eta} \to 0, \quad \frac{\partial C}{\partial L_m} = w_m(L_f), \quad u'(C) = C^{-\sigma} > 0.$$

So:

$$\frac{\partial U_m}{\partial L_m} \to C^{-\sigma} \cdot w_m > 0.$$

Therefore, the male corner solution is never optimal under regularity assumptions — the interior solution strictly dominates:

$$\frac{\partial U_m}{\partial L_m} > 0 \quad \Rightarrow \quad L_m > 0 \textit{ must hold in equilibrium.}$$

Therefore, a fixed point of T is an interior or boundary equilibrium that satisfies the household labor-supply system.

2.4 Stay-at-Home Decision with Heterogeneous Preferences

I now incorporate heterogeneous preferences for working through a random shock $\theta_i \sim F_i(\theta)$, which captures the idiosyncratic utility that individual $i \in \{f, m\}$ derives from staying at home. The shock is drawn from a distribution $U(0, \nu)$. I can define a certain threshold θ^*

that divides the real line in two regions: an area where the agent decides to work, and an area where work is not optimal and the agent decides to become a stay-at-home partner. This allows us to model the labor force participation decision probabilistically rather than deterministically.[5]

Each individual compares the utility of staying at home (not working, $L_i = 0$) versus working (choosing some $L_i > 0$).

Utility from Staying at Home. If individual i chooses not to work, then:

$$U_i^{\text{home}} = u(w_{-i}L_{-i}) + \theta_i$$

where $w_{-i}L_{-i}$ is the income generated by the partner and θ_i is the preference for being a stay-at-home partner.

Utility from Working. If individual i chooses to work, the utility is:

$$U_i^{\text{work}} = u(C) - v(L_i) - d \cdot \mathbf{1}\{i = f\} \cdot \mathbf{1}\{L_m = 0\}$$

where: $C = w_i L_i + w_{-i}L_{-i}$ is total household income; $v(L_i)$ is the disutility of labor supply; $d \cdot \mathbf{1}\{i = f\} \cdot \mathbf{1}\{L_m = 0\}$ is a penalty term: only women suffer a disutility if the man does not work.

Threshold Rule. Individual i works if and only if:

$$U_i^{\text{work}} > U_i^{\text{home}}$$

Substituting the expressions for each utility, I get:

$$u(C) - v(L_i) - d \cdot \mathbf{1}\{i = f\} \cdot \mathbf{1}\{L_m = 0\} > u(w_{-i}L_{-i}) + \theta_i$$

Solving for the threshold θ_i^*, individual i works if and only if:

$$\theta_i < \theta_i^* \equiv u(C) - v(L_i) - u(w_{-i}L_{-i}) - d \cdot \mathbf{1}\{i = f\} \cdot \mathbf{1}\{L_m = 0\}$$

[5]This approach has been frequently used in political economy too, generating the so called probabilistic voting model (Lindbeck and Weibull , 1987).

Probability of Working. Given $\theta_i \sim F_i(\theta)$, the probability that individual i works is:

$$P_i^{\text{work}} = F_i(\theta_i^*) \quad \Rightarrow \quad \mathbb{E}[L_i] = P_i^{\text{work}} \cdot \tilde{L}_i \tag{4}$$

where $\tilde{L}_i \in (0, 1]$ is the optimal interior labor supply conditional on working.

2.5 Expected Labor Supply with Heterogeneity

Expected labor supply incorporates the probability that each individual chooses to work, based on a heterogeneous preference shock θ_i drawn from a uniform distribution on $[0, \nu]$.[6]

Given this, expected female labor supply is:

$$\mathbb{E}[L_f] = \left(\frac{w_f}{C^\sigma}\right)^{\frac{1}{\eta}} \cdot \mathbb{E}\left[1 - \frac{\theta_f^*}{\nu}\right],$$

and similarly for men:

$$\mathbb{E}[L_m] = \left(\frac{w_m}{C^\sigma}\right)^{\frac{1}{\eta}} \cdot \mathbb{E}\left[1 - \frac{\theta_m^*}{\nu}\right],$$

where the expectation is taken over the distribution of θ_i.

Taking the difference:

$$\mathbb{E}[L_m] - \mathbb{E}[L_f] = \left(\frac{w_m}{C^\sigma}\right)^{\frac{1}{\eta}} \cdot \mathbb{E}\left[1 - \frac{\theta_m^*}{\nu}\right] - \left(\frac{w_f}{C^\sigma}\right)^{\frac{1}{\eta}} \cdot \mathbb{E}\left[1 - \frac{\theta_f^*}{\nu}\right].$$

Under the model assumptions: the fact that labor supply increases in own wage and decreases in the disutility threshold θ_i^*; that women face an additional penalty $d > 0$ when their partner does not work; that men do not face a symmetric penalty; θ_m and θ_f are independently and identically distributed across gender, so gender differences in preferences do not drive outcomes; Wages w_m and w_f are fixed parameters, with $w_m \geq w_f$.

With symmetric distributions of the taste parameter $\theta_i \sim U(0, \nu)$ and symmetric or mildly male-advantaged wage parameters (i.e., $w_m \geq w_f$), the only source of asymmetry in the model is the penalty $d > 0$ applied to women whose male partner does not work. This penalty raises the threshold θ_f^* for female labor force participation in those households, reducing the term $\mathbb{E}\left[1 - \frac{\theta_f^*}{\nu}\right]$. In contrast, men do not face a penalty when their female partner stays home, so θ_m^* is lower in expectation.

[6] θ_m and θ_f are i.i.d. across gender, so any expected labor supply differences are not driven by heterogeneity in underlying preferences.

This difference in thresholds implies that, even conditional on wages, women are systematically less likely to work than men. Because the utility function is additively separable in consumption and labor effort, the penalty d operates as a fixed cost rather than as a function of income, and thus is not offset by income effects.[7] As a result, the model robustly predicts:

$$\mathbb{E}[L_m] > \mathbb{E}[L_f],$$

with the inequality holding strictly when the norm penalty d is positive and men are not penalized for having a stay-at-home partner. This result highlights how an asymmetric social norm, even in an otherwise symmetric environment, can generate gendered labor supply outcomes.

As a result, the model implies gender gaps even when average wages and preference distributions are otherwise symmetric. The inequality becomes strict when there is a nonzero mass of couples where w_m is low enough to induce male non-employment. In those cases, the resulting female disutility from having a non-working male partner further suppresses her labor supply.

2.6 Transition to Expected Earnings

Let's assume for simplicity that w_i are realized scalars (as assumed earlier), that come from any distributions respecting the condition $w_m \geq w_f$. Basic probability theory applied to earnings $w_i \cdot L_i$ implies:[8]

$$\mathbb{E}[w_m L_m] = \mathbb{E}[w_m] \cdot \mathbb{E}[L_m] + \text{Cov}(w_m, L_m)$$
$$\mathbb{E}[w_f L_f] = \mathbb{E}[w_f] \cdot \mathbb{E}[L_f] + \text{Cov}(w_f, L_f)$$

Even if $\mathbb{E}[w_m] = \mathbb{E}[w_f]$, a gap in $\mathbb{E}[L_m] > \mathbb{E}[L_f]$ (as shown above) will create a gap in expected earnings. Additionally, if labor supply is increasing in wage offers (which is standard), then $\text{Cov}(w_i, L_i) > 0$, reinforcing the inequality.

[7] Quasi-linear, instead of quasi-separable preferences, would allow this result even generalizing d to a variable, rather than a fixed cost.

[8] I use the identity for the expectation of a product:

$$\mathbb{E}[XY] = \mathbb{E}[X] \cdot \mathbb{E}[Y] + \text{Cov}(X, Y)$$

Next, I take the difference between male and female expected earnings:

$$\mathbb{E}[w_m L_m] - \mathbb{E}[w_f L_f] = \mathbb{E}[w_m]\mathbb{E}[L_m] - \mathbb{E}[w_f]\mathbb{E}[L_f] + (\text{Cov}(w_m, L_m) - \text{Cov}(w_f, L_f)).$$

To further decompose this expression, I use equation (4):

$$\mathbb{E}[L_m] - \mathbb{E}[L_f] \geq d \cdot P(w_m = 0).$$

Multiplying both sides by $\mathbb{E}[w_m]$:

$$\mathbb{E}[w_m](\mathbb{E}[L_m] - \mathbb{E}[L_f]) \geq \mathbb{E}[w_m] d \cdot P(w_m = 0).$$

Substituting this into the earnings difference equation:

$$\mathbb{E}[w_m L_m] - \mathbb{E}[w_f L_f] \geq \mathbb{E}[w_m] d \cdot P(w_m = 0) + (\text{Cov}(w_m, L_m) - \text{Cov}(w_f, L_f)).$$

This equation shows that the earnings gap arises due to: 1) The penalty term $d \cdot P(w_m = 0)$ which reduces female labor supply, 2) The potential difference in covariances $\text{Cov}(w_m, L_m) - \text{Cov}(w_f, L_f)$, which captures the differential relationship between wages and labor supply across genders.

If high-wage women are more likely to exit the labor force due to θ, then $\text{Cov}(w_f, L_f)$ will be smaller than $\text{Cov}(w_m, L_m)$, reinforcing the gender wage gap.

By incorporating a random preference θ, I introduce individual variation in the decision to stay home, rather than assuming all women drop out when $w_m = 0$. This maintains the gender wage gap result but adds a more nuanced probability-based transition, better reflecting observed labor market behaviors.

2.7 Model Extension: The Role of Preference Asymmetry in Explaining the Gender Gap

Goldin (2014) suggests that gender gaps are influenced by the education level of the workers: gender gaps are less pronounced at the top of the education distribution. I now generalize the baseline model to allow for gender-asymmetric disutility from having a stay-at-home partner.

This captures the idea that social norms penalizing couples where the woman works and the man stays home may vary by both gender and education.

Let utility for each individual $i \in \{f, m\}$ be given by:

$$U_i = u(C) - v(L_i) - \gamma_i \cdot \mathbf{1}_{\{L_{-i}=0\}}$$

where $u(C) = \frac{C^{1-\sigma}}{1-\sigma}$, $v(L_i) = \frac{L_i^{1+\eta}}{1+\eta}$, and $\gamma_i \geq 0$ is the disutility from having a non-working partner. I assume:

$$C = w_f L_f + w_m L_m$$

and wages again depend on the partner's labor supply as in equation (2).

Let each individual also draw a preference shock $\theta_i \sim F(\theta)$, representing intrinsic preferences over having a non-working partner. Then, individual i works if and only if:

$$\theta_i < \theta_i^*(L_{-i}) \equiv \text{threshold function derived from optimality}$$

Comparative Statics Result

Proposition 2 *Let $\Delta = \gamma_f - \gamma_m$. Under the assumptions that u is strictly concave, v is strictly convex, and $F(\theta)$ is strictly increasing and continuous with support on $[0, \bar{\theta}]$, the gender gap in expected labor supply,*

$$\Delta L = \mathbb{E}[L_f] - \mathbb{E}[L_m]$$

is strictly increasing in Δ. That is, the more asymmetric the disutility of a stay-at-home partner across gender, the larger the gender gap in labor force participation.

Full Proof: For the full proof, see Appendix. Below, I present the main idea of the proof.

Proof 2 (Sketch of Proof) *I will present the main intuition of the proof. From the FOCs and participation conditions, labor supply depends on a cutoff:*

$$\theta_i^* \propto \textit{Marginal Utility Gain from Partner Working}$$

A higher γ_i reduces the benefit of working if the partner is not working, lowering θ_i^*, and therefore increasing the chance that individual i does not work.

Thus, increasing γ_f (or increasing Δ) disproportionately reduces female participation relative to male participation, increasing ΔL. This holds pointwise for any realization of wages and therefore in expectation.

In the data, I observe more symmetric preferences over career sacrifice in the high-education sample. This corresponds to the case where $\gamma_f \approx \gamma_m$, implying $\Delta \approx 0$, and hence a smaller gender gap ΔL. Conversely, a larger asymmetry $\Delta > 0$ in the low-education sample generates a larger gender gap, consistent with empirical patterns.

3 The Experiment

Heterosexual participants between 18 and 55 years old were recruited through the Amazon MTurk platform. The number of participants was 500: 250 male and 250 female. 495 participants survived two quality controls, ex-ante and ex-post, by Amazon MTurk and by me. After the screenings and the final data cleaning, the resulting sample includes 495 participants.[9] Participants had first to agree to the informed consent, which presented the shareable details of the experiment to the prospective participant.[10] Having agreed to participate to the experiment, each participant completed a brief questionnaire collecting limited, non-identifiable personal information, including age, perceived income, and education. The only identifiable information that was collected was the Amazon MTurk ID, which is an anonymized item from my perspective, and that information was useful for cross-checks and quality control.

Following the individual questionnaire, participants were presented with 42 profiles. Male participants were asked to evaluate female profiles, and vice versa. A profile, in modern online dating, is a one (or more) picture(s), followed by a short presentation of the user. The user is evaluated and the users are able communicate after a match. In Figure 1 and Figure 2 I present all of the 42 pictures of the profiles that were presented respectively to male and female participants. The experiment was designed to study gender differences in response to a main treatment: a randomly assigned sentence signaling the willingness to sacrifice one's career for the benefit of the family. Given the large number of profiles shown, it was impractical to randomize the main treatment by using only one signaling sentence. Therefore,

[9] 5 participants were able to pass the screenings without actually complete the survey.

[10] In Appendix Figure A.1 I present the screenshot of the Informed Consent.

six synonymous sentences were developed to convey the willingness to give up one's career for the benefit of the family. The control group consisted of keeping the profile without the extra sentence.

The number 42 was chosen based both on guidance from the econometric literature on clustering—which suggests, theoretically and through simulation evidence, that inference with cluster-robust standard errors becomes more reliable when the number of clusters approaches or exceeds 42 (Cameron, Gelbach, and Miller , 2008, Angrist and Pischke , 2009)—and on the need to have a sufficient number of clusters within each gender.

The image appearing on each profile was either downloaded from open repositories containing images not protected by copyright or generated with Artificial Intelligence (AI). Profiles were user-generated and did not necessarily represent real-world individuals. Each participant was required to spend at least 30 seconds evaluating each profile; a temporary screen block was introduced to enforce this minimum viewing time.

An important concern, drawn from the existing literature on speed dating in economics (Fisman et al. , 2006), is that single individuals may value ambition in a partner. Ambition and the willingness to make a career sacrifice could reflect related but negatively correlated traits. However, while ambition may be associated with a preference for a partner willing to sacrifice their career, the two concepts are not logically equivalent. To address this concern, a second treatment arm was included at the design stage to test the robustness of the main result. The ambition treatment was implemented using three sentences.

The randomization rule was as follows: the absence of a sentence had a 50% probability of appearing; the career sacrifice treatment had a 1/3 probability (with each "career sacrifice" sentence having a 1/18 probability); and the ambition treatment had a 1/6 probability (with each ambition sentence having a 1/36 probability). In Figure 3 I present the same profile (the first female to be evaluated) with three different potential realizations of the treatment/control options.

The six sentences representing the career sacrifice treatment were:[11]

> "My intention is to fully support the career of my partner, including by giving up my own career."
>
> "I happily plan to take on household chores and childcare, allowing my partner

[11] I present the screenshot of the dating questionnaire in Appendix Figure A.3.

to pursue their professional goals."

"I'm looking forward to managing our home life, so my partner can thrive in their career."

"I plan to dedicate myself to advancing my partner's career, even if it means sacrificing my own."

"I'm excited to focus on the home and kids, so my partner can fully concentrate on their career."

"I'm ready to step back from my own career to ensure my partner has every opportunity to succeed."

The three sentences representing the ambition treatment were:

"Motivated by success, I work hard in both my professional and personal spheres."

"Driven to succeed, I'm striving to reach the next level in my career and personal life."

"I am constantly looking for opportunities to grow and excel."

For each profile presented in the experiment, participants were asked to answer a standardized questionnaire designed to measure romantic attractiveness. The questionnaire consisted of five items, each capturing a different dimension of attraction or perceived social desirability. Responses were recorded on a 7-point Likert scale. For the first three questions the answers ranged from "strongly disagree" to "agree." For the last two questions the answers ranged from: "totally unacceptable," to "perfectly acceptable." The questionnaires were influenced by the literature in sociology specifically focused on how to measure romantic preferences in questionnaires (Campbell , 1999, Perrone , 2022).

The first item captures an overall assessment of physical appeal:

Do you agree/disagree with the following statement: "I find this person attractive"?

This question measures the respondent's immediate perception of the profile's physical appearance, a core component of romantic attraction.

The second item evaluates desirability as a potential partner:

> Do you agree/disagree with the following statement:"I find this person desirable as a dating partner"?

While related to attractiveness, desirability incorporates broader considerations, such as personality cues and perceived compatibility.

The third item measures concrete dating interest:

> Do you agree/disagree with the following statement:"I would like to date this person"?

This shifts from hypothetical evaluation to an expression of actual intent, indicating a more behaviorally relevant preference.

The fourth item assesses self-perception in the hypothetical relationship:

> "How would you feel about yourself if you were dating this person?"

This question links attraction to self-image, capturing whether dating the person would enhance or diminish the respondent's own perceived social standing or self-esteem.

The fifth item measures anticipated peer evaluation:

> "How do you think your friends would feel about you if you were dating this person?"

This assesses the perceived social approval or disapproval from one's peer group, which may influence dating preferences through reputational concerns.

Collectively, these five items provide a multidimensional measure of romantic attractiveness, incorporating not only physical appeal but also social and self-perception factors. Among the five measures of romantic attractiveness, the question "How much would you actually like to date this person?" is the most direct proxy for dating intentions and, by extension, the formation of long-term partnerships. While perceptions of attractiveness or desirability provide valuable information about hypothetical evaluations, they need not translate into concrete behavioral intentions. In contrast, stated willingness to date reflects a decision-oriented preference that is more closely tied to actual matching behavior. From the perspective of household formation, such intentions are critical: the initiation of a dating

relationship is the first step in the sequence leading to cohabitation, marriage, and family creation. This makes the measure especially relevant for understanding economic outcomes. Household formation decisions shape labor supply, savings behavior, human capital investments, and geographic mobility, and these effects are often heterogeneous by gender. For instance, marriage and childbearing remain key drivers of gender gaps in labor force participation and earnings. Thus, examining treatment effects on dating intentions offers a direct link between experimentally elicited romantic preferences and the economic processes that underlie long-run patterns in labor markets and family demographics.

I measure the intensity of these variables with a dummy variable which equals to 1 if the repondent does not disagree with the statement.[12]

In Table 1 I present the summary statics of the main variables, which are divided into three groups. The first group includes the pre-determined covariates collected in the initial questionnaire: age, number of children, education, an indicator variable that reflects whether the parcipant is a breadwinner, perceived income level and nature of the job. Then, the five outcome variables are summarized. Finally, I summarize the main treatment, "career sacrifice," and the ancillary treatment to evaluate the main competing explanation, ambition.

In Table 2 I test the difference in means across the control group and the career sacrifice treatment. The Table is divided into two parts: the Predetermined covariates and the Outcomes. All the pre-determined covariates are balanced between the two samples. For what matters the outcomes, one sees that three of the five variables are statistically different across the two samples, and suggest that expressing the desire to sacrifice the career for the benefit of the partner is less romantically attractive, but that the magnitude is small, less than 1 percentage point. In Table 3 I repeat the exercise comparing the control group to the ambition check. The predetermined covariates are again perfectly balanced across the treatment and the control group. Four of the five outcomes are stastistically different across the two subsamples, suggesting that also expressing ambition is seen as romantically unattractive, but the difference is economically small, less than 2 percentage points.

[12]This implies that the respondent selected either "either agree or disagree," or "somewhat agree," "agree" or "strongly agree" to the question of interest. The other three options, which are coded as 0, are "somewhat disagree," "disagree" and "strongly disagree."

4 Empirical Strategy

The core empirical strategy relies on a survey experiment in which 250 men and 250 women were each shown 42 dating profiles of the opposite gender, with one sentence that appears at random (representing two different treatments) or not (representing the control). Each profile consisted of a photograph accompanied by a brief text. Embedded in these texts were randomized treatments: some profiles included a sentence indicating a willingness to give up one's career for a partner (the "career sacrifice" treatment), others included a sentence signaling strong professional ambition (the "ambition" treatment), while the remaining profiles served as pure controls. The random assignment of treatments ensures that, conditional on profile and rater gender, any systematic differences in evaluations can be causally attributed to the treatment.

The equation that I estimate is the following:

$$Y_{ij} = \alpha + \beta M_i * CareerS_{ij} + CareerS_{ij} + P_i + \epsilon_{ij} \tag{5}$$

Where Yij is one of the five attractiveness dimensions asked in the questionnaire. M_i is the gender of the participant (equal to 1 if the participant is male); the gender of the participant is the opposite of the gender of the profile shown, therefore, for ease of notation, I restrict it to vary only in the i space. $CareerS_{ij}$ is a dummy variable equal to 1 if participant i sees profile j with one of the sentences associated with the willingness to sacrifice the career for the sake of the partner's one. P_i are participants fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the profile level, reflecting that treatment is assigned at the profile level and each profile is evaluated by multiple raters.

The main estimating equation regresses each of five dependent variables—measures of romantic interest—on the treatment dummies, their interaction with the rater's gender, and appropriate controls.

4.1 Robustness Specifications

I conduct three robustness tests. First, I note that a willingness to sacrifice one's career may itself act as a signal of reduced ambition, a trait that prior experimental evidence—particularly from speed-dating studies in economics—has shown to negatively influ-

ence dating preferences. To ensure that the estimated effect of the career-sacrifice signal is not confounded by this potential ambition channel, the experiment incorporated a second, independently randomized treatment explicitly designed to convey ambition, since its design. This ambition treatment, implemented on a smaller scale but contemporaneously with the main intervention, was introduced solely to serve as a robustness check, allowing the effect of the career-sacrifice signal to be interpreted net of any ambition-related perceptions.

$$Y_{ij} = \alpha + \beta M_{ij} * CareerS_{ij} + M_{ij} + CareerS_{ij} + M_{ij} * A_{ij} + A_{ij} + P_i + \epsilon_{ij} \quad (6)$$

where A stands for ambition. Second, I present my results within-profile. In other words, I add the profile fixed effects, estimating the equation below:

$$Y_{ij} = \alpha + \beta M_{ij} * CareerS_{ij} + M_{ij} + CareerS_{ij} + M_{ij} * A_{ij} + A_{ij} + P_i + p_j + \epsilon_{ij} \quad (7)$$

Finally, I apply a stricter sample-selection criterion. Although Amazon MTurk enforces its own quality controls—fully implemented during the experiment—additional screening, as a robustness test, can still be informative. Specifically, I exclude participants who appear to have mistakenly entered their Amazon MTurk ID in place of the survey confirmation number at the very end of the survey. These individuals otherwise completed the survey within the expected time frame and exhibited no suspicious response patterns in any other part of the survey, including the timing of the responses. Given the experimental setting and logistic, I believe that such confusion is plausibly an honest mistake. Nevertheless, to ensure the robustness of the results to this potential source of noise, the baseline specification (5) is re-estimated in the third robustness check, below, after excluding these cases.

5 Results

In Table 4 I present the results of the baseline specification. On average the results are either precisely estimated zeroes, or statistically significant but economically small effects. For the four estimated zeroes, the data allow me to rule out substantively large effects of the "career sacrifice" signal on dating outcomes. At the 95% confidence level, I can rule out that the treatment reduces attractiveness by more than 0.17% of a standard deviation,

reduces the perception of desirability by more than 0.48% of a standard deviation, reduces others' perceived willingness to date the profile by more than 0.36% of a standard deviation, or reduces the respondent's own willingness to date the profile by more than 0.53% of a standard deviation. These upper bounds suggest that, if any negative effects of the treatment exist, they are likely to be minimal in magnitude. For what matters the only statistically significant variable, the one reflecting the intention to date, one standard deviation of the independent variable affects the dependent variable by 0.3% standard deviations.[13]

This result suggests that social norms do not affect couple formation and are unlikely to explain the observed gaps between men and women in the labor market.

My empirical results and model also relate to Bertrand, Kamenica, and Pan (2015), who document that U.S. marriage formation and labor supply patterns are influenced by gender identity norms, particularly the norm that a husband should earn more than his wife. In my framework, heterogeneous preferences over career sacrifice capture a similar mechanism: deviations from traditional household roles can generate utility costs which, in equilibrium, translate into gender differences in labor force participation. However, unlike Bertrand, Kamenica, and Pan (2015), who focus in already established couple, I focus on the dating and household formation stage, studying norms that influence the willingness to enter relationships in the first place. My results are therefore particularly relevant for explaining the existence and persistence of couples in which only one partner works (about a quarter of the USA couples), and are less relevant for explaining divorces, which are a focus of Bertrand, Kamenica, and Pan (2015).

A potential objection to the notion of career sacrifice within couples is that market substitutes—such as nannies, housekeepers, cooks, or gardeners—can replicate the household support provided by a stay-at-home partner. However, replicating the full bundle of services that such a partner typically supplies is both logistically complex and financially out of reach for most households. Recent evidence from Been, Rohwedder, and Hurd (2020) shows that the scope for substitution between home production and market consumption is quantitatively limited. Using plausibly exogenous variation in housing wealth during the Great Recession, the authors estimate that only a small share of consumption is replaced by increased home production, even when time constraints are relaxed. This implies that

[13]The results without participants fixed effects are included in Appendix Tables A.1, A.2, A.3 and A.4.

market-based outsourcing is neither a perfect nor an efficient substitute for the role played by a stay-at-home partner. In this context, career sacrifice and home-based support remain economically meaningful—and socially relevant—decisions within households.

Heterogeneity

In Tables 5 and 6, I explore heterogeneity in treatment effects by the respondent's education level. Specifically, I estimate the baseline model separately for individuals who completed at least tertiary (college or higher) education and those who did not.

The results reveal a clear and economically meaningful pattern. Among college-educated respondents (Table 6), the estimated effects of the male career-sacrifice signal are uniformly small and statistically indistinguishable from zero across all outcome variables. These findings suggest that, in this subgroup, expressing a willingness to sacrifice one's career does not substantially alter perceived attractiveness, desirability, or interest in dating. The null results are also precisely estimated, allowing us to rule out even moderately sized effects with high confidence.

In contrast, among respondents with less than tertiary education (Table 5), several statistically significant effects emerge. While the coefficients remain economically modest in magnitude, three out of the four outcome variables show statistically significant shifts, with direction and size suggesting a subtle increase in perceived desirability or dating interest when a man signals career sacrifice. Although the effect sizes are not large enough to suggest a meaningful penalty or boost, the fact that statistically significant effects are only observed in the lower-education group points to a meaningful difference in how social signals are interpreted across subpopulations.

These results are consistent with the theoretical model introduced earlier. The model predicts that gendered social norms—particularly penalties applied to men for deviating from traditional provider roles—are more salient among less educated individuals. This prediction arises because norms are allowed to be asymmetric, and the asymmetry (modeled by a higher disutility parameter d or $\gamma_f > \gamma_m$) has been found stronger in lower-education samples (Goldin , 2014). In contrast, the model predicts that among individuals with more education, preferences for a working partner are more symmetric across genders, reducing or eliminating any penalty applied to men who signal willingness to stay at home or deprioritize

career ambitions.

Robustness

The results presented in Table 7 and Appendix Tables A.5, and A.6 confirm the robustness of the main findings across a variety of alternative specifications and subsamples.

In Table 7, the specification corresponding to equation ((6)) controls for an additional experimentally randomized treatment that explicitly signals ambition. The treatment was designed specifically to addresses the following concern: that willingness to sacrifice one's career may be interpreted as a signal of lower ambition, which could independently reduce attractiveness. The inclusion of this ambition treatment allows the coefficient on the career-sacrifice signal to be interpreted net of any ambition-related interpretation. The results show that the main interaction effect of interest—between male raters and the career sacrifice signal—remains statistically indistinguishable from zero for attractiveness, desirability, and all outcome variables except for a small but significant effect on intention to date. This confirms that the null effects on other outcomes are not driven by hidden perceptions of ambition.

In Table A.5, equation ((7)) incorporates profile fixed effects, exploiting only within-profile variation across different raters. This is a demanding test, as it holds constant all profile-level heterogeneity (including any non-random residual differences in profile appearance, style, or inferred socioeconomic status). The results are virtually unchanged. The estimated effect of the male-career-sacrifice signal remains small and statistically insignificant for all key outcomes, again with the exception of a marginally significant positive coefficient for intention to date. The consistency of these estimates within-profile provides further support that the baseline results are not driven by unobserved profile-level confounds.

Finally, Table A.6 reports results from a restricted sample that excludes respondents who may have mistakenly entered their Amazon Mechanical Turk ID in the wrong field at the end of the survey, despite surviving the Amazon MTurk and the econometrician pre-experiment quality control, and having answered all of the other questions in reasonable time. In light of the setting, I consider those answers still credible. The specification replicates the baseline analysis on a more strictly selected sample. Once again, the results are fully consistent: the career-sacrifice signal has no meaningful negative impact on men's perceived attractiveness

or desirability and produces at most a modest positive effect on expressed interest in dating.

Across all three robustness strategies, the estimates are stable and consistent with the baseline findings. Where effects are statistically insignificant, the estimated coefficients are small and precise enough to rule out substantively meaningful negative effects. In particular, the upper bounds of the confidence intervals suggest that if any penalty for the male career-sacrifice signal exists, it is modest in size and unlikely to drive large differences in partner selection. These findings further strengthen the interpretation that the dating stage is unlikely to be a primary driver of observed gender gaps in employment outcomes. The results are qualitatively similar without the participants fixed effects.

6 Conclusion

This paper investigates the origins of gender gaps in labor market outcomes by combining a theoretical model of gendered social norms with a novel empirical experiment on online dating preferences. The model demonstrates how asymmetric norms regarding stay-at-home partners can, in equilibrium, generate gender differences in labor force participation and earnings even in the absence of productivity differences or overt discrimination. The experiment tests whether these norms are active during the early stages of couple formation. By randomizing signals of career sacrifice in dating profiles and measuring reactions across multiple dimensions, the results reveal that there is little evidence of a strong penalty for men who signal a willingness to prioritize their partner's career.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the roots of gender inequality in labor markets are unlikely to lie in social norms operating at the couple formation stage. Instead, they point toward mechanisms that emerge later in the lifecycle, such as the arrival of children, which have been shown to generate large and persistent penalties for women's earnings and employment trajectories (Goldin , 2014).

Future research should examine the extent to which the findings from online dating platforms generalize to other common methods of couple formation, such as introductions by friends, educational settings, or community-based interactions. Each context may activate different social norms or filtering mechanisms that could shape mate selection and subsequent gender dynamics.

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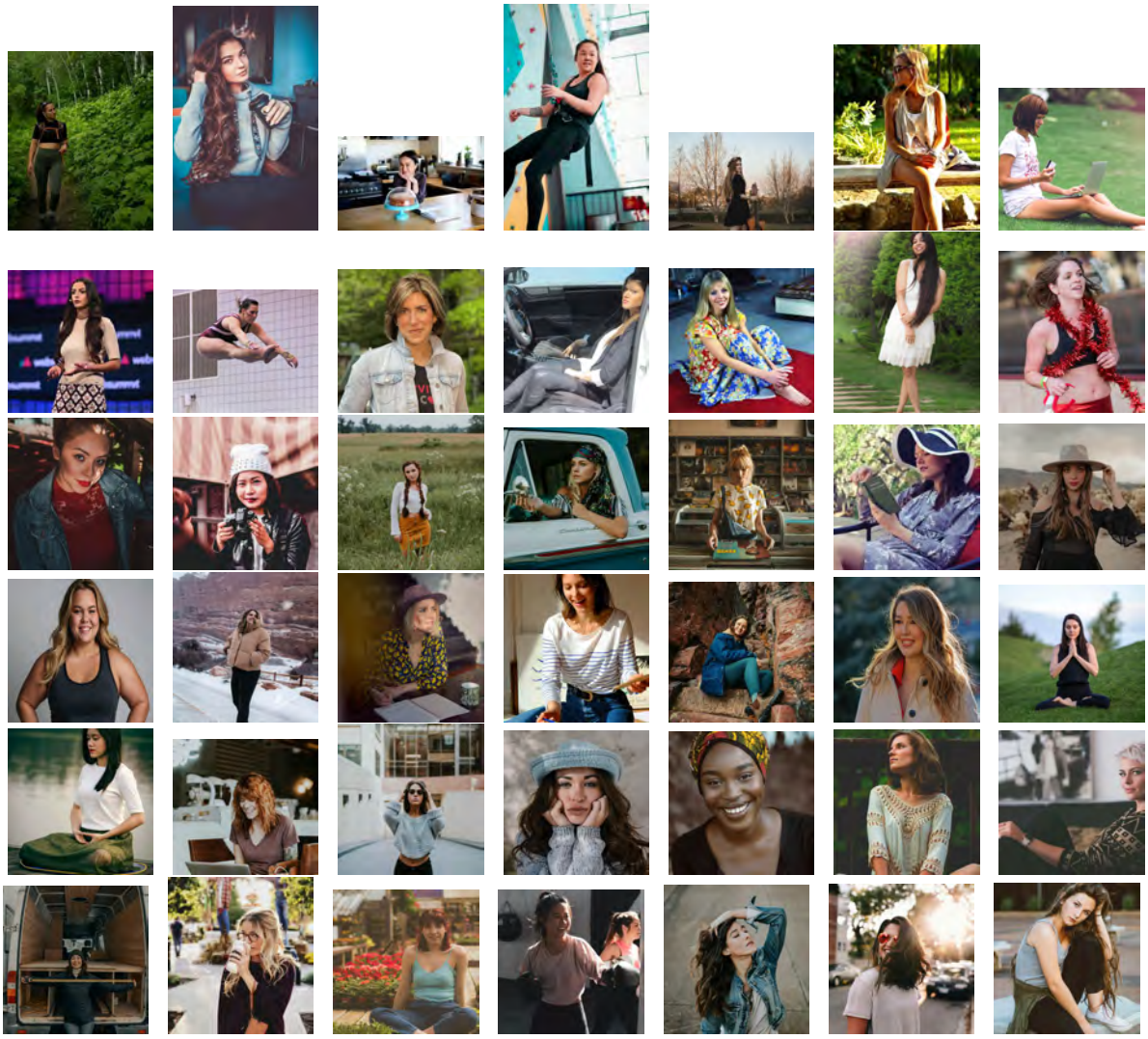
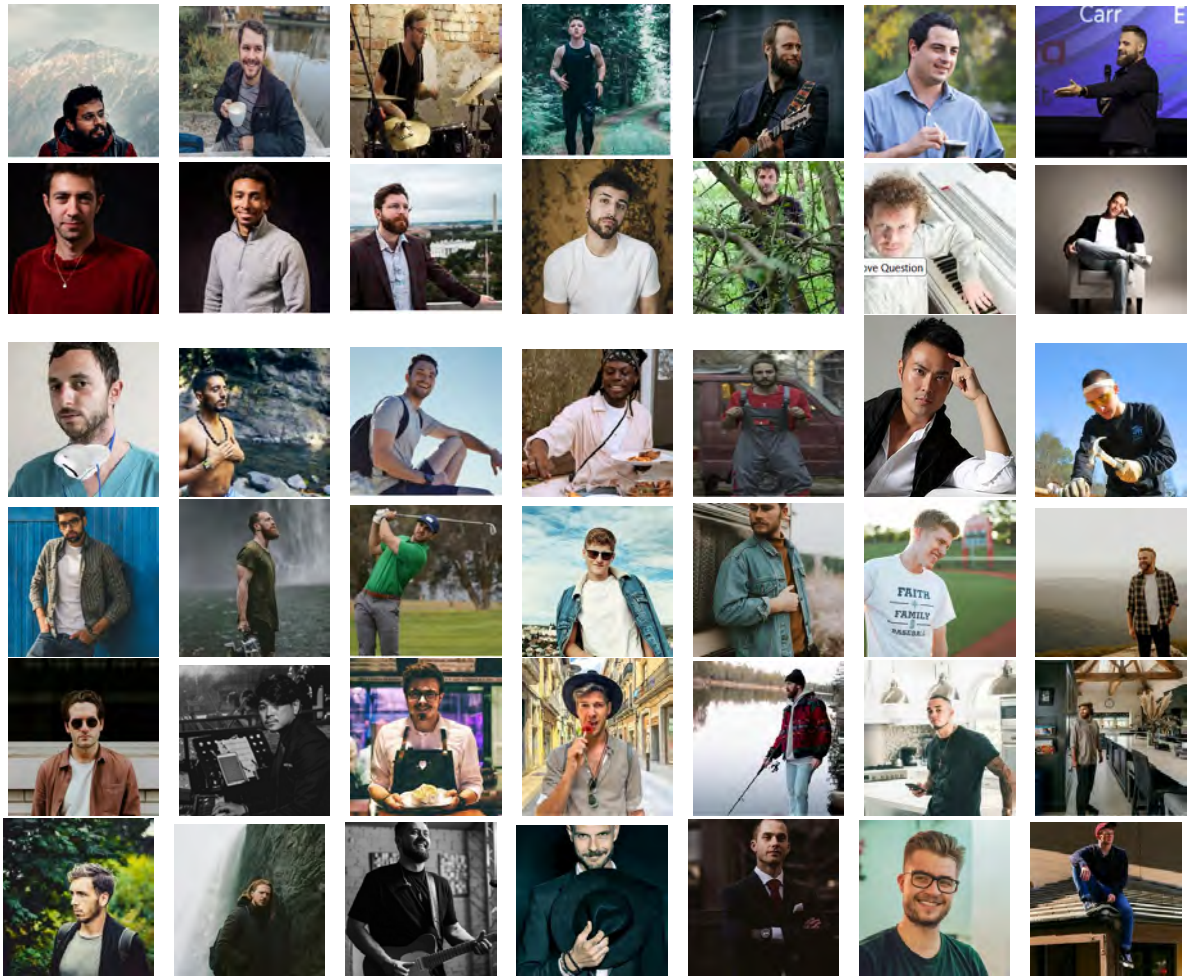
Figures

Figure 1: All 42 profile female images used in the experiment.



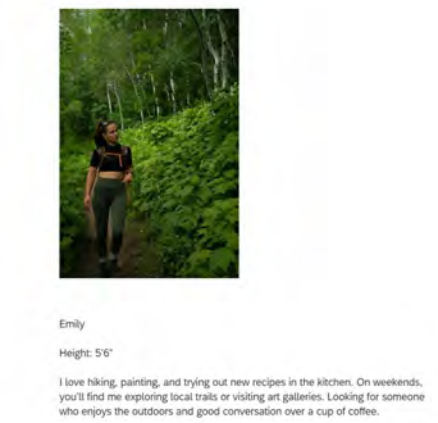
Notes: In the Figure, ordered from the top left to right, are all the pictures of the female profiles used in the online dating experiment.

Figure 2: All 42 profile male images used in the experiment.



Notes: In the Figure, ordered from the top left to right, are all the pictures of the female profiles used in the online dating experiment.

Figure 3: Sample profile shown in the experiment.



(a) Profile 1: Control realization

(b) Profile 1: Career Sacrifice realization

(c) Profile 1: Ambition Realization

Notes: I present three potential realizations of the first female profile presented to the male participants. At random, the profile could be a "control profile" (panel (a)); a 'careersacrifice profile" that receives one of the 6 career sacrifice sentences (such as the one in the picture, "My intention is to fully support the career of my partner, including by giving up my own career" (panel (b)); a "ambition profile" where one of the three potential ambition sentences appear, such as "All about making things happen - because even kids deserve parents who strive for success."

Tables

Table 1: Summary Statistics

	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
Age	32.63	5.96	18.00	55.00	20,790
No children	0.17	0.37	0.00	1.00	20,790
College	0.72	0.45	0.00	1.00	20,790
Currently breadwinner	0.76	0.43	0.00	1.00	20,790
High income	0.31	0.46	0.00	1.00	20,790
Full-time job	0.92	0.27	0.00	1.00	20,790
Male	0.50	0.50	0.00	1.00	20,790
Attractive	5.37	1.33	1.00	7.00	20,790
Desirable partner	5.30	1.60	1.00	7.00	20,790
Would like to date	5.29	1.56	1.00	7.00	20,790
Friends approve	5.39	1.52	1.00	7.00	20,790
Feel good dating	5.38	1.52	1.00	7.00	20,790
careersacrifice	0.33	0.47	0.00	1.00	20,790
ambition	0.16	0.37	0.00	1.00	20,790
careersacrificemale	0.17	0.37	0.00	1.00	20,790
ambitionmale	0.08	0.27	0.00	1.00	20,790

Notes: *Age* is the age of the subject participant (profile rater). *No children* is a dummy variable that equals 1 if the respondent does not have any children. *No children* is a dummy variable that equals to 1 if the respondent does not have any children. *College* is a dummy variable that equals to 1 if the respondent completed at least tertiary education. *Currently breadwinner* is a dummy variable that equals to 1 if the respondent answered to be the chief wage earner in their household. *High income* is a dummy variable that equals to 1 if the respondent answered "High" to the current level of their income. *Full-time job* is a dummy variable that equals to 1 if the respondent is employed full-time. *Male* is a dummy variable that equals to 1 if the respondent is male. *Attractive* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence "I find this person attractive." *Desirable partner* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence "I find this person desirable as a dating partner." *Would like to date* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence: "I would like to date this person." *Friends approve* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not answer with unacceptable among the possible answers to the question: "How do you think your friends would feel about you if you were dating this person?" *Feel good dating* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not answer with unacceptable among the possible answers to the question: "How would you feel about yourself if you were dating this person?'" *Careersacrificemale* is a dummy variable generated by the interaction with the dummy variable "Male," equal to 1 if the respondent is male, with the dummy variable *Careersacrifice* which equals to 1 if the profile evaluated contains one of the 6 sentences representing the willingness to sacrifice the career for the partner. *Ambitionmale* is a dummy variable generated by the interaction with the dummy variable "Male," equal to 1 if the respondent is male, with the dummy variable *Ambition* which equals to 1 if the profile evaluated contains one of the 3 sentences representing the signal to be ambitious.

Table 2: Balance: Career Sacrifice sentences vs Control

	N. C	Mean C	N. CS	Mean CS	Delta	p-val
Predetermined covariates						
Age	10446	32.66	6915	32.66	-0.01	0.937
No children	10446	0.17	6915	0.16	0.00	0.404
College	10446	0.72	6915	0.72	-0.00	0.893
Currently breadwinner	10446	0.76	6915	0.76	-0.00	0.541
High income	10446	0.30	6915	0.30	-0.00	0.986
Full-time job	10446	0.93	6915	0.92	0.00	0.274
Male	10446	0.50	6915	0.50	0.00	0.763
Outcomes (ratings)						
Attractive	10446	5.35	6915	5.37	-0.03	0.190
Desirable partner	10446	5.28	6915	5.31	-0.03	0.170
Would like to date	10446	5.27	6915	5.31	-0.04*	0.080
Friends approve	10446	5.36	6915	5.41	-0.05**	0.041
Feel good dating	10446	5.36	6915	5.41	-0.05**	0.030

Notes: "N.C" means "Number of observations in the Control group. "Mean C" is the mean of the variable in the control group. "N. CS" is the number of observations for the observation representing a profile-rater pair receiving a "career sacrifice" treatment. "Mean CS" is the mean for the variable in the "career sacrifice" sample. *Age* is the age of the subject participant (profile rater). *No children* is a dummy variable that equals 1 if the respondent does not have any children. *No children* is a dummy variable that equals to 1 if the respondent does not have any children. *College* is a dummy variable that equals to 1 if the respondent completed at least tertiary education. *Currently breadwinner* is a dummy variable that equals to 1 if the respondent answered to be the chief wage earner in their household. *High income* is a dummy variable that equals to 1 if the respondent answered "High" to the current level of their income. *Full-time job* is a dummy variable that equals to 1 if the respondent is employed full-time. *Male* is a dummy variable that equals to 1 if the respondent is male. *Attractive* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence "I find this person attractive." *Desirable partner* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence "I find this person desirable as a dating partner." *Would like to date* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence: "I would like to date this person." *Friends approve* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not answer with unacceptable among the possible answers to the question: "How do you think your friends would feel about you if you were dating this person?" *Feel good dating* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not answer with unacceptable among the possible answers to the question: "How would you feel about yourself if you were dating this person?"

Table 3: Balance: Ambition sentences vs Control /

	N. C	Mean C	N. Amb	Mean Amb	Delta	p-val
Predetermined covariates						
Age	10446	32.66	3429	32.51	0.15	0.205
No children	10446	0.17	3429	0.17	-0.00	0.868
College	10446	0.72	3429	0.73	-0.01	0.342
Currently breadwinner	10446	0.76	3429	0.75	0.01	0.233
High income	10446	0.30	3429	0.31	-0.01	0.248
Full-time job	10446	0.93	3429	0.92	0.00	0.429
Male	10446	0.50	3429	0.49	0.01	0.275
Outcomes (ratings)						
Attractive	10446	5.35	3429	5.43	-0.08***	0.002
Desirable partner	10446	5.28	3429	5.35	-0.07**	0.036
Would like to date	10446	5.27	3429	5.32	-0.04	0.155
Friends approve	10446	5.36	3429	5.43	-0.07**	0.026
Feel good dating	10446	5.36	3429	5.43	-0.07**	0.018

Notes: "N.C" means "Number of observations in the Control group. "Mean C" is the mean of the variable in the control group. "N. Amb" is the number of observations for the observation representing a profile-rater pair receiving an "ambition" treatment. "Mean Amb" is the mean for the variable in the "ambition" sample. *Age* is the age of the subject participant (profile rater). *No children* is a dummy variable that equals 1 if the respondent does not have any children. *No children* is a dummy variable that equals to 1 if the respondent does not have any children. *College* is a dummy variable that equals to 1 if the respondent completed at least tertiary education. *Currently breadwinner* is a dummy variable that equals to 1 if the respondent answered to be the chief wage earner in their household. *High income* is a dummy variable that equals to 1 if the respondent answered "High" to the current level of their income. *Full-time job* is a dummy variable that equals to 1 if the respondent is employed full-time. *Male* is a dummy variable that equals to 1 if the respondent is male. *Attractive* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence "I find this person attractive." *Desirable partner* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence "I find this person desirable as a dating partner." *Would like to date* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence: "I would like to date this person." *Friends approve* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not answer with unacceptable among the possible answers to the question: "How do you think your friends would feel about you if you were dating this person?" *Feel good dating* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not answer with unacceptable among the possible answers to the question: "How would you feel about yourself if you were dating this person?"

Table 4: The Attractiveness of Career Sacrifice

	(1) Attractive	(2) Desirable	(3) Date	(4) Others	(5) Feeldating
careersacrificemale	-0.00709	0.00775	0.0131**	-0.00203	0.00610
	(0.0068)	(0.0066)	(0.0061)	(0.0086)	(0.0079)
Participant FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	20790	20790	20790	20790	20790
R^2	0.549	0.663	0.620	0.570	0.557

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Notes: Standard errors are clustered at the profile level. *Attractive* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence "I find this person attractive." *Desirable* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence "I find this person desirable as a dating partner." *Date* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence: "I would like to date this person." *Others* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not answer with unacceptable among the possible answers to the question: "How do you think your friends would feel about you if you were dating this person?" *Feeldating* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not answer with unacceptable among the possible answers to the question: "How would you feel about yourself if you were dating this person?" *Careersacrificemale* is a dummy variable generated by the interaction with the dummy variable *Male*, equal to 1 if the respondent is male, with the dummy variable *Careersacrifice* which equals to 1 if the profile evaluated contains one of the 6 sentences representing the willingness to sacrifice the career for the partner.

Table 5: The Attractiveness of Career Sacrifice - Below Tertiary Education

	(1) Attractive	(2) Desirable	(3) Date	(4) Others	(5) Feeldating
careersacrificemale	-0.00200	0.0393**	0.0337**	0.00854	0.0288*
	(0.0138)	(0.0148)	(0.0125)	(0.0160)	(0.0146)
Participant FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	5838	5838	5838	5838	5838
R^2	0.612	0.729	0.711	0.694	0.669

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Notes: See footnotes of the next table.

Table 6: The Attractiveness of Career Sacrifice - Tertiary Education and Above

	(1) Attractive	(2) Desirable	(3) Date	(4) Others	(5) Feeldating
careersacrificemale	-0.00965	-0.00566	0.00430	-0.00629	-0.00306
	(0.0077)	(0.0076)	(0.0077)	(0.0090)	(0.0087)
Observations	14952	14952	14952	14952	14952
R^2	0.458	0.592	0.513	0.405	0.429

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Notes: Standard errors are clustered at the profile level. The sample of the Table in the upper part of the page includes the respondents who did not complete a tertiary education degree of above. The sample of the Table in the lower part of the page includes the respondents who completed at least a tertiary education degree. *Attractive* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence "I find this person attractive." *Desirable* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence "I find this person desirable as a dating partner." *Date* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence: "I would like to date this person." *Others* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not answer with unacceptable among the possible answers to the question: "How do you think your friends would feel about you if you were dating this person?" *Feeldating* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not answer with unacceptable among the possible answers to the question: "How would you feel about yourself if you were dating this person?" *Careersacrificemale* is a dummy variable generated by the interaction with the dummy variable "Male," equal to 1 if the respondent is male, with the dummy variable *Careersacrifice* which equals to 1 if the profile evaluated contains one of the 6 sentences representing the willingness to sacrifice the career for the partner.

Table 7: The Attractiveness of Career Sacrifice

	(1) Attractive	(2) Desirable	(3) Date	(4) Others	(5) Feeldating
careersacrificemale	-0.00489	0.00853	0.0133**	-0.00394	0.00499
	(0.0071)	(0.0071)	(0.0065)	(0.0088)	(0.0082)
ambitionmale	0.00904	0.00308	0.000710	-0.00771	-0.00437
	(0.0083)	(0.0091)	(0.0077)	(0.0084)	(0.0083)
Participant FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	20790	20790	20790	20790	20790
R^2	0.549	0.663	0.620	0.570	0.557

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Notes: Standard errors are clustered at the profile level. *Attractive* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence "I find this person attractive." *Desirable* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence "I find this person desirable as a dating partner." *Date* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence: "I would like to date this person." *Others* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not answer with unacceptable among the possible answers to the question: "How do you think your friends would feel about you if you were dating this person?" *Feeldating* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not answer with unacceptable among the possible answers to the question: "How would you feel about yourself if you were dating this person?" *Careersacrificemale* is a dummy variable generated by the interaction with the dummy variable "Male," equal to 1 if the respondent is male, with the dummy variable *Careersacrifice* which equals to 1 if the profile evaluated contains one of the 6 sentences representing the willingness to sacrifice the career for the partner. *Ambitionmale* is a dummy variable generated by the interaction with the dummy variable "Male," equal to 1 if the respondent is male, with the dummy variable *Ambition* which equals to 1 if the profile evaluated contains one of the 3 sentences representing the signal to be ambitious.

Appendix

Proof of Proposition 2: Asymmetry in Norms and Gender Gap in Labor Supply

Proof I consider the labor supply decision in a simplified setting where individuals choose whether to work or not, i.e., $L_i \in \{0, 1\}$.

Let each individual $i \in \{f, m\}$ have utility:

$$U_i = u(C) - v(L_i) - \gamma_i \cdot \mathbf{1}_{\{L_{-i}=0\}} + \theta_i \cdot \mathbf{1}_{\{L_{-i}=0\}}$$

where $\theta_i \sim F(\theta)$ is a preference shock capturing idiosyncratic utility from having a non-working partner.

Suppose both individuals are evaluating whether to work. The relevant utility comparisons are:

For the woman:

$$U_f(L_f = 1) = u(C_1) - v(1) - \gamma_f \cdot \mathbf{1}_{\{L_m=0\}}$$
$$U_f(L_f = 0) = u(C_0) - v(0) - \gamma_f \cdot \mathbf{1}_{\{L_m=0\}} + \theta_f$$

The woman works if:

$$u(C_1) - v(1) > u(C_0) + \theta_f \Rightarrow \theta_f < u(C_1) - u(C_0) - v(1) \equiv \theta_f^*$$

Similarly, for the man:

$$\theta_m^* = u(C_1') - u(C_0') - v(1)$$

where C_1' and C_0' denote consumption when the man works vs. does not work.

Thus, expected labor force participation is:

$$\mathbb{E}[L_f] = F(\theta_f^*), \quad \mathbb{E}[L_m] = F(\theta_m^*) \Rightarrow \Delta L = F(\theta_f^*) - F(\theta_m^*)$$

Now observe how θ_f^* and θ_m^* depend on γ_f and γ_m. Suppose $L_m = 0$. Then woman's disutility increases with γ_f, so θ_f^* decreases. Suppose $L_f = 0$. Then man's disutility increases with γ_m, so θ_m^* decreases. If γ_f increases while γ_m stays fixed, then:

$$\frac{d\theta_f^*}{d\gamma_f} < 0, \quad \frac{d\theta_m^*}{d\gamma_f} = 0 \Rightarrow \frac{d\Delta L}{d\gamma_f} < 0$$

Similarly, if γ_m increases holding γ_f fixed:

$$\frac{d\Delta L}{d\gamma_m} > 0$$

Hence, the gender gap in labor supply ΔL is strictly increasing in $\Delta = \gamma_f - \gamma_m$, i.e.,

$$\frac{d\Delta L}{d\Delta} > 0$$

This completes the proof.

Appendix [For Online Publication]

This Online Appendix provides additional information and robustness checks, which are also discussed in the paper:

- Informed Consent (Figure A.1)
- Dating Questionnaire (Figure A.2)
- Baseline without the participant fixed-effects (Table A.1)
- Baseline without the participant fixed-effects and with the ambition control (Table A.2)
- Heterogeneity without the participant fixed effects (Table A.3 and Table A.4)
- Inclusion of Profile FE (Table A.5)
- Stricter sample seleciton (Table A.6)

Figure A.1: Informed Consent

Title of research study: Dating Preferences and the Labor Market

Researcher:
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Department of Economics, UC Riverside
ugoantonio.troiano@ucr.edu , 951-827-1012

Introduction
This is a research study about the preferences for a partner and the labor market. The study Principal Investigator (PI), Ugo antonio Troiano from the UCR Department of Economics, will explain this study to you. You are being asked to take part in this study because you have responded to our call for participants for a research study that involves answering questions about your preferences in a partner. The experiment is reserved for heterosexual participants aged between 18 and 55 years old who identify themselves as a woman. The study will consist of two parts. In the first part, you will be asked to answer 10 questions about yourself. In the second part, you will be presented with a number of dating profiles of the opposite gender, and you will be asked to answer 5 questions for each profile. You will have to focus on the profile for at least 35 seconds before you can answer the question about the profile. These latter questions aim to measure how attractive each profile is to you. The survey lasts 120 minutes. The participation to the experiment is compensated with $20. You can leave the experiment at any time by logging off from the survey. If you leave the experiment there is no compensation. All the questions have to be completed and no question can be skipped. The survey has to be completed in one setting (multiple sessions are not allowed. The benefit of this experiment is to enhance societal comprehension of how dating preferences influence labor market outcomes for couples, which will benefit the society, through academic research. If you are interested in learning more about the results in the experiment, please contact: ugoantonio.troiano@ucr.edu . There are no foreseeable risks from participating in the experiment.

- You will be given a questionnaire to respond about you and your socio-economic status.
- You will also be presented a number of dating profiles and you will be asked five questions for each dating profile aimed at measuring the attractiveness of each profile.

You can skip questions you do not want to answer in the first part of the experiment, you are required to evaluate each of the presented profile to move forward. In any case, you can stop participating at any time. Your responses are anonymous, and no one will be able to link your answers back to you. Since the survey is anonymous, the research team will be unable to withdraw your data after submission of the survey should you wish to withdraw. Please do not include your name or other information that could be used to identify you in your responses.

Whom can I talk to?
If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, you can write to the Principal Investigator at ugoantonio.troiano@ucr.edu . If you have questions about your rights or complaints as a research subject, please contact the IRB Chairperson at (951) 827 - 4802 during business hours, or to contact them by email at irb@ucr.edu.

CONSENT
PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. The decision to participate, or not participate, is solely up to you. If you wish to participate in this study, please click on the arrows below to proceed. The click on the arrow below implicitly implies the consent to participate in the experiment.

Figure A.2: Dating Questionnaire

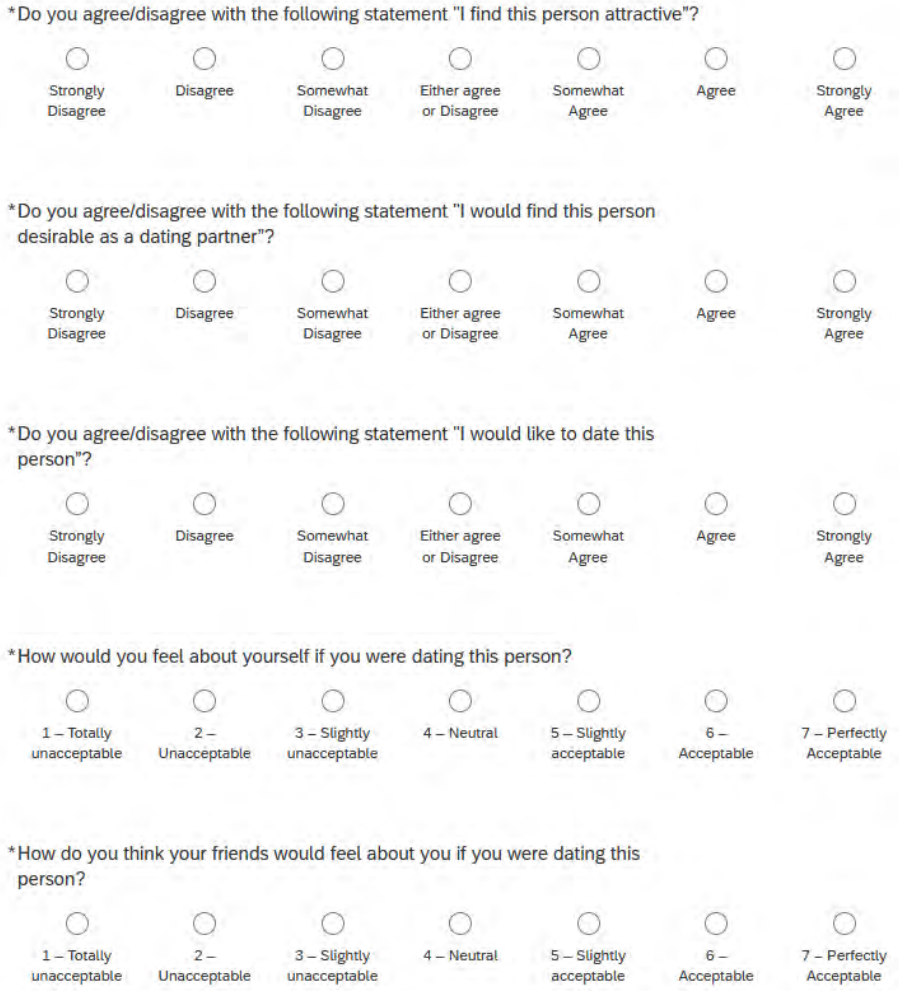

Table A.1: The Attractiveness of Career Sacrifice

	(1) Attractive	(2) Desirable	(3) Date	(4) Others	(5) Feeldating
careersacrificemale	0.00204	0.0183	0.0220**	0.00565	0.0157
	(0.0086)	(0.0112)	(0.0095)	(0.0113)	(0.0105)
Observations	20790	20790	20790	20790	20790
R^2	0.006	0.039	0.026	0.025	0.029

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Notes: Standard errors are clustered at the profile level. *Attractive* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence "I find this person attractive." *Desirable* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence "I find this person desirable as a dating partner." *Date* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence: "I would like to date this person." *Others* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not answer with unacceptable among the possible answers to the question: "How do you think your friends would feel about you if you were dating this person?" *Feeldating* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not answer with unacceptable among the possible answers to the question: "How would you feel about yourself if you were dating this person?" *Careersacrificemale* is a dummy variable generated by the interaction with the dummy variable *Male,* equal to 1 if the respondent is male, with the dummy variable *Careersacrifice* which equals to 1 if the profile evaluated contains one of the 6 sentences representing the willingness to sacrifice the career for the partner.

Table A.2: The Attractiveness of Career Sacrifice

	(1) Attractive	(2) Desirable	(3) Date	(4) Others	(5) Feeldating
careersacrificemale	0.00970	0.0259**	0.0296***	0.0118	0.0217*
	(0.0082)	(0.0116)	(0.0098)	(0.0114)	(0.0111)
ambitionmale	0.0314**	0.0314**	0.0312***	0.0255*	0.0247*
	(0.0128)	(0.0147)	(0.0106)	(0.0132)	(0.0131)
Observations	20790	20790	20790	20790	20790
R^2	0.006	0.040	0.026	0.026	0.029

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Notes: Standard errors are clustered at the profile level. *Attractive* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence "I find this person attractive." *Desirable* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence "I find this person desirable as a dating partner." *Date* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence: "I would like to date this person." *Others* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not answer with unacceptable among the possible answers to the question: "How do you think your friends would feel about you if you were dating this person?" *Feeldating* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not answer with unacceptable among the possible answers to the question: "How would you feel about yourself if you were dating this person?" *Careersacrificemale* is a dummy variable generated by the interaction with the dummy variable "Male," equal to 1 if the respondent is male, with the dummy variable *Careersacrifice* which equals to 1 if the profile evaluated contains one of the 6 sentences representing the willingness to sacrifice the career for the partner. *Ambitionmale* is a dummy variable generated by the interaction with the dummy variable "Male," equal to 1 if the respondent is male, with the dummy variable *Ambition* which equals to 1 if the profile evaluated contains one of the 3 sentences representing the signal to be ambitious.

Table A.3: The Attractiveness of Career Sacrifice - Below Tertiary Education

	(1) Attractive	(2) Desirable	(3) Date	(4) Others	(5) Feeldating
careersacrificemale	0.0144	0.0538**	0.0599***	0.0351	0.0598***
	(0.0190)	(0.0232)	(0.0182)	(0.0228)	(0.0215)
Observations	5838	5838	5838	5838	5838
R^2	0.079	0.202	0.151	0.153	0.171

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Notes: See footnotes of the next table.

Table A.4: The Attractiveness of Career Sacrifice - Tertiary Education and Above

	(1) Attractive	(2) Desirable	(3) Date	(4) Others	(5) Feeldating
careersacrificemale	-0.00512	0.00153	0.00427	-0.00814	-0.00340
	(0.0095)	(0.0116)	(0.0110)	(0.0114)	(0.0105)
Observations	14952	14952	14952	14952	14952
R^2	0.001	0.007	0.003	0.002	0.003

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Notes: Standard errors are clustered at the profile level. The sample of the Table in the upper part of the page includes the respondents who did not complete a tertiary education degree of above. The sample of the Table in the lower part of the page includes the respondents who completed at least a tertiary education degree. *Attractive* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence "I find this person attractive." *Desirable* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence "I find this person desirable as a dating partner." *Date* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence: "I would like to date this person." *Others* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not answer with unacceptable among the possible answers to the question: "How do you think your friends would feel about you if you were dating this person?" *Feeldating* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not answer with unacceptable among the possible answers to the question: "How would you feel about yourself if you were dating this person?" *Careersacrificemale* is a dummy variable generated by the interaction with the dummy variable "Male," equal to 1 if the respondent is male, with the dummy variable *Careersacrifice* which equals to 1 if the profile evaluated contains one of the 6 sentences representing the willingness to sacrifice the career for the partner.

Table A.5: The Attractiveness of Career Sacrifice

	(1) Attractive	(2) Desirable	(3) Date	(4) Others	(5) Feeldating
careersacrificemale	-0.00501	0.00848	0.0132**	-0.00381	0.00494
	(0.0070)	(0.0069)	(0.0064)	(0.0086)	(0.0080)
Participant FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Profile FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	20790	20790	20790	20790	20790
R^2	0.552	0.666	0.623	0.573	0.560

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Notes: Standard errors are clustered at the profile level. *Attractive* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence "I find this person attractive." *Desirable* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence "I find this person desirable as a dating partner." *Date* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence: "I would like to date this person." *Others* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not answer with unacceptable among the possible answers to the question: "How do you think your friends would feel about you if you were dating this person?" *Feeldating* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not answer with unacceptable among the possible answers to the question: 'How would you feel about yourself if you were dating this person?" *Careersacrificemale* is a dummy variable generated by the interaction with the dummy variable "Male," equal to 1 if the respondent is male, with the dummy variable *Careersacrifice* which equals to 1 if the profile evaluated contains one of the 6 sentences representing the willingness to sacrifice the career for the partner.

Table A.6: The Attractiveness of Career Sacrifice

	(1) Attractive	(2) Desirable	(3) Date	(4) Others	(5) Feeldating
careersacrificemale	-0.00724	0.00680	0.0141**	-0.00244	0.00582
	(0.0073)	(0.0070)	(0.0064)	(0.0093)	(0.0085)
Participant FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Profile FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	18900	18900	18900	18900	18900
R^2	0.553	0.665	0.621	0.570	0.558

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Notes: Standard errors are clustered at the profile level. *Attractive* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence "I find this person attractive." *Desirable* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence "I find this person desirable as a dating partner." *Date* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not disagree with the sentence: "I would like to date this person." *Others* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not answer with unacceptable among the possible answers to the question: "How do you think your friends would feel about you if you were dating this person?" *Feeldating* is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent does not answer with unacceptable among the possible answers to the question: "How would you feel about yourself if you were dating this person?" *Careersacrificemale* is a dummy variable generated by the interaction with the dummy variable "Male," equal to 1 if the respondent is male, with the dummy variable *Careersacrifice* which equals to 1 if the profile evaluated contains one of the 6 sentences representing the willingness to sacrifice the career for the partner.