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Commitments and the Marital Match: The Effect of Alimony Reform on Assortative Matching

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ABSTRACT

Commitments and the Marital Match: The Effect of Alimony Reform on Assortative Matching

This paper examines the effects of reforms that reduced alimony on matching in the marriage market. Recent literature indicates that divorce law changes which reduce commitment or income-sharing upon separation will lead to an increase in assortative matching, as women forgo specialization which may not be compensated upon divorce. Using state-level data on alimony reform that reduced the entitlements of eligible spouses and American Community Survey data on marriage and the characteristics of newlyweds, we find that alimony reform increased measures of spousal covariance in education. Our results indicate that correlation coefficients on spousal degree attainment consistently rise with alimony reform, and regression-based measures of assortative matching increase similarly. Moreover, we find the largest effects among those groups who might be more sensitive to the reform. Regression-based measures of assortative matching increase by over 10% among couples in which at least one partner had previously been married and by 9% among those couples who marry in states with less generous property division and child support which are often treated as substitutes for alimony in divorce settlements.

JEL Classification: J12, K12

Keywords: marriage, matching, divorce law, alimony, assortative matching, commitment mechanisms

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1 Introduction

This paper examines how alimony may affect matching in the marriage market, particularly the effects of alimony on assortative matching on education. A number of papers have shown that unenforceable contracting in the marriage market may lead to inefficient marriage market outcomes (see Pollak (2019), Rasul (2006) and Francesconi and Muthoo (2003), for example) and that policies and other factors that increase marital commitment may improve efficiency, as well as increasing household specialization and decreasing assortative matching (Reynoso, 2017; Reynoso, 2019; LaFortune and Low, 2017; LaFortune and Low, 2019; Wong, 2019). Similarly, alimony may increase incentives for specialization and marriage-specific investment by acting as a commitment device and by providing spouses who work in the household with an enforceable share of family income upon divorce.

This paper uses recent data from state alimony reforms as well as data from the American Community Survey (ACS) to examine empirically how recent state alimony reforms which limit the length and amount of alimony women receive upon divorce have affected matching in the marriage market. Given a positive probability of divorce, a reduction in alimony may decrease the incentive for specialization and thereby increase assortative matching, while alimony reform may also affect the composition of who marries since it both reduces (increases) females' (men's) expected utility from entering marriage. Following similar logic, work by Reynoso (2017, 2019), LaFortune and Low (2017, 2019) and Wong (2019) show that policies such as unilateral divorce, asset-sharing and income-sharing may affect assortative matching and specialization in part through their effects on marital commitment.

To the extent that alimony also affects the marriage market and assortative matching, the reform has the potential to affect a host of demographic and economics outcomes, including income inequality, child outcomes and intergenerational income mobility. Edwards and Roff (2016) estimate a structural model of marital surplus and find that couples with high estimated marital surplus also tend to be assortatively matched across education and religion, and that the offspring of these couples score better on cognitive tests controlling for parents' individual educational outcomes, indicating that the match itself, not simply individual parental characteristics affect child outcomes. Using Norwegian data, Bratsberg and coauthors (2018) show significant, but mixed,

effects of assortative matching on child outcomes by social class, with negative effects of assortative matching on GPA at age 16 and positive effects on later earnings and years of schooling, while Bingley et al. (2021) find large intergenerational persistence in education from assortative matching. Relatedly, a wide literature, discussed in more detail in the next section, indicates that assortative matching also affects income mobility and inequality (Kremer, 1997; Fernandez and Rogerson, 2001; Fernandez, 2002; Ermisch et al., 2006; Greenwood et al., 2014; Handy, 2015; Eika et al., 2018).

In this paper, we first examine the effects of alimony reform on entry into marriage and find that the reform has had few effects on entry into marriage overall and for specific educational groups, with two exceptions—a small but significant increase in entry into marriage among lower-educated women and highly educated men. We then turn to the effects of alimony reform on assortative matching by education and find that reduced alimony has significantly increased assortative matching, with correlation coefficients in couples' degree attainment rising across the board and regression-based measures of assortative matching increasing as well. In a heterogeneity analysis, we also find the biggest effects of the reform among those who may be expected to have a larger behavioral response, specifically couples in which the husband or wife is entering a second (or more) marriage who therefore face a higher probability of divorce (Mayol-Garcia et al., 2021) and couples who live in states without community property laws as well as those in states without high average child support award amounts. Since community property states generally provide a more generous division of marital assets to women upon divorce (Reynolds, 1988), alimony may be expected to have greater importance in states that lack this avenue of asset sharing upon divorce; likewise, given that around 60% of divorces involve children and since child support levels may affect judges' generosity in alimony award amounts (Mayol-García et al., 2021; Doskow, 2020), alimony reform may have less important behavioral effects in states with relatively high levels of child support.

The paper is structured as follows: section 2 discusses the relevant literature on the relationship between divorce laws, commitment, and assortative matching as well as how others have measured assortative matching, and the importance of assortative matching for economic outcomes; section 3 examines the role of alimony in the U.S.; section 4 outlines our empirical strategy and identifying variation; finally, section 5 discusses our

empirical results, and section 6 concludes.

2 Background and Literature Review

Recent research has focused on factors that may mitigate or exacerbate the commitment problem on marriage and thereby affect marriage rates and the composition of married couples. LaFortune and Low (2017, 2019) develop a theoretical model that shows that assets may act as a commitment device that encourages marriage as well as household specialization and that income-sharing upon divorce also increases incentives for specialization. Their work shows that while imperfect commitment reduces household public goods and specialization, income-sharing will mitigate this reduction. Our work follows directly from this finding to examine whether reduced incentives for household specialization generated from lower income sharing with alimony reform has also led to increased assortative matching in the marriage market

Similarly, Reynoso (2017, 2019) shows that laws that reduce marital commitment (such as unilateral divorce) reduce the willingness of the lower earning partner to specialize even when that is the efficient choice for the household with enforceable contracts in cases of non-contractable marital investment. Consistent with the model's theoretical predictions, she demonstrates empirically that unilateral divorce leads to an increase in assortative matching in education as the incentive for household specialization falls.

How to measure the change in assortative matching is not necessarily straightforward, however. A common proxy that has been used to measure changes in assortative matching over time is to use the coefficients from a regression of one spouse's characteristic on his or her partner's. However, since the coefficient depends not only on the covariance between the two characteristics, but also the marginal distributions, this method can be sensitive to differences in changes in the marginal distributions of the characteristic and one may find quite different results depending on which spouse is chosen as the dependent variable. To deal with this issue, Bratsberg et al. (2018) construct a measure of social class as defined by parental earnings rank as their matching variable, which has no temporal variation. Eika et al (2018) normalize their measure to changes in marginal distributions by dividing the observed match by the product of the marginal distributions, which is the match that would be observed if the two groups matched randomly. Others, including Reynoso (2017), use both genders as the dependent variable in their regressions to test the sensitivity

of their results to changes in marginal distributions over time.

Gihleb and Lang (2016) use a variety of approaches to measure changes in assortative matching in the U.S. over time to test for sensitivity to changes in marginal distributions, including multiple covariance measures that may reflect different definition of assortativeness, from ones that rely on a direct covariance measure between two spouses' characteristics to those that rely on a rank-order approach in which assortativeness is defined by whether those with the highest level of education in one group match with those with the highest education level in the other group. Moreover, they show that the measurement of assortative matching may be sensitive to the educational groupings used. (See Gihleb and Lang for a thorough explanation of these issues.) For this reason, to examine the effects of alimony on changes to assortative matching, we present results using several different measures as follows: 1) we use multiple definitions of education from relatively broad categories to a years of education variable, 2) when presenting regression results and event studies, we use both spouse's education as the dependent variable, and 3) we also show multiple covariance measures—from simple Pearson's correlation coefficients to rank-order covariance measures—for the treated and nontreated groups. Moreover, our period of analysis covers the years from 2008 to 2018—a relatively short period in which there are not large changes in the marginal distributions of education that differed by gender. Over our sample period, average years of schooling for men in our data has ranged from roughly 11.2 years of schooling at the start of the sample period to 11.7 by 2018; average years of schooling for women has ranged from 11.5 at the beginning of the period to almost 12 by the end.

To what extent does assortative matching affect economic outcomes? While Kremer (1997) finds that assortative matching has a negligible effect on income inequality, Fernandez and Rogerson (2001) develop a calibrated intergenerational model that includes education and fertility that indicates large effects of assortative matching on the standard deviation of income. Later work by Fernandez et al (2005) shows a theoretical correlation between high levels of income inequality and sorting, which is also confirmed in cross-country empirical analysis. Similarly, Ermisch et al. (2006) suggests that assortative matching has a significant effect on inequality, with as much as 50% of the covariance between parents' and offsprings' income explained by the marital match, which exhibit high levels of correlation in spousal human capital. Looking at assortative

matching in education over time, Eika et al (2018) find that trends in assortative matching over time vary by education levels and that while assortative matching can explain much of the cross-sectional variation in income inequality, it has little effect on changes in income inequality over time.¹ Using Norwegian data, Bratsberg et al (2018) find decreasing assortative matching at the bottom of the distribution, with a corresponding decrease in inequality.

Another strand of the literature has examined the impact of marital policies that affect commitment (such as unilateral divorce) on marriage and divorce rates. In separate papers, Rasul (2003, 2006) uses a theoretical and reduced form empirical approach to show that unilateral divorce will increase divorce rates among those shocked by the policy and that it reduces marriage rates, while increasing the match quality of those who marry.² Wong (2016) considers the effects of a policy similar to alimony that compensates homemakers for intrahousehold work, which she refers to as the ‘homemakers provision’, and finds that the policy increases marriage.

While no papers to our knowledge have looked at how alimony may affect matching, a few have considered the effects of alimony on time use and hours worked. Rangel (2006) compares cohabiting couples in Brazil who were newly granted alimony rights to a control group of married couples and finds an increase in daughters’ schooling and a decrease in hours worked among women newly affected by the law that is consistent with improved female bargaining power. Chiappori et al. (2016) compare hours worked after an alimony reform law in Canada that mandated alimony among cohabiting couples. They find a decrease in hours worked among women in those couples surprised by the change and no effect among those who were not, which they interpret as evidence of intra-household transfers in response to the policy change. In robustness checks, they explore whether the policy led to selection into cohabitation and find few effects of alimony on the individual characteristics of cohabitators, but they do not explore possible effects on the joint characteristics of the couples.

3 Alimony receipt in the U.S.

Alimony figures prominently in popular U.S. culture regarding divorce despite the fact that it is awarded

¹ Greenwood et al. (2014) find that assortative matching on education has been increasing over time, but the results are sensitive to the effects of marginal changes in education by gender over time.

² Similarly, Reynoso (2019) finds a decrease in marriage rates with unilateral divorce.

in a relatively small number of cases. During the mid-20th century, alimony was awarded in roughly 25% of divorces (Workman, 2012). Since then, the number has fallen with only about 10 to 15% of all divorces generating an alimony award in the late twentieth century and early 2000s (McMullen and Oswald, 2010; Workman, 2012). However, there is significant heterogeneity in who receives alimony. Using court data from California, Weitzman and Dixon (1980) estimated women with marriages over 15 years to be three times as likely to receive alimony as those with marriages less than five years; correspondingly, alimony also tends to be awarded to older women (U.S. Census Bureau, 1989). Since spousal support is meant to maintain living standards and address need, women who divorce high earning men, particularly those with lower education or lower earnings themselves, are more likely to receive alimony.

Moreover, the relative importance of alimony for divorced women may vary by the generosity of child support awards and the property division laws of the state. Judicial decisions on alimony award amounts frequently rely on spousal ‘need’, which may be affected by child support and property settlement decisions that are made prior to the alimony determination, causing child support and property division to be viewed as a substitute for alimony in court (Doskow, 2020).³ Accordingly, one may expect stronger behavioral effects of alimony reform in those states that have less generous property division laws (i.e., excluding community property states) and in states with less generous child support.

Research in legal journals indicates that alimony may have an outsized effect on the popular perception of divorce due to the larger incidence of alimony among high-profile divorces. Alimony tends to be awarded more in cases with high-income spouses, and lawyers have an incentive to publicize cases of high awards won for their clients (Weitzman and Dixon, 1980). Moreover, celebrity divorces with high award amounts tend to receive heavy press coverage, adding to the perception of the prevalence of alimony. Robin Williams famously bemoaned high levels of alimony in a press interview that was picked up by several news outlets, saying that alimony was simply a way to say ‘all the money’ (Rader, 2013). Similarly, Chris Rock built a nationwide stand-up comedy tour based on his experience with divorce and alimony, which he referred to as his ‘Alimony Tour’

³ Another potential mechanism is that more generous property division and child support laws may reduce the marginal utility of extra income from alimony.

(Rodrick, 2017).⁴

The legal literature indicates that this perception of the prevalence of alimony is also shared by lawyers and judges. In a survey of legal professionals in Los Angeles during the mid-1970s, Weitzman and Dixon (1980) found that lawyers estimated that about two-thirds of divorcing women received alimony, and that judges estimated that one-half of divorcing women received alimony awards, even though fewer than 20% of divorces during that time were awarded alimony, both within Los Angeles and nationwide.

Finally, evidence that alimony may have an outsized effect on the popular perception of divorce comes from the significant effects found by the literature that studied the effects of alimony reforms on time use and female employment (Chiappori et. al, 2017, and Rangel, 2006). Chiappori et. al, (2017) find that when a relationship is granted the right to petition for alimony, women are about 4.7% less likely to work full time (when about 51% of the control group worked) and Rangel (2006) finds that after the passage of the laws, women reduced their weekly hours of work by 3.2%.

4 Identification and Empirical Specification

Several states have implemented alimony (also called spousal support) reform over the past several years to limit cases in which high levels of alimony were awarded indefinitely. These reforms generally ranged from guidelines intended to remove judicial discretion in award amounts by creating an algorithm for spousal support based on both parties' incomes and factors such as the amount of child support paid, to limits in the length of time that alimony may be received and the maximum amount of alimony that can be assigned. Table 1 illustrates the state reforms that have occurred over our sample period; to generate the data on state alimony reform, we employed a variety of web-based search methods, including google searches and state-specific legal websites. Appendix A provides more information on our data sources.

Massachusetts was among the first states to institute wide-ranging reforms. Beginning in 2011, Massachusetts implemented guidelines with caps on maximum alimony amounts and eliminated permanent alimony. Several states followed suit with their own reforms over the next several years. Maine instituted

⁴ John Cleese also had an international 'alimony tour' following his divorce.

reforms which made the termination of alimony easier in 2013, while Colorado, Illinois and New York underwent reforms to limit the maximum amount of alimony paid and Alabama and New Jersey limited the length of time that alimony could be awarded. In contrast to these states, Texas loosened previously existing limitations alimony amounts and durations; for this reason, we eliminate Texas from our sample. We use a single discrete measure of alimony reform, coding all states that limited alimony in amount or duration as a reform state beginning in the year of the implementation of the reform.

Our identification strategy therefore relies on state variation in timing of the reform. One may be concerned that state-level factors affect both the timing of reform and matching among new marriages (i.e., policy endogeneity). We use two methods to mitigate and examine the extent to which policy endogeneity may affect our results (in addition to including state-level time trends in our models). First, we employ event studies to assess the role of pre-existing trends in marital matching. Secondly, as discussed at the end of this section, we also estimate a probit model of the state entry into reform using variables that proxy gender norms in the state to analyze whether gender norms that might also affect matching in the marriage market are driving alimony reform. Finally, as shown in Figure 1, both Republican and Democratic-led states adopted alimony reform, so we do not see a clear political pattern in the adoption of reform.

4.1 Empirical Specifications: Alimony reform, entry into marriage, and assortative matching

To analyze the effects of alimony reform on entry into marriage, we first estimate a probit regression on entry into marriage among the unmarried sample between the ages of 18 to 65:

$$Marriage_{ist} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 Alimonyreform_{st} + \tau + \varphi + \varphi * trend + u_{ist} \quad (1)$$

Where $Marriage_{ist}$ equals 1 if unmarried individual i in state s marries in year t , and 0 otherwise; $Alimonyreform_{st}$ equals 1 if alimony reform was passed in state s before year t , and 0 otherwise; and φ and τ are state and year fixed effects, with state-specific time trends. To examine whether alimony reform induces differential entry into marriage by gender-specific educational group, we also estimate equation one for educational attainment within each gender for the following four educational attainment categories: no high school degree, high school diploma, Bachelor or Master degree, and Doctorate or Professional degree. As we

discuss later in this section, we use these four categories of educational attainment since alimony reform affects the incentive for low earnings spouses to match with high earners and since these four categories are associated with the largest changes in earnings between groups. However, our results are the same if we subdivide by smaller groups. We also estimated alternative variations of equation 1 omitting state time trends and including the yearly sex-ratio and unemployment rate in each state with substantively similar results.

With these results in hand, we explore the effects of alimony reform on educational assortative matching in the marriage market. As mentioned in the previous section, we undertake two methods to do so: 1) our primary method of analysis estimates event studies and difference-in-difference regressions of educational attainment on spousal educational attainment interacted with alimony reform among the set of couples who married during our sample period, using a variety of measures of educational attainment and using both spouses as the dependent variable, 2) we also compare various measures of covariance between spousal education by treatment status. In our regression analyses, we first estimate the following difference-in-difference regressions for our sample of newly married men as well as for the sample of newly married women:

$$Educ_{ist} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 Alimonyreform_{st} + \alpha_2 Spouse_Educ_{ist} + \alpha_3 Spouse_Educ_{ist} * Alimonyreform_{st} + S'\Upsilon + \tau + \varphi + \varphi * trend + u_{ist} \quad (2)$$

where $Educ_{ist}$ is educational attainment, $Spouse_Educ_{ist}$ is spousal educational attainment, and S , τ , and φ are again defined as a vector of time-varying state characteristics which may affect educational composition in new marriages, including the state sex-ratio and unemployment rate, and year and state fixed effects, respectively. Given this specification, α_1 measures the direct effect of alimony reform on education levels by gender, while α_2 provides a loose measure of educational assortative mating and α_3 measures any additional assortative matching from alimony reform. Since our paper primarily examines the effects of alimony reform on assortative matching, α_3 is our main coefficient of interest.

As noted by Gihleb and Lang (2016), however, the use of regression coefficients to measure assortative matching may be problematic since regression coefficients depend not only on educational covariance, but also the variance of spousal education; as such, changes over time in the marginal distributions of education by

gender may lead to very different estimates depending on whether male or female education is the dependent variable.⁵ Because of this issue, we estimate equation (2) with both genders as the dependent variable, and we also show several covariance measures of newlywed education among those in alimony reform states as compared to those in non-reform states as discussed later in this section. Despite the aforementioned potential problems with using regression coefficients, we view regression analysis to be a useful tool in this analysis for at least two reasons: 1) unlike studies that cover extended post-war time periods, men's and women's marginal distributions of educational attainment did not undergo large changes over our sample period (from 2008 to 2018), and 2) regression analysis allows us to control for state and year fixed effects, as well as other state-level variables that may be confounding factors in the effects of alimony reform on assortative matching.

Since the effect of alimony reform on assortative matching may be sensitive to the definition of educational attainment used, we employ four variables to define $Educ_{ist}$ and $Spouse_Educ_{ist}$. These vary from the most finely defined measures of education to broader measures and are defined as follows: 1) total years of schooling, 2) a six-category educational attainment variable with the following categories: no high school diploma, high school diploma, some college, Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, and Doctorate or professional degree, 3) a four-category degree attainment variable with the following categories: no high school diploma, high school diploma, Bachelor or Master's degree, and Doctorate or professional degree, and finally 4) a three-category variable with the following categories: no high school diploma, high school diploma and a Bachelor's degree or more.

Because alimony reform may be expected to increase educational assortative matching by reducing the incentive for one partner to specialize in market work, we expect that alimony reform will particularly affect assortative matching on measures that correlate most highly with income differentials. Using BLS data of earnings by education level, one can see in Figure 2 a few cutoffs that are associated with relatively large income differences, including earning a high school degree, earning a Bachelor or Master degree, and earning a

⁵ Recall that since OLS coefficients equal $(XX')^{-1}(X'Y)$, the coefficient depends not only on the covariance but also the independent variable variance.

Doctorate or Professional degree.⁶ Note that earnings with a Masters degree are much closer to a Bachelor than to the next highest category, with an average difference of \$229 vs. \$342. For this reason, we view our third definition with four education categories as our preferred measure for examining the impact of alimony reform on assortative matching.

As previously discussed, we also estimate our models as event studies to assess the presence of pre-existing trends in assortative matching that may affect our estimates. Those models are as follows:

$$Educ_{ist} = \theta_0 + \sum_{t=-3}^3 \beta_t * Alimonyreform_{st} + \theta_1 Spouse_Educ_{is} + \sum_{t=-3}^3 \alpha_t Spouse_Educ_{is} * Alimonyreform_{st} + S'\Upsilon + \tau + \varphi + \varphi * trend + u_{ist} \quad (3)$$

Where $t=0$ is the year that alimony reform was instituted, so that we have separate estimates of assortative matching in new marriages that began for the three periods before and after alimony reform. To allow for more treated observations in each time period, we denote $t=1$ to indicate the two years immediately after reform, $t=2$ to indicate the next two years, and $t=3$ to indicate years five to six, with an analogous definition for the preceding periods. As in our difference-in-difference specification, φ and τ are state and time fixed effects and S is a vector of state-level controls.

4.11 Heterogeneity Analyses

We also estimate equations 2 and 3 on three subgroups in our sample which may be expected to show a larger behavioral response to alimony reform. These include: 1) a sample that excludes states that have been identified as having relatively high average child support amounts, 2) a sample that excludes states with community property laws, which lead to more generous property division for the lower earning spouse, and 3) the sample of newly married couples in which the marriage is a second marriage for at least one spouse. We expect that the first two subsamples will have larger behavioral responses since legal research indicates that alimony and other forms of compensation are often treated as substitutes in divorce settlements (Doskow, 2020). As such, alimony amounts are likely to be smaller and less important in high child support and property

⁶ Master degrees are associated with relatively minor income increases as compared to professional degrees and doctorates and are therefore more appropriately grouped with Bachelor degrees in terms of income.

division states.

We expect a larger behavioral response among the last subsample (previously married newlyweds), since second marriages in the U.S. are widely viewed as more likely to end in divorce, making alimony more salient to the match. A widely cited statistic from the popular press is that over 60% of remarriages end in divorce (see for example, Atlas (2013) and Jensen et al. (2015)).⁷ To identify states with high child support, we use state child support measures computed by Kotlikoff (2018) calculated as average state child support amounts divided by state per capital income computed for a couple with two children who each earn \$100,000 a year. In our analysis that omits high child support states, we drop all states in which the computed child support award is more than 50% average state per capita income using Kotlikoff's measure.⁸⁹

State property division laws may fall under an 'equitable division' or 'community property' standard. Under the 'equitable division' standard, property acquired during the marriage is supposed to be divided 'fairly' but may not be divided equally. Under the 'community property' standard, property acquired during the marriage is divided equally upon divorce. In practice, community property distribution regimes usually have a more generous settlement for the lower earning spouse (Reynolds, 1988).¹⁰

4.12 Placebo and policy endogeneity tests

To test for spurious results, we estimate equation 2 with the timing of the reform moved back by five years. Finally, as an additional test for policy endogeneity, we examine whether state-level gender norms may be driving alimony reform. To do so, we estimate a state-level probit analysis of states' entry into alimony reform by a vector of time varying, state level characteristics, as well as measures that proxy gender norms in the state, including the wage-gap and female labor force participation (Fortin, 2015) as follows:

⁷In contrast, Stevenson and Wolfers (2007) find that divorce rates are slightly lower among second marriages for cohorts born before 1955. However, CPS data from 2016 (Mayol-Garcia et al, 2021) indicates that second marriages were more likely than first marriages to divorce.

⁸ We also used two alternative cutoffs of 40% and 45% of per capital income to define our 'high child support states'. We have omitted these two alternative cutoffs from our reported heterogeneity results in the interest of brevity because our results were not sensitive to these changes.

⁹ These states are Colorado, Connecticut, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota and Wisconsin.

¹⁰ The community property states include: Arizona, California, Idaho, Louisiana, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, Washington and Wisconsin.

$$Reform_{st} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 Unemployment_{s,t} + \alpha_2 wage\ gap_{s,t-1} + \alpha_3 female\ LF\ participation_{s,t-1} + u_{ist}$$

where $Reform_{st} = 1$ if the state undertook reform in year t and 0 otherwise, and the gender norm variables are measured the year preceding reform, since the reform may affect these variables.

4.2 Comparison of covariance measures by treatment

We also estimate a range of covariance measures by treatment to gauge how alimony reform has affected assortative matching. As mentioned previously, regression estimates of the effect of alimony reform on matching have the advantage of allowing controls; however, they do not directly measure the added covariance in education between couples from alimony reform, since the coefficient may be affected by the variance of the marginal distributions.

For this reason, we estimate covariances under treatment and without, using several different measures.¹¹ Our correlation measures include a standard Pearson's correlation coefficient, along with several coefficients that base correlation on rank instead of educational category, and therefore equal one if the highest education male matches with the highest education female and so on, regardless of whether the two genders have the same category of education. However, even the use of rank-based correlation coefficients is complicated by the discrete nature of education data which leads to many 'ties'—cases in which many individuals have the same 'rank' within their gender. Of the rank-based correlation coefficients we use, Spearman does not correct for ties, while Kendall's Tau-B and Gamma do.¹²

We present these rank-based measures for the curious reader; however, we view the Pearson correlation coefficient as our primary covariance measure for our purposes since there have not been large changes to the marginal distributions of education over our data period which would make rank-based measures more

¹¹ An alternative to this would be to estimate Eika et al.'s (2018) sorting parameter, which is equal to the observed distribution of a male of type j matching with female of type i , divided by the distribution that would be observed if the two categories matched randomly, with alimony reform and without. However, we are interested in knowing how the reform affects the percentages in each category without normalizing for marginal distribution changes. In other words, if the law drew more high education men into marriage, we do not want to net this effect out.

¹² Spearman's coefficient is a rank-based measure that equals one if two variables are positively and monotonically related in a dataset. Kendalls Tau-B compares two sets of observations and designates them as concordant if a higher (lower) education woman matches with a higher (lower) education man, and discordant otherwise, and then compares the number of concordant to discordant pairs in the dataset. It includes an adjustment that inflates this number based on the number of ties. Gamma throws out all tied pairs and divides the difference in the number of discordant from concordant pairs by their sum.

appealing. In any case, as shown in section 6, the results are generally similar across correlation coefficients.

5 Data and Descriptive Statistics

Our dataset merges state-level data on alimony reform with the American Community Survey (ACS) data, an annual cross-sectional survey that covers roughly 3.5 million American households per year and includes data on household economic and demographic characteristics as well as housing information. In addition to its large sample size, the ACS has several other advantages for identifying the effects of alimony reform; beginning in 2008, the survey incorporated a question on whether the household member married over the past year, which allows us to identify the state and year in which a couple married in combination with the survey's state-level identifiers. While year of marriage is a common variable in household survey data, it is relatively unusual to be able to identify the state in which the marriage occurred; this feature allows us to identify individuals who married in reform states.

We observe behavioral effects of alimony using state of marriage as the measure of anticipated alimony, but for those who expect to move, the correct measure for alimony will be the state of their anticipated move. Since the relevant alimony law will be the one in place in the state in which the couple lives at the time of divorce rather than the one in which the couple marries, and since some couples may anticipate that they will move to a different state preceding divorce, any effects of alimony reform in the state of marriage on matching may be thought of as a lower bound of the effects of anticipated alimony at the time of marriage due to measurement error and attenuation bias.

To examine the effects on entry into marriage, we include all unmarried adults between the ages of 18 to 65 between the years of 2007 to 2018 (the years in which we can identify whether a marriage occurred in an 'alimony reform' state). Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for this sample. Among unmarried men, almost half of the sample report that a high school diploma or less is their highest level of education, roughly one-third have some college education, 14% have a four-year degree, and only a little more than 5% have more than a college degree. In line with gender differentials in the overall population, our sample of unmarried women have slightly higher education, with an average of 13.3 years of schooling as compared to 12.8 for men. Among unmarried women, slightly less than 40% of the group has only a high school diploma or less, while 38% has

some college, 17% has completed a four-year degree and over 8% have gone on to additional degrees after college. About 8% of the sample married in an alimony reform state, which works out to over 600,000 treated observations.¹³

To look at effects of alimony reform on matching, we also use the sample that includes only couples who entered marriage during our sample period. These summary statistics are shown in Table 3. Our newly married sample is more highly educated than the marriage eligible sample but shows a similar gender differential in education, with an average of 13.7 years of schooling for men and 14.2 for women. About 40% of newly married men report only a high school degree or less, and another third have had at least some college. Close to a quarter of newly married men have a four-year college degree with another 10% or so who report a degree beyond a Bachelors. Similarly, only about a third of newly married women have a high school diploma or less as their highest degree, almost 30% have a Bachelor, or four-year college, degree, and about 13% have completed a degree following college. Newly married women are also slightly younger on average (32.8 years of age) than the broader group of single women, who have an average age of 37.7 years. Of the newly married sample, roughly 7% of the group, or about 11,000 observations, married in an alimony reform state.

6 Results

Table 4 shows the results of a probit model of alimony reform on entry into marriage. Looking at the overall sample, alimony reform appears to have little impact on marriage; the marginal effect of alimony reform on entry into marriage shown in Table 4 is essentially zero. However, alimony reform does appear to impact the composition of entry into marriage by gender and education level, leading to an increase in marriage among the most educated men and least educated women. Among women with less than a high school degree, alimony reform has generated an increase in the probability of marrying of 0.0029—an increase of almost 9%. Similarly, among men with a doctorate or professional degree, alimony reform generates an increase in the probability of marrying of 0.012, which represents an increase in the probability of marriage of over 10%. While the primary

¹³ We also used the full sample of adults ages 18 to 65 during the sample period as an alternative sample when estimating effects of alimony reform on the decision to marry, since alimony reform may also affect the composition of the unmarried group by affecting divorce. The effects of alimony reform on marriage entry among this alternative sample are similar but smaller in magnitude.

focus of this paper is the effect of alimony reform on assortative matching, we view these results as interesting and suggestive that highly educated men may have chosen to limit marriage due to their perception of potentially costly alimony prior to reform. The decrease (increase) in expected utility of marriage among women (men) also may have drawn lower educated women who previously unable to match into the marriage market. Interestingly, as we discuss next, despite the increase in marriage at opposite extremes of the two marginal distributions (highly educated men and lower educated women), we also find an increase in assortative matching with alimony reform.

Tables 5 show the results of our regression analysis of the effects of alimony reform on assortative matching using our three-category definition of education as well as our preferred definition of degree attainment with educational attainment categories defined by those that are associated with substantial earnings differentials and which include: no high school degree, a high school diploma, four-year college degree or Masters, and a doctorate or professional degree. Looking first at our results with male educational attainment as the dependent variable for the full sample of newlyweds (column 1), we see that alimony reform is associated with a significant increase in our regression-based measure of assortative matching of about 0.04. In contrast, while the coefficient is positive using female educational attainment as the dependent variable, it is smaller in magnitude and not statistically significant.

Figure 3, which shows the dynamic effects of the policy, tells a similar story. Alimony reform leads to a small, but significant increase in our regression-based measure of assortative matching that grows in the years following the passage of alimony reform when using husband's educational attainment as the dependent variable for the full sample of newlyweds. Using the wife's educational attainment as the dependent variable generates a small in our regression-based measure of assortative matching that is largest in the later years following the reform.

However, when we restrict the sample to our groups that we expect to have the largest behavioral effects from alimony reform, we see larger and generally statistically significant effects of the reform on assortative matching, irrespective of whether we use husband's education as the dependent variable or the wife's. Column 3 to 5 and 7 to 9 illustrate the effects of alimony reform on assortative matching among the sample that omits high

child support and community property states. Among these groups, alimony reform reduces both gender's education on average. Consistent with larger behavioral effects, alimony reform also leads to greater increases in our regression measure of assortative matching, with an increase of 0.045 (roughly 9% increase) among lower child support and property division states when using male education as the dependent variable and an increase of a little over .02 (roughly 4-5% increase) when using female education as the dependent variable.

When we subdivide the sample by matches among those in which at least one partner is entering a 2nd (or more) marriage—a group that may be expected to have stronger effects from alimony reform due to a higher probability of divorce—we see even stronger effects of alimony reform. This subsample is less assortatively matched on average than the full sample, and alimony reform both reduces education levels on average after controlling for spousal education and increases our measure of assortative matching by about 0.05, or over 10%. These effects are relatively consistent when using both genders as the dependent variable.

Figure 4 shows the dynamic effects on our regression-based measure of assortative matching for our heterogeneity analyses. Looking first the samples that omits high child support and community property states, we see an increase in our assortative matching coefficient that is highest in later years. The multiple marriage sample shows even larger effects; alimony reform generates an increase of over 0.05 in our assortative matching coefficient in the years following alimony reform with both dependent variables, again with even larger effects in later years.

Thus far, our regression results indicate that alimony reform has generated a significant increase in assortative matching when we define our educational categories using a 4-category measure that tracks closely with the largest income differences by education level, with similar results when we use a 3-category measure. We turn next to our results using finer variation in education levels. Table 6 defines education as a six-category variable with the following categories: no high school degree, high school degree, some college, four-year college degree, MA, and Doctorate or professional degree, while Table 7 uses years of schooling. Although we see some increase in assortative matching with alimony reform with generally larger results among the groups that we expect to show the largest effects, the magnitude of the effect is smaller and generally not statistically significant. Alimony reform appears to affect matching primarily through its effect on broad educational

categories.

5.1 Placebo and robustness tests

To test the sensitivity of our results, we also perform analyses with alternative specifications using our preferred four-category definition of educational attainment, by dropping state-level covariates, omitting state-specific time trends, and including quadratic state-specific time trends. Table 8 presents these results, which are quite close to those found in our main specification. Table 9 shows our results for a placebo test, focusing again on our preferred definition of educational attainment with four categories. As discussed in section 3, our placebo test redefines our treatment variable by moving the year of reform back by five years. As can be seen in the table, this test generates no significant effects.

Finally, we report the results for our policy endogeneity test in table 10. This table shows the marginal effects of a probit of state alimony reform regressed on a vector of state-level variables lagged by one year, to examine whether changing gender norms or conditions that may also affect the level of assortative matching in the marriage market may be driving states' decision to enact alimony reform. To proxy state gender norms, we use the female labor force participation rate and the wage gap in the state by year (Fortin, 2010). We see no significant effects of our state-level gender variables on entry into alimony reform.

5.2 Covariance

We next report our results that directly measure educational covariances among newly married spouses under alimony reform and without, over all our definitions of educational attainment. These results are shown in Table 11. As discussed in section 3, our covariances include: 1) Pearson's correlation coefficient, 2) Spearman's coefficient, which is a rank-based correlation coefficient, 3) Kendall's Tau-B, which is a rank-based correlation coefficient that corrects for ties, and 4) Gamma, which measures correlation by computing the number of concordant pairs in the data (those for which if the female has a higher education than her peer, the man does too) and subtracts the number of discordant pairs, and then divides that number by the total number of non-tied pairs.

The correlation coefficients on our three- and four-category degree attainment variable show a consistent increase of about 0.03 for newlyweds in alimony reform states relative to non-reform states across all

coefficients, with a slightly smaller increase in Gamma for our four-category degree attainment variable—an increase that is generally in line with our regression results for the full sample. Perhaps not surprisingly, this increase in covariance measures is similar to the increase in assortative matching found in our regression-based measures, which increased from roughly 0.51 to 0.55 when using male education as the dependent variable and increased from roughly 0.48 to 0.50 when using female education as the dependent variable. Also consistent with our regression results in tables 5 through 8, our broadly defined definitions of degree attainment show the largest difference in assortative matching from alimony reform, with relatively small differences in correlation between treated and untreated groups with finer definitions of educational groups. Allowing for more narrowly defined educational categories by using years of education and our six-category variable leads to differences in correlation coefficients in alimony reform observations that are generally less than 0.02 higher than non-reform states.

Alternatively, one may calculate by treatment status Eika et al.'s (2018) sorting parameter, which provides a measure of how assortatively each category is matched by dividing the observed distribution in that category by the number that would be observed if the two groups matched randomly. However, we view this method to be less useful for this analysis since Eika's parameter normalizes for changes to the marginal distributions by dividing the observed distribution by the one that would be observed if the match occurred randomly. If alimony reform causes couples to match similarly in education in part through effects on marginal distributions of education by gender, this component of the effect should not be netted out. Finally, of course, a comparison of raw covariances or other parameters that does not control for possible state or year fixed effects should be interpreted with caution. As such, we view our regression results to be an essential part of this analysis.

6 Conclusions

Our research provides evidence that alimony laws affect assortative matching in the marriage market. These effects are strongest among those who might be expected to have the strongest reaction: couples who are entering a second marriage and couples who live in states with less generous other forms of income and property sharing upon divorce. We find average increases in our measures of assortative matching of about ten

percent from alimony reform among those who are remarrying, with an increase over time after treatment.

Assortative matching has been shown to have important effects on child outcomes and income inequality, leading to increasing income inequality, particularly in the lower end of the income distribution (Eika et al., 2018), and to lower intergenerational mobility. Ermish et al. (2006) estimate that nearly 50% of the covariance between parental and offspring income can be attributed to parental sorting. Given this, a particularly salient remaining question is the effects of alimony reform on income mobility and inequality. Fernandez and Rogerson (2001) show that an increase in the covariance of education from 0.5 to 0.6 generates an increase in the standard deviation of income by 5% without credit constraints and by 15% with realistic credit constraints; similarly, it increases wage ratio for skilled to unskilled labor by 3 to 9% depending on credit constraints. Since the increase in assortative matching about 4-5 years after alimony reform is roughly half of Fernandez and Rogerson's increase, one may reasonably expect important increases in the standard deviation of income and wage inequality from alimony reform.

This paper focuses particularly on the reduced form effects of alimony reform on assortative matching. Of course, alimony reform directly affects the expected utility of marriage for both partners, along with affecting labor supply and other family decisions. The estimation of a full structural model on the effects of alimony on marriage, matching and subsequent second-order effects would be a useful next step for this topic.

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Table 1: State Alimony Reforms

State	Year of Reform	
Alabama	2018	Limits permanent alimony
Colorado	2014	Guidelines with limit on max amount
Illinois	2015	Guidelines with limit on max amount
Illinois	2018	Limits alimony time length
Maine	2013	Allows easier termination of alimony
Massachusetts	2012	Limits permanent alimony, allows easier termination of alimony
New Jersey	2014	Limits alimony time length
New Mexico	2006	Guidelines
New York	2016	Guidelines, alimony amount capped and time limited
Texas	2011	Caps on alimony amounts and duration <i>expanded</i>

Notes: See Appendix for source data.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics, Marriage Eligible Sample

VARIABLES	mean	SD	min	Max
MEN				
Age	35.71	14.16	18	65
Number of Marriages	1.343	0.595	1	3
White	0.725	0.447	0	1
Black	0.142	0.349	0	1
Hispanic	0.137	0.344	0	1
Less than HS degree	0.211	0.407	0	1
HS degree	0.265	0.441	0	1
Some college	0.330	0.470	0	1
4-year college degree	0.141	0.348	0	1
Master's degree	0.037	0.190	0	1
Ph.d. or Professional degree	0.017	0.130	0	1
Years of Schooling	12.76	2.75	0	20
WOMEN				
Wife's age	37.65	15.05	18	65
Number of Marriages	1.37	0.613	1	3
White	0.706	0.456	0	1
Black	0.163	0.369	0	1
Hispanic	0.129	0.335	0	1
Less than HS degree	0.146	0.353	0	1
HS degree	0.219	0.413	0	1
Some college	0.379	0.485	0	1
4-year college degree	0.172	0.377	0	1
Master's degree	0.065	0.246	0	1
Ph.d. or Professional degree	0.020	0.140	0	1
Years of Schooling	13.27	2.77	0	20
STATE				
Alimony Reform	0.068	0.252	0	1
Community Property State	0.241	0.427	0	1
Unemployment Rate	6.778	2.347	2.400	13.70
N	9,024,045			

Notes: Sample includes all unmarried adults aged 65 years or below. Source: ACS, waves from 2008 to 2018.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics Newly Married Couples

VARIABLES	mean	Sd	min	max
HUSBAND				
Age	35.11	10.72	18	65
Number of Marriages	1.389	0.632	1	3
White	0.841	0.366	0	1
Black	0.0820	0.274	0	1
Hispanic	0.118	0.322	0	1
Less than HS degree	0.123	0.328	0	1
HS degree	0.209	0.406	0	1
Some college	0.320	0.467	0	1
4-year college degree	0.238	0.426	0	1
Master's degree	0.0743	0.262	0	1
Ph.d. or Professional degree	0.0358	0.186	0	1
Years of Schooling	13.73	2.76	0	20
WIFE				
Wife's age	32.84	10.07	18	65
Number of Marriages	1.374	0.624	1	3
White	0.837	0.370	0	1
Black	0.0696	0.254	0	1
Hispanic	0.120	0.325	0	1
Less than HS degree	0.0895	0.285	0	1
HS degree	0.155	0.362	0	1
Some college	0.339	0.474	0	1
4-year college degree	0.274	0.446	0	1
Master's degree	0.106	0.308	0	1
Ph.d. or Professional degree	0.0359	0.186	0	1
Years of Schooling	14.18	2.69	0	20
STATE				
Alimony Reform	0.0678	0.251	0	1
Community Property State	0.225	0.418	0	1
Unemployment Rate	6.728	2.350	2.400	13.70
N	159,497			

Notes: Sample includes all adults aged 65 years or below who married during the sample period. Source: ACS, waves from 2008 to 2018.

Table 4: Probit of Entry into Marriage by Alimony Reform among singles

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
	<i>Male Subgroup Analysis</i>					<i>Female Subgroup Analysis</i>			
	<i>Full Sample</i>	<i>Less than a HS degree</i>	<i>HS degree</i>	<i>Bachelor or Masters</i>	<i>Doctor or Profession degree</i>	<i>Less than a HS degree</i>	<i>HS degree</i>	<i>Bachelor or Masters</i>	<i>Doctor or Profession degree</i>
Alimony Reform	-0.0002 (0.0008)	-0.0012 (0.0012)	-0.0013 (0.0011)	-0.0013 (0.0022)	0.0123** (0.0059)	0.0029** (0.0013)	-0.0008 (0.0011)	0.0018 (0.0016)	-0.0019 (0.0028)
Expected Entry in Marriage	0.0451	0.0307	0.0400	0.0722	0.0890	0.0331	0.0392	0.0671	0.0771
Observations	9,024,045	954,226	2,706,253	811,992	78,018	651,404	2,673,309	1,058,852	89,991

Notes: Probit of entry into marriage on alimony reform among singles for the overall sample and by gender-specific education groups. Reported results are marginal effects including state and year fixed effects and linear state-specific time trends. Omitting time trends or allowing quadratic trends does not materially affect the estimates. Texas is excluded from the sample for having passed a reform in opposite direction, that is, augmenting the alimony rights of ex-spouses. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the state level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 Source: ACS, waves from 2008 to 2018.

Table 5: Effects of Alimony Reform on Matching on Degree Attainment

Four categories: Less than HS, HS, BA/MA, Ph.d./Professional Degree

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Dep Var: 4-Category Male Education				Dep Var: 4-Category Female Education			
	All newly married couples	excluding high child support states	excluding community property states	2 ⁺ marriages	All newly married couples	excluding high child support states	excluding community property states	2 ⁺ marriages
Alimony Reform	-0.0787* (0.0459)	-0.0993* (0.0539)	-0.0963** (0.0456)	-0.1259** (0.0575)	-0.0670** (0.0331)	-0.0907*** (0.0304)	-0.0826*** (0.0301)	-0.1324*** (0.0460)
Spouse's Education	0.5125*** (0.0092)	0.5135*** (0.0100)	0.5080*** (0.0080)	0.3926*** (0.0095)	0.4839*** (0.0094)	0.4860*** (0.0103)	0.4784*** (0.0076)	0.3730*** (0.0096)
Alimony Reform*Spouse's Education	0.0387** (0.0174)	0.0480** (0.0201)	0.0454*** (0.0175)	0.0516** (0.0220)	0.0153 (0.0120)	0.0216* (0.0120)	0.0221** (0.0108)	0.0480*** (0.0171)
R-squared	0.2702	0.2724	0.2693	0.1645	0.2727	0.2747	0.2724	0.1654
Three categories: Less than HS, HS, BA+								
	Dep Var: 3-Category Male Education				Dep Var: 3-Category female Education			
Alimony Reform	-0.0932** (0.0424)	-0.1196** (0.0459)	-0.1203*** (0.0388)	-0.1369*** (0.0504)	-0.0578* (0.0319)	-0.0850*** (0.0285)	-0.0770*** (0.0277)	-0.1283*** (0.0374)
Spouse's Education	0.5072*** (0.0102)	0.5082*** (0.0113)	0.5015*** (0.0080)	0.3802*** (0.0095)	0.4819*** (0.0098)	0.4830*** (0.0109)	0.4760*** (0.0075)	0.3715*** (0.0100)
Alimony Reform*Spouse's Education	0.0436*** (0.0151)	0.0546*** (0.0160)	0.0540*** (0.0146)	0.0548*** (0.0172)	0.0131 (0.0122)	0.0220* (0.0117)	0.0214** (0.0105)	0.0484*** (0.0166)
R-squared	0.2657	0.2672	0.2639	0.1590	0.2679	0.2659	0.2669	0.1599
Observations	156,273	137,057	123,600	63,905	156,273	137,057	123,600	63,905

Notes: OLS of education on spousal education, alimony reform and their interaction, including state and year fixed effects, and linear state-specific time trends. Texas is excluded from the sample for having passed a reform in opposite direction, that is, augmenting the alimony rights of ex-spouses. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the state level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Source: ACS, waves from 2008 to 2018.

Table 6: Effects of Alimony Reform on Matching on Degree Attainment, 6 categories: Less than HS, HS, Some college, BA, MA, Ph.d./Professional Degree

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Dep Var: 6-Category Male Education				Dep Var: 6-Category Female Education			
	All newly married couples	excluding high child support states	excluding communit y property states	2+ marriages	All newly married couples	excluding high child support states	excluding communit y property states	2+ marriages
Alimony Reform	-0.0499 (0.0567)	-0.0651 (0.0655)	-0.0633 (0.0559)	-0.1266* (0.0697)	-0.0818 (0.0498)	-0.119*** (0.0397)	-0.0888* (0.0486)	-0.1744** (0.0689)
Spouse's Education	0.5355*** (0.0086)	0.5368*** (0.0093)	0.5319*** (0.0071)	0.4170*** (0.0087)	0.5043*** (0.0092)	0.5073*** (0.0100)	0.5011*** (0.0079)	0.3992*** (0.0091)
Alimony Reform*Spouse's Education	0.0207 (0.0162)	0.0263 (0.0184)	0.0238 (0.0163)	0.0372* (0.0216)	0.0124 (0.0124)	0.0177 (0.0107)	0.0143 (0.0118)	0.0438** (0.0190)
Observations	156,273	137,057	123,600	63,905	156,273	137,057	123,600	63,905
R-squared	0.2926	0.2957	0.2924	0.1873	0.2949	0.2979	0.2955	0.1863

Notes: OLS of education on spousal education, alimony reform and their interaction, including state and year fixed effects, and linear state-specific time trends. Texas is excluded from the sample for having passed a reform in opposite direction, that is, augmenting the alimony rights of ex-spouses. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the state level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Source: ACS, waves from 2008 to 2018.

Table 7: Effects of Alimony Reform on Matching on Years of Schooling								
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Dep Var: Male Years Education				Dep Var: Female Years Education			
	All newly married couples	excluding high child support states	excluding community property states	2+ marriages	All newly married couples	excluding high child support states	excluding community property states	2+ marriages
Alimony Reform	-0.4000 (0.3878)	-0.5260 (0.4160)	-0.4554 (0.4000)	-0.6121 (0.4127)	-0.1999 (0.1953)	-0.2890 (0.1740)	-0.2347 (0.1731)	-0.6076* (0.3139)
Spouse's Education	0.5376*** (0.0092)	0.5394*** (0.0099)	0.5313*** (0.0070)	0.4204*** (0.0104)	0.5082*** (0.0104)	0.5101*** (0.0113)	0.5032*** (0.0086)	0.4035*** (0.0124)
Alimony Reform*Spouse's Education	0.0280 (0.0238)	0.0364 (0.0255)	0.0313 (0.0248)	0.0427* (0.0250)	0.0083 (0.0131)	0.0128 (0.0120)	0.0106 (0.0115)	0.0378 (0.0230)
Observations	156,273	137,057	123,600	63,905	156,273	137,057	123,600	63,905
R-squared	0.2912	0.2936	0.2894	0.1852	0.2940	0.2964	0.2928	0.1849

Notes: OLS of education on spousal education, alimony reform and their interaction, including state and year fixed effects, and linear state-specific time trends. Texas is excluded from the sample for having passed a reform in opposite direction, that is, augmenting the alimony rights of ex-spouses. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the state level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Source: ACS, waves from 2008 to 2018.

Table 8: Robustness to Alternative Specifications

	(1)	(2)	(2)	(3)	(5)	(6)	(7)	
	Dep Var: 4-category male education				Dep Var: 4-category female education			
	Preferred Specification	No covariate s	No state time trends	Quadratic time trends	Preferred Specificatio n	No covariate s	No state time trends	Quadratic time trends
Alimony Reform	-0.08*	-0.07	-0.09**	-0.09*	-0.07**	-0.06	-0.05	-0.07
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Spouse's Education	0.51***	0.51***	0.51***	0.51***	0.48***	0.49***	0.48***	0.48***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Alimony Reform* Spouse's Education	0.04**	0.04**	0.04**	0.04**	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.02
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Observations	156,273	159,497	156,273	156,273	156,273	159,497	137,057	123,600
R-squared	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.29

Notes: OLS of education on spousal education, alimony reform and their interaction, including state and year fixed effects. Texas is excluded from the sample for having passed a reform in opposite direction, that is, augmenting the alimony rights of ex-spouses. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the state level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 Source: ACS, waves from 2008 to 2018.

Table 9: Placebo Tests

	(1)	(2)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(5)	(6)
	All newly married couples	excluding high child support states	excluding commun property states	2+ marriages	All newly married couples	excluding high child support states	excluding commun property states	2+ marriages
Alimony Reform	-0.06 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.06)	-0.06 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.06 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.06)	-0.06 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.04)
Spouse's Education	0.51*** (0.01)	0.52*** (0.01)	0.51*** (0.01)	0.39*** (0.01)	0.51*** (0.01)	0.49*** (0.01)	0.49*** (0.01)	0.48*** (0.01)
Alimony Reform* Spouse's Education	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	0.00 (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)
Observations	63,905	132,024	113,775	61,408	63,905	132,024	159,497	137,057
R-squared	0.19	0.27	0.26	0.16	0.19	0.27	0.27	0.27

Notes: OLS of education on spousal education, alimony reform and their interaction, including state and year fixed effects, and linear state-specific time trends. Texas is excluded from the sample for having passed a reform in opposite direction, that is, augmenting the alimony rights of ex-spouses. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the state level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: ACS, waves from 2008 to 2018.

Table 10: Probit of State Alimony Reform by measures of state gender norms

Unemployment Rate	-0.0016 (0.0016)
Female Labor Force Participation	-0.0345 (0.0853)
Wage Gap	0.0007 (0.0008)
Observations	561

Notes: Probit of entry into state alimony reform. Texas is excluded from the sample for having passed a reform in opposite direction, that is, augmenting the alimony rights of ex-spouses. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the state level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 Source: wage gap data, Bureau of Labor Statistics 2007-2017, female labor force participation 2007-2017, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement.

Table 11: Correlation Coefficients by Treatment Status

	(1) Pearson Correlation Coefficient	(2) Spearman	(4) Kendall's Tau- B	(6) Gamma
<hr/>				
Degree				
Attainment: No				
HS, HS or BA+				
Treated	0.537	0.548	0.521	0.776
Untreated	0.507	0.516	0.487	0.745
Degree				
Attainment: No				
HS, HS,				
BA/MA,				
Professional				
Degree/PhD				
Treated	0.539	0.554	0.514	0.745
Untreated	0.511	0.522	0.485	0.725
Degree				
Attainment: No				
HS, HS, Some				
College, BA,MA,				
Professional				
Degree/PhD				
Treated	0.548	0.563	0.476	0.593
Untreated	0.533	0.545	0.464	0.587
Years Schooling				
Treated	0.551	0.563	0.466	0.561
Untreated	0.533	0.547	0.451	0.540

Notes: Covariance by treatment status. ACS, waves from 2008 to 2018.

Figure 1: Party affiliation of governor in year of reform

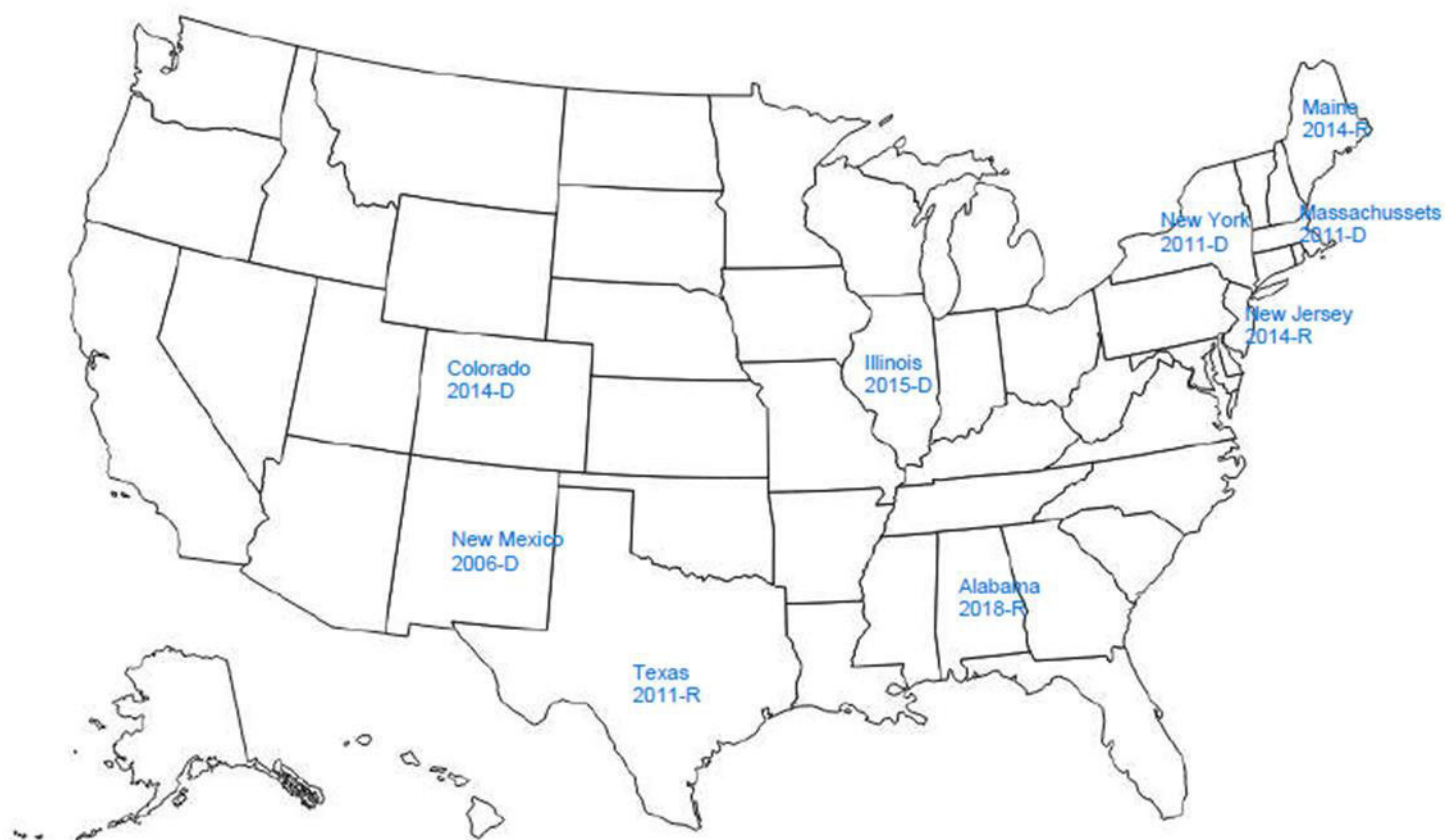
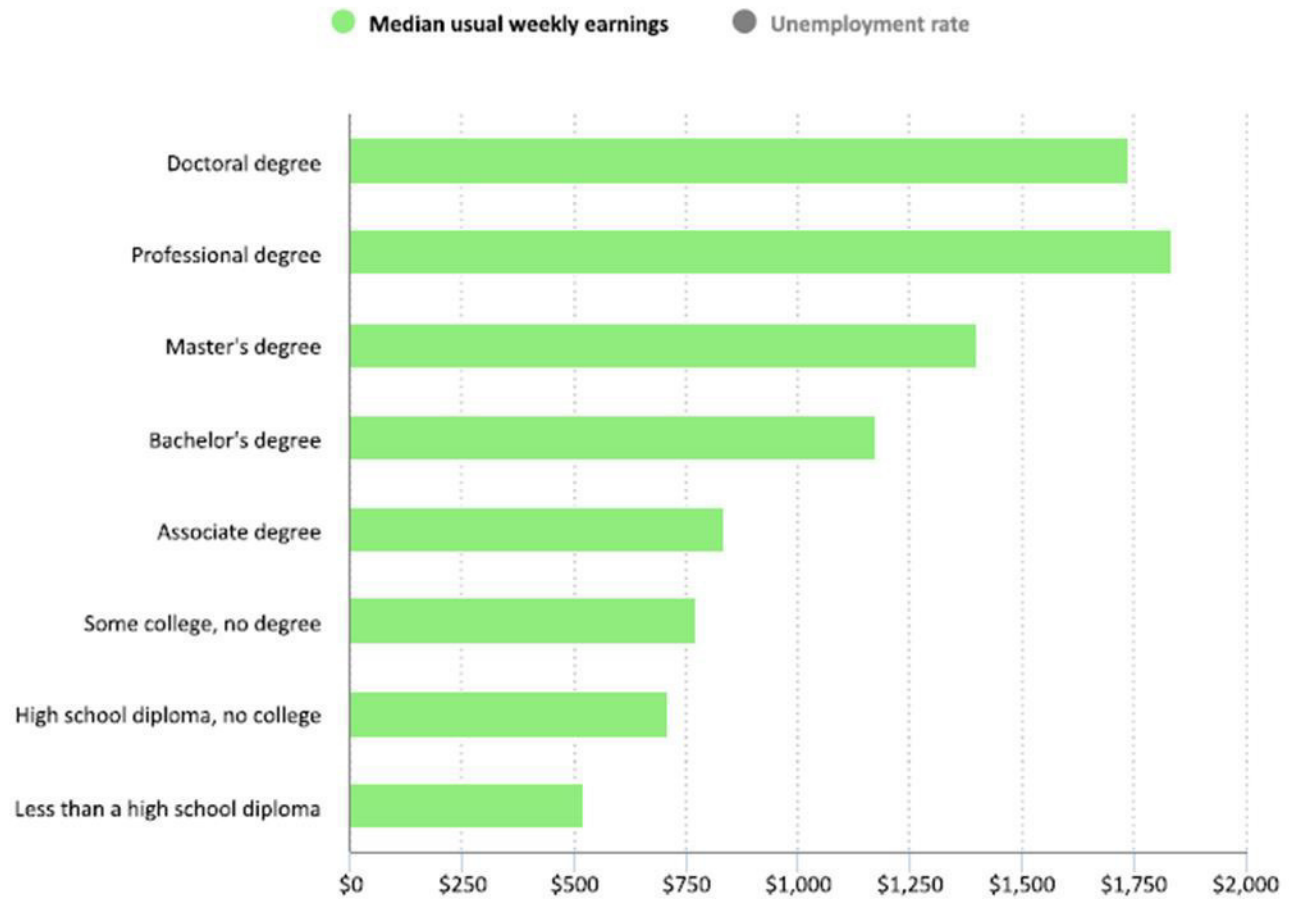


Figure 2: Earnings by Education Levels

Median weekly earnings and unemployment rate by educational attainment, 2017



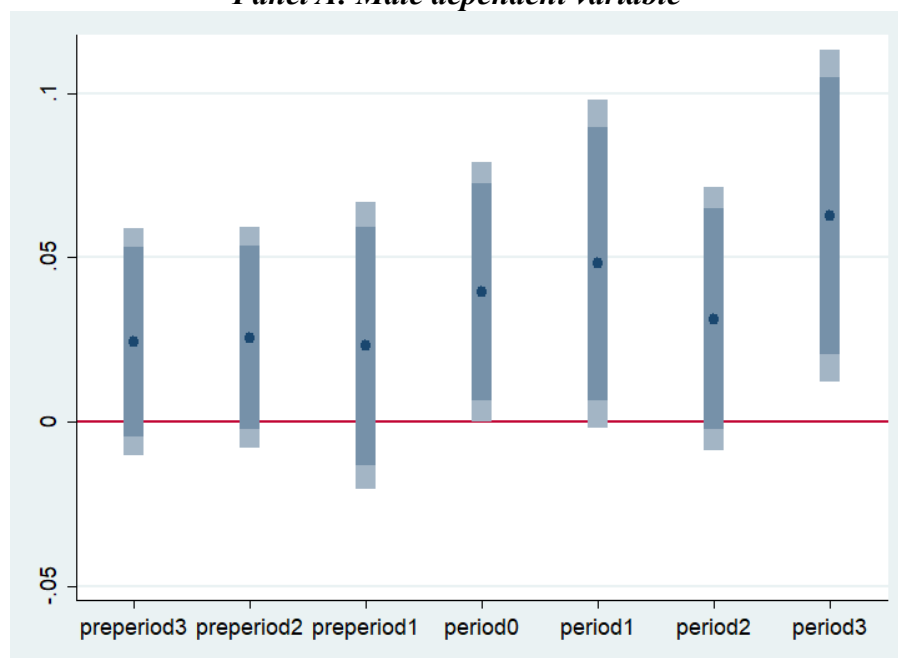
Click legend items to change data display. Hover over chart to view data.

Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.



Figure 3: Dynamic Effects of Alimony reform on regression-based measures of assortative matching
Panel A: Male dependent variable



Panel B: Female dependent variable

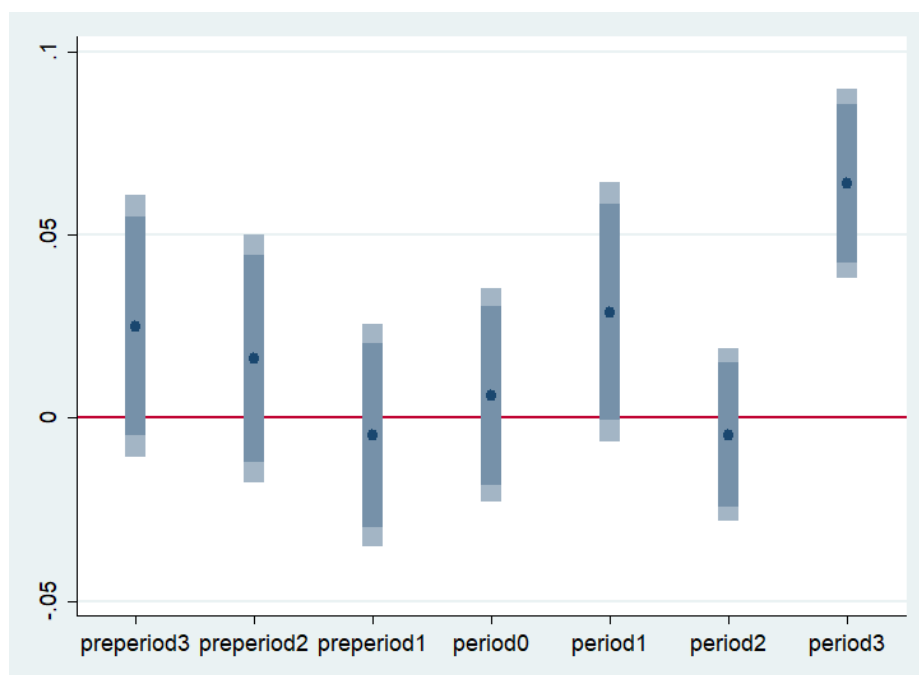
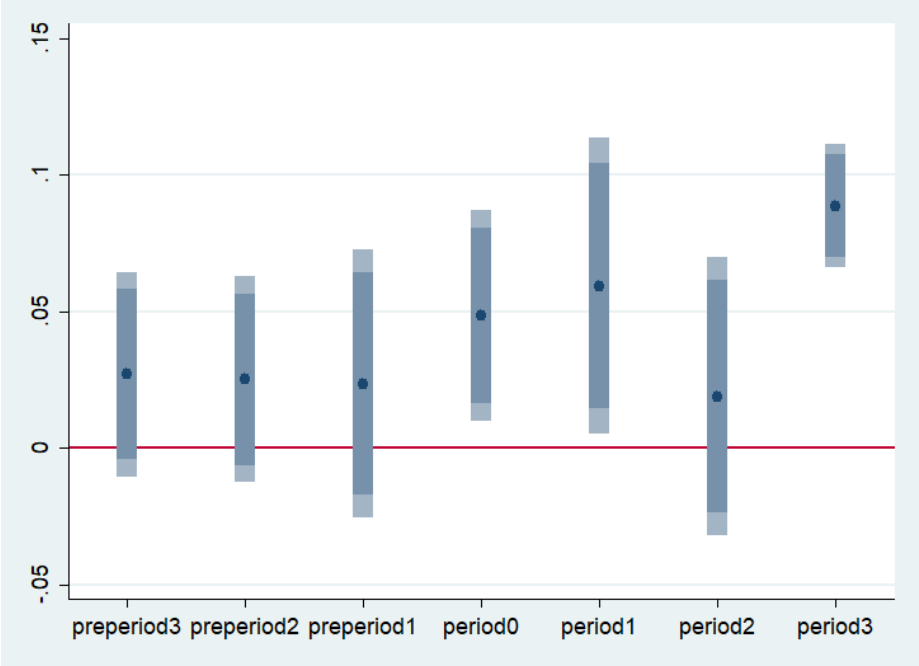


Figure 4A: Dynamic Effects of Alimony reform on regression-based measures of assortative matching, excluding high child support states
Panel A: Male dependent variable



Panel B: female dependent variable

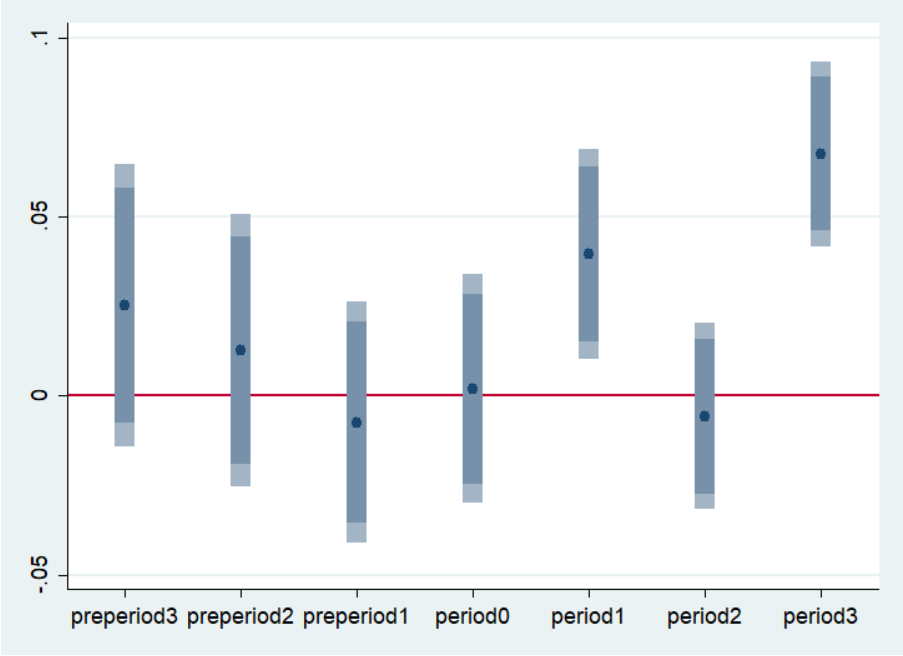
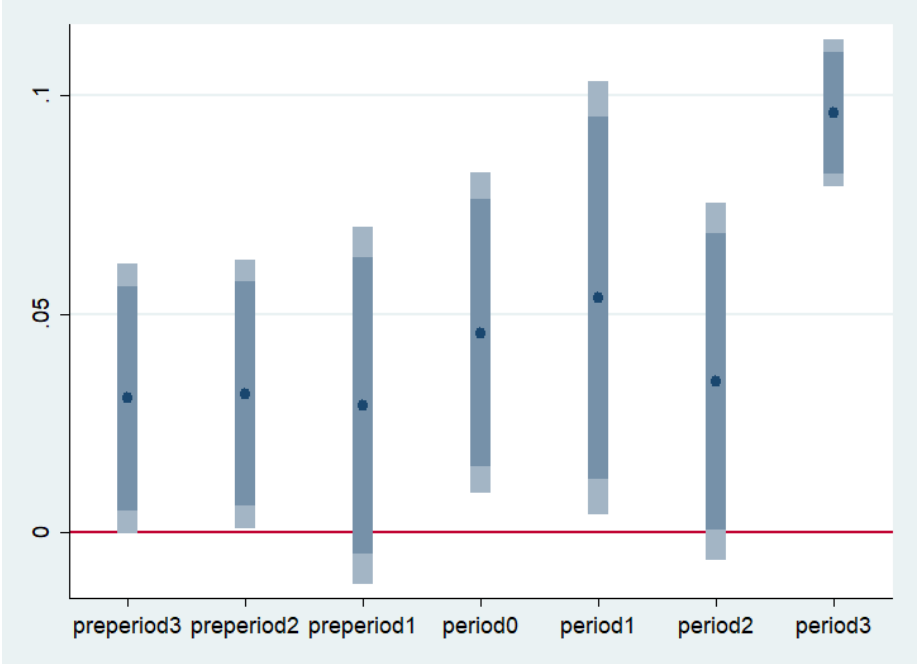


Figure 4B: Dynamic Effects of Alimony reform on regression-based measures of assortative matching, excluding community property states
Panel A: Male dependent variable



Panel B: Female dependent variable

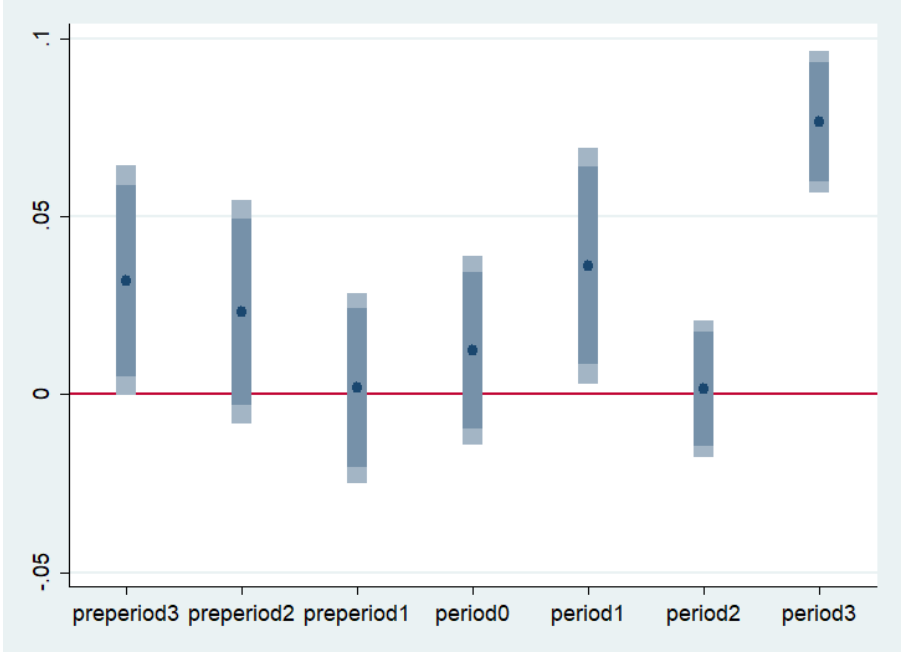
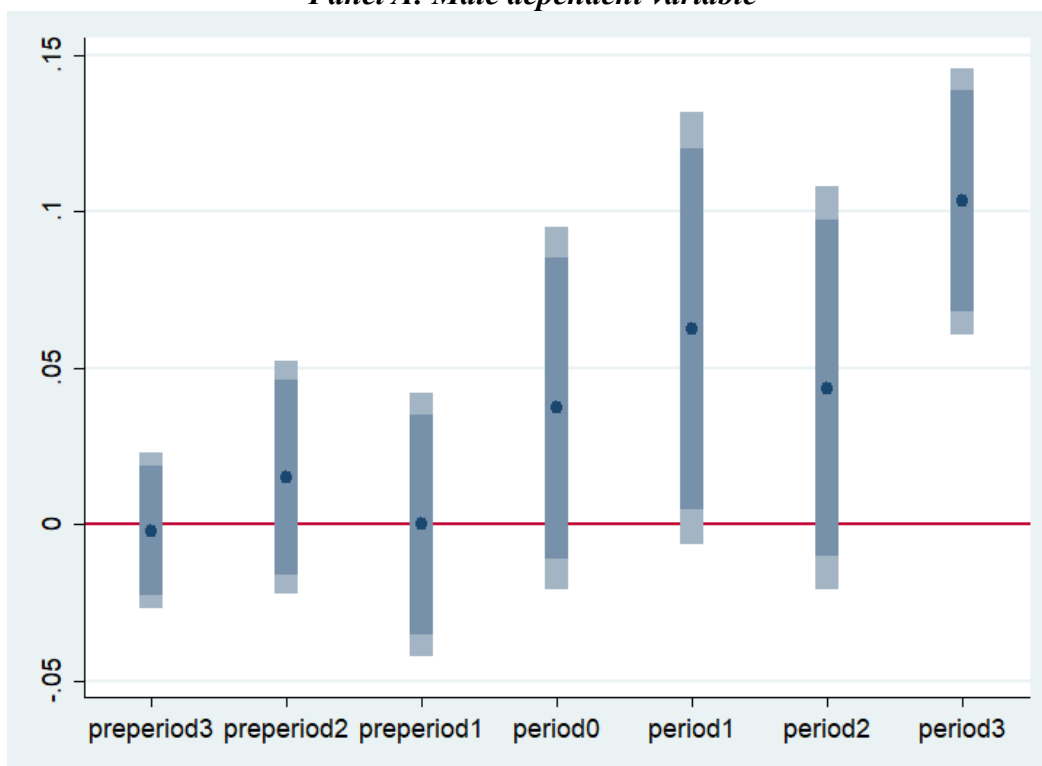
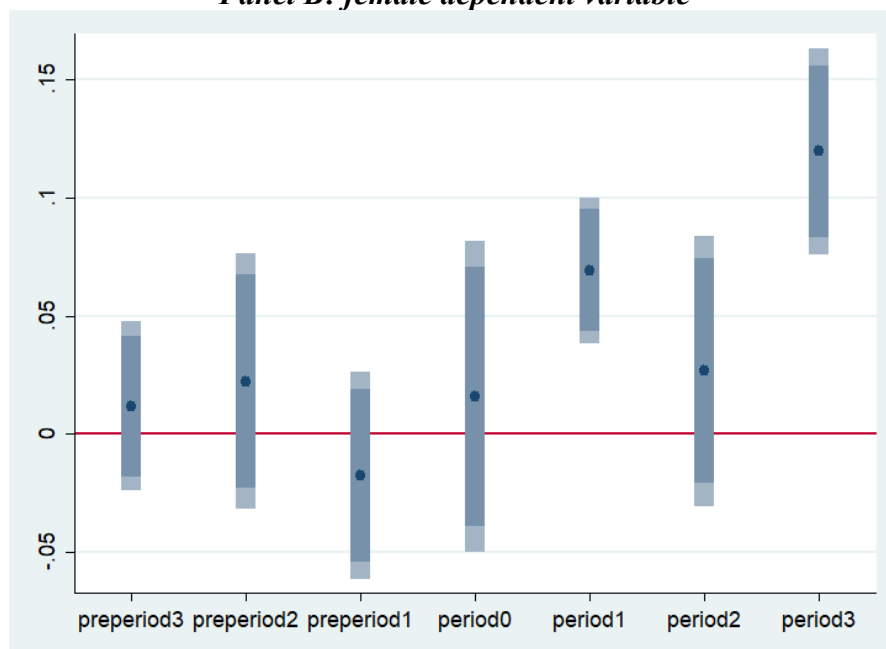


Figure 4C: Dynamic Effects of Alimony reform on regression-based measures of assortative matching, 2+ marriages

Panel A: Male dependent variable



Panel B: female dependent variable



Appendix A: Background state alimony reforms: 2006 to 2018

State	Websites	Date of access	Notes
Alabama	https://law.justia.com/codes/alabama/2006/22063/30-2-52.html https://codes.findlaw.com/al/title-30-marital-and-domestic-relations/al-code-sect-30-2-51.html https://codes.findlaw.com/al/title-30-marital-and-domestic-relations/al-code-sect-30-2-51.html https://codes.findlaw.com/al/title-30-marital-and-domestic-relations/al-code-sect-30-2-51.html	4/26/18	Limits permanent alimony in 2018.
Alaska	https://www.divorcenet.com/resources/divorce/spousal-support/understanding-and-calculating-alimony-a-0	4/26/18	No change
Arizona	http://divorceinfo.com/azfaqsalimony.htm http://www.divorcephoenixarizona.com/alimony-reform-implications/	4/26/18	No reform. Movement for reform not passed.
Arkansas	https://www.thewrightlawfirm.org/Family-Law-Overview/Spousal-Support.shtml	4/27/18	No reform. Movement for reform but not passed yet.
California	http://www.calalimonyreform.org/why.html	4/27/18	No reform bill yet.
Colorado	https://www.colo-law.com/Articles/New-Colorado-Maintenance-Act.shtml#:~:text=On%20January%201%2C%202014%2C%20Colorado,of%20maintenance%20is%20at%20issue. https://www.thelawcenterpc.com/Articles/Colorado-divorce-What-spousal-maintenance-reform-looks-like.shtml	4/27/18	Move to guidelines in 2014.
Connecticut	https://www.broderorland.com/Articles/alimony-in-connecticut-family-law-the-spousal-duty-of-support http://www.mayalaw.com/2016/07/19/ct-alimony-reform-child-support/	4/28/18	Movement for reform not passed.
Delaware	https://www.legalmatch.com/law-library/article/how-to-receive-alimony-in-delaware.html	4/28/18	No reform
Florida	https://www.myfloridalaw.com/alimony/obtaining-alimony-in-a-florida-divorce/ https://www.myfloridalaw.com/alimony/florida-alimony-reform/	4/28/18	Movement for reform not passed yet.
Georgia	https://www.gadivorceonline.com/gapages/Alimony/alimony.asp	4/28/18	No reform

Hawaii	https://cainandherren.com/conditions-spousal-support/ https://www.divorcenet.com/resources/divorce/spousal-support/understanding-and-calculating-alimony-ha	4/28/18	No reform
Idaho	https://www.divorcenet.com/resources/divorce/marital-property-division/understanding-and-calculating-	4/29/18	No reform
Illinois	https://www.dupagecountydildivorcelawyerblog.com/2014/08/27/law-maintenance-aka-alimony-changing-illinois-will-calculated-changes-mean/ http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=098-0961 https://www.equitablemediation.com/blog/maintenance-alimony-in-illinois	4/29/18	Reform occurs twice; first guidelines in 2015 then time limits in 2018.
Indiana	https://banksbrower.com/2015/03/08/spousal-maintenance-in-indiana/ https://www.julieglade.com/blog/spousal-maintenance-in-indiana/	4/29/18	No reform
Iowa	http://www.garyhilllaw.com/Blog/2017/February/How-is-Spousal-Support-Determined-in-Iowa-.aspx http://www.nlrg.com/legal-content/the-lawletter/family-law-spousal-support-in-no-guideline-states	4/29/18	No reform
Kansas	https://www.kansaslegalservices.org/node/255/spousal-supportmaintenance http://www.mathewsgrouponline.com/Articles/Kansas-courts-have-broad-discretion-in-awarding-alimony.shtml	4/29/18	No reform
Kentucky	http://www.divorceinkentucky.com/maintenance-alimony-spousal-support.htm	4/29/18	No reform
Louisiana	https://www.divorcenet.com/resources/divorce/spousal-support/understanding-and-calculating-alimony-lo	6/18/18	No reform
Maine	https://www.divorcenet.com/resources/divorce/spousal-support/understanding-and-calculating-alimony-ma http://www.rudmanwinchell.com/maine-s-spousal-support-law-becomes-even-more-uncertain/	6/18/18	Easier termination of alimony in 2013.
Maryland	https://www.mddivorceonline.com/mdpages/Alimony/alimony.asp https://www.jgllaw.com/blog/alimony-maryland-striking-balance-between-extremes	4/28/18	No reform
Massachusetts	https://www.sederlaw.com/Articles/Massachusetts-Alimony-Reform-Law-Has-Huge-Effect-on-	5/10/18	Reform limits time and amount of alimony

	Divorcing-Spouses.shtml https://static1.squarespace.com/static/595a86e52c5e6a9f951f55/t/595a93d71b10e397c5ec9a0f/1499108312131/AlimonyReformLaw_09262011Chapter124oftheActsof2011.pdf		beginning in 2012
Michigan	https://michiganlegalhelp.org/self-help-tools/family/spousal-support-alimony-nutshell https://www.schwartzlawfirmpc.com/Articles/A-Guide-to-Spousal-Support-in-Michigan.shtml	5/10/18	No reform
Minnesota	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=518.552 http://www.startribune.com/minnesota-s-alimony-reform-bill-in-a-nutshell/380178791/ https://www.divorcenet.com/states/minnesota/spousal_maintenance_in_minnesota	5/12/18	Minor reform passed which limits alimony in small number of cases in which ex-spouse is cohabiting in 2016
Mississippi	https://www.msbar.org/for-the-public/consumer-information/how-is-the-amount-of-alimony-determined/ https://codes.findlaw.com/ms/title-93-domestic-relations/ms-code-sect-93-5-23.html	5/12/18	No reform
Missouri	https://cordellcordell.com/resources/missouri/missouri-maintenance/ https://www.bellonlawgroup.com/spousal-maintenance-or-alimony.html	5/12/18	No reform
Montana	http://www.divorcesource.com/ds/montana/montana-alimony-4838.shtml http://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/40/4/40-4-203.htm http://www.rossberglaw.com/alimony.html	5/15/2018	No reform
Nebraska	http://koenigdunne.com/5-most-common-questions-regarding-alimony-in-nebraska/ https://www.huskerlaw.com/divorce/nebraska/	5/15/2018	No reform
Nevada	https://nevadalawhelp.org/resource/alimony-or-spousal-support https://rightlawyers.com/spousalsupportcalculator/	5/15/2018	No reform
New Hampshire	https://www.tennandtenn.com/spousal-support-alimony.html http://info.legalzoom.com/divorce-law-new-hampshire-alimony-24668.html	5/15/2018	No reform
New Jersey	http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2014/Bills/AL14/42.PDF http://www.njalimonyreform.org/new-jersey-alimony-reform-act-of-2014-qa/	5/15/2018	2014 reform; time limits.
New Mexico	https://www.divorcenet.com/states/new_mexico/nm_faq03 https://nmfinanciallaw.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Revised_Alimony_Guidelines.pdf	6/1/2018	Guidelines developed as of 2006.
New York	https://www.divorceny.com/maintenance/maintenance-formula/ https://www.dbnylaw.com/new-spousal-maintenance-laws-in-new-york/ http://www.nysdivorce.com/maintenance-	6/1/2018	Alimony reform as of 2016. Guidelines, caps and time limited as well.

[awards-until-2016.html](#)

North Carolina	https://www.rosen.com/alimony/alimonyarticles/alimony-north-carolina/	6/1/2018	No reform.
North Dakota	http://www.alimonyhq.com/northdakota-alimony.html https://www.legalmatch.com/law-library/article/how-to-receive-alimony-in-north-dakota.html	6/1/2018	No reform.
Ohio	https://www.ohiobar.org/forpublic/resources/law-youcanuse/pages/lawyoucanuse-387.aspx https://www.hartley-lawoffice.com/blog/2018/02/what-you-should-know-about-spousal-support-in-ohio.shtml	6/1/2018	No reform.
Oklahoma	http://www.tulsadivorceattorney.pro/tulsa-divorce-information/how-do-courts-determine-alimony-in-oklahoma/	6/11/2018	No reform
Oregon	https://www.osbar.org/public/legalinfo/1134_ChildSupportDivorce.htm	6/11/2018	No reform. Attempted reform in 2013 did not pass.
Pennsylvania	http://www.fellheimerfamilylaw.com/alimony-in-pa-your-questions-are-answered/	6/11/2018	No reform
Rhode Island	https://www.hg.org/article.asp?id=18172	6/11/2018	No reform
South Carolina	https://thepeckfirm.com/the-six-types-of-alimony-in-a-south-carolina-divorce/ http://www.scalimonyreform.com/	6/11/2018	No reform. Push for reform has not passed.
South Dakota	https://www.freelegalaid.com/nav/south-dakota/divorce-and-family-law/article/alimony-south-dakota	6/14/2018	No reform
Tennessee	https://memphisdivorce.com/alimony/	6/14/2018	No reform
Texas	https://www.divorcemediationtexas.com/blogs/how-get-spousal-support-spousal-maintenance-or-alimony-intexas https://cordellcordell.com/resources/texas/texas-maintenance/ http://www.fathersrightsdallas.com/alimony-expands-in-texas/	6/14/2018	Alimony reform in 2011 that <i>expands</i> alimony. Relaxes caps and time limits. Texas historically has had limited alimony.
Utah	https://www.utcourts.gov/howto/divorce/alimony.html https://www.facebook.com/utahalimonyreform/	6/14/2018	No reform. Push for alimony reform not passed.
Vermont	https://www.vermontjudiciary.org/family/divorce/financial-issues https://www.divorcenet.com/resources/divorce/spousal-support/understanding-and-calculating-alimony-ve https://vtdigger.org/2017/12/20/dont-overhaul-alimony-law-says-task-force/ https://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Documents/2018/WorkGroups/Senate%20Judiciary/Alimony%20Reform/W%20%20Brian%20Greason~Alimony%20Reform%20Report~2-1-2017.pdf	6/14/2018	No reform. Attempt at reform not adopted by legislature.

Virginia	https://www.livesaymyers.com/divorce-lawyers/spousal-support/ https://virginiaalimonyreform.com/	6/19/2018	No reform
Washington	http://www.genesislawfirm.com/spousal-maintenance-alimony-wa http://www.tlclawco.com/2016/09/spousal-maintenance-much-long/	6/19/2018	No reform
Washington, DC	https://www.divorcenet.com/resources/divorce/spousal-support/understanding-and-calculating-alimony-dc	11/13/2021	No reform
West Virginia	http://familylaw.vanbibberlaw.com/wv-alimony-calculator/ http://www.divorcesource.com/ds/westvirginia/west-virginia-alimony-4860.shtml	6/19/2018	No reform
Wisconsin	https://www.sterlinglawyers.com/wisconsin/spousal-support/calculator/ https://cordellcordell.com/resources/wisconsin/wisconsin-maintenance/	6/19/2018	No reform
Wyoming	http://www.legalhelpwy.org/index.php/get-legal-help/self-help-2/family-law/divorce/common-questions/spousal-support/	6/19/2018	No reform

Notes: States that have not undergone generally reform rely on broad judicial discretion to set alimony amounts. To determine which states undertook reform in the period preceding 2014, we also used https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/events/family_law/2014/10/alimony.authcheckdam.pdf (accessed 6/18/2018).
