

Marriage Rights and the Household Division of Labor

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Abstract:

Individual states in the US started granting same-sex couples the right to marry as far back as 2003; each year, more states somewhat randomly extended that right to their citizens. In 2015, nation-wide legislation was passed granting marriage rights to all remaining same-sex couples. In some states, same-sex couples were given access to alimony rights and the ability to file taxes jointly years before they could legally marry. The analysis in this paper uses this quasi-experimental design of marriage, alimony, and joint taxation rights in different years across states to study their effects on couples' household division of labor (DoL). It employs data from the American Community Survey from 2000-2014 and four measures of a division of labor to test whether couples with access to alimony, joint taxation, or marriage are more likely to engage in a DoL, and which of these institutions provide a greater spark for a DoL. The paper thus addresses an important way in which labor supply is influenced by public policy.