Commuting Behavior and Gender Norms by Sexual Orientation
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Abstract
We assess the role of gender-conforming social norms in household decision-making and gender inequalities in the labor market with a parsimonious household model that endogenizes commuting time. Using the American Community Survey 2008-2019, we test the model predictions and find that women in same-sex couples have a longer commute to work than working women in different-sex couples, whereas the commute to work of men in same-sex couples is shorter than the one of working men in different-sex couples, even after controlling for demographic characteristics, partner’s characteristics, location, fertility, and marital status. These differences among men and women amount to 50%, and 100%, respectively, of the gender commuting gap estimated in the literature, and are particularly stark among married couples with children. Within-couple gaps in commuting time are also significantly smaller in same-sex couples, and labor supply disparities mimic the commuting ones. According to our model, these differences are interpreted as gender-conforming social norms, leading women in different-sex couples into jobs with a shorter commute and fewer hours worked while their male partners/spouses hold jobs with a longer commute and more hours worked, thus reinforcing gender inequalities.

Descriptive Statistics
- Figure 1 on commuting time:
  - Gender gap: men commute more than women
  - Women in same-sex couples have longer commutes than women in different-sex couples
  - Men in same-sex couples have shorter commutes than men in different-sex couples
- Figure 2 on within-couple commuting time gap:
  - Smaller commuting time gaps in same-sex couples
  - Consistent with idea that same-sex couples are more egalitarian

Introduction
• Large literature and interest from policymaker on gender commuting gap and broader gender inequality in labor market outcomes
  - Women choose jobs with shorter commute
  - Women move to lower-paying jobs closer to home after having children
  - Married women exhibit lower labor force participation in metropolitan areas with longer commutes
  - Child penalty and specialization among same-sex couples lower than for different-sex couples
• Research goal: to better understand the existing gender commuting gap and labor market inequalities
  - How?
    - Household model with endogenous commuting choice and gender norms
    - Test model predictions by comparing same-sex and different-sex couples in the American Community Survey

Model Insights
• Gender-conforming social norms affect trade-off between utility from household public good and utility from career
  - In different-sex couples, these norms lead women to believe that utility from public good is relatively higher for them
  - Women settle for closer-to-home less-rewarding jobs in order to take up heavier responsibilities in the household, while their male partners settle for farther, more-rewarding jobs
• Gender-conforming social norms less binding among same-sex couples
  - Different commuting behavior and labor supply choices may arise even when men and women are equally productive, and among childless couples

Data
• American Community Survey 2008-2019
• Annual survey containing demographic, economic, social, and housing information on random 1% sample of U.S. population
• Same-sex couples (SSC): household head and same-sex married spouse or unmarried partner
  - Roommates excluded
• Sample: working adults aged 18-64
• Key variable: total amount of time, in minutes, that it usually took the respondent to get from home to work

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