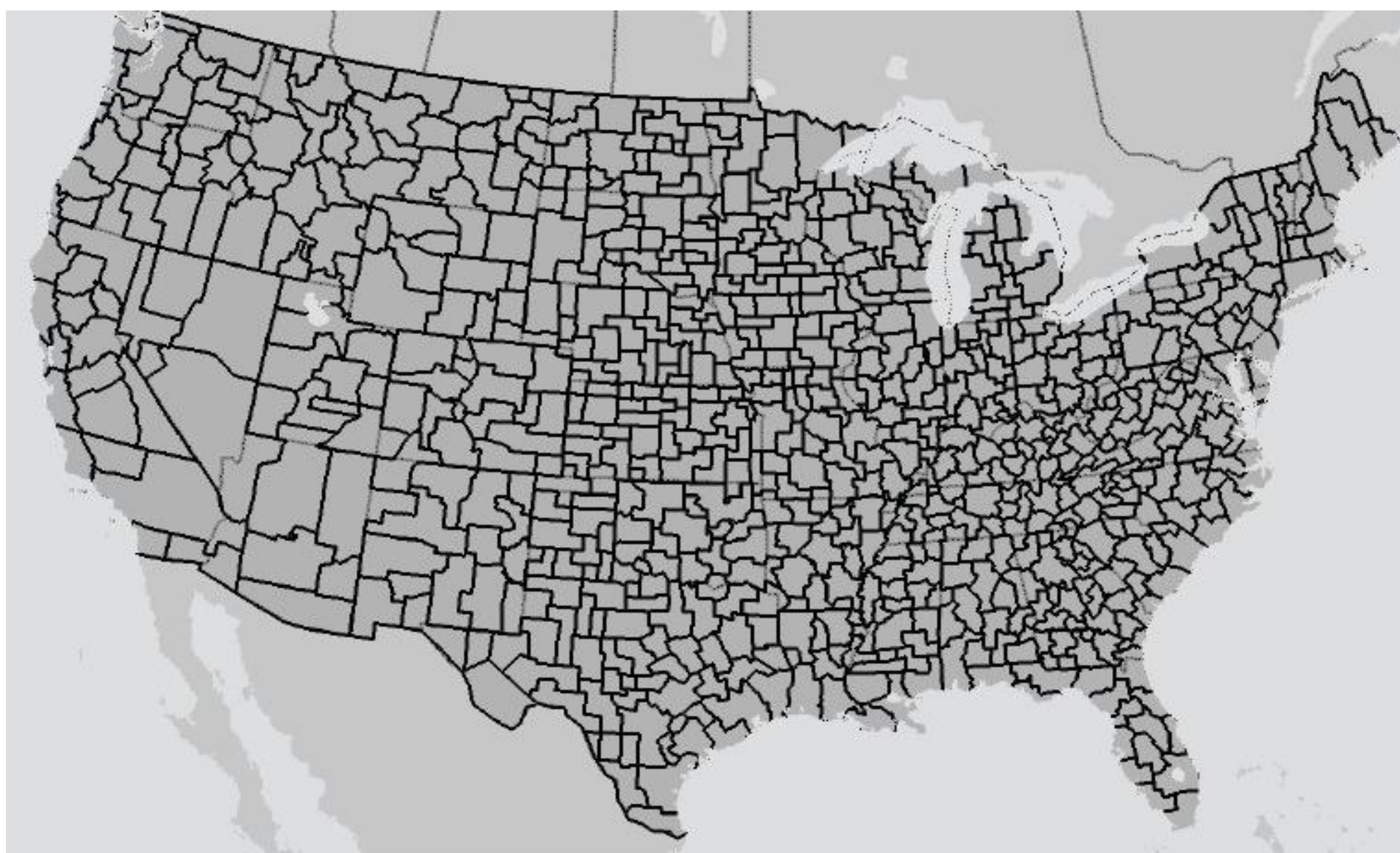


Background

A temporal perspective has dominated U.S.-based demographic research agendas among gender scholars studying the causes and consequences of gender inequality in the labor market. For example, scholars have well documented a national-level, temporal change in gender inequality in a labor market and resulting overall shift to egalitarian gender attitudes in the U.S. A smaller set of scholars have focused on space, rather than time, and have documented substantial variation in gender inequality across labor markets within the U.S., measured by dimensions such as the gender wage gap (McCall 1998, 2000). However, unlike their colleagues who have mapped change over time in these measures of gender inequality, and how they may coincide with changing gender attitudes, scholars interested in spatial variation in markets like the gender wage gap have rarely examined whether gender attitudes also vary spatially in ways that suggest an association. To build on these past literatures, this paper examines whether the conditions of local labor markets shape individual attitudes about the appropriate gender of a primary earner. I also examine the impact of relative earnings that arises when households rearrange labor contributions between spouses during this recessionary period on individual attitudes about who should be a primary earner. It is likely that increasing women's relative earnings in a two adult household leads individuals to have less traditional attitudes about who should be a primary earner even after controlling for CZ-level gender wage gap. However, the influence of women's contribution to household income could differ by household economic status, and I expect a weaker impact on traditional attitudes for low-income households.

Data & Methods

I use the first two waves of the National Survey of Family and Households (1987-88, 92-94) data and merged them with Current Population Survey in order to construct gender wage gap in local labor markets. I use census-defined, 741 Commuting Zones in the mainland U.S. as a proxy for local labor markets, which draws boundaries of economically-homogeneous labor markets based on commuting patterns of census population. I limit my analytic sample to married men and women under age 65 (N=5,109) and conducted multivariate analyses with married couple weights. Since I use the first two waves of the NSFH data, two observations are available per individual. I use a random intercept model to exploit this panel data structure. A random intercept model allows dependency among observations within the clustering unit, which is an individual in this study, by introducing a person-specific term that randomly varies across individuals.



<Figure 1> Census-defined Commuting Zones in 1990

Results & Conclusion

Findings of this study suggest that individuals have less traditional attitudes about the appropriate gender of a primary earner when they reside in a local labor market where average earnings of women are closer to those of men. This suggests that a local labor market is an important level of analysis in understanding individual attitudes about the male breadwinner ideology. Also, the results of this study suggest that all individuals do not experience recessionary labor markets in the same way. The ways households respond to economic insecurity in recessionary labor markets, for example, with household labor rearrangement and its consequences for women's relative income in a two adult household, does shape individual perception of who should be a primary earner even when individuals are embedded in the same labor market. Lastly, findings of this study suggest that the impact of women's relative earnings in the household on individual attitudes about the male breadwinner ideology differ by household economic status.

Acknowledgement

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<Table 1> Population-weighted characteristics of married couple sample from the NSFH (87-88, 92-94), overall and stratified by 200% Federal Poverty Line (FPL)

	Overall	Below FPL 200%	Above FPL 200%
Number of individuals	5,080	966	4,137
Number of observations	10,160	1,932	8,274
W1 Gender role attitude	.03	.30***	-.03***
W2 Gender role attitude	.09	.81***	-.06***
Δ Gender role attitude	+.06	+.51	-.03
<u>Individual-level characteristics</u>			
Race (%)			
White (non-Hispanic)	88.8	75.2	91.6
Black	5.1	8.9	4.3
Hispanic	5.2	14.7	3.2
Other	.9	1.3	.8
Age (in years)	43.6	43.4	43.6
Husband or wife (Wife= 1)	50.9	51.1	50.9
Education (in years)	13.0	11.2***	13.4***
<u>Household-level characteristics</u>			
W1 Women's relative earnings	-.42	-.32***	-.44***
W2 Women's relative earnings	-.32	-.29	-.32
Δ Women's relative earnings	+.10	+.03	+.12

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, † p<.1

<Table 2> Random effect regression model predicting individual attitude about the male breadwinner ideology

	Male breadwinner ideology (high = traditional)	
	Coef.	SE
Gender wage ratio in local labor markets	-.03***	.01
Women's relative earnings	-.53***	.05
Income-to-needs ratio (< 200% fpl)	.48***	.07
Women's relative earnings × Income-to-needs ratio	.25**	.08
<u>Demographic & SES characteristics</u>		
Race (ref = Non-Hispanic White)		
Black	-.41***	.07
Hispanic	.28**	.09
Other	-.03	.19
Age (in years)	.03***	.00
Education (in years)	-.09***	.01
Presence of minor child	.05	.05
R is wife (yes = 1)	-.39***	.03
Wave 2	.12**	.04
Constant	3.05***	.60
Number of observations		10,218
Number of individuals		5,109

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, † p<.1