

# Affirmative Action Policies and Interracial Marriage

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## Abstract

- This paper examines the impact of state affirmative action policies on white/black interracial marriage for public-sector employees using the 2008-2017 American Community Survey.
- The empirical analysis uses triple-difference model and exploits time and state variations in initiating state affirmative action laws to estimate the implications of interracial marriage.
- The result suggests that state affirmative action laws improve race relations, but with gender and racial differences.**

## Institutional Background

- State affirmative action law (AA law) requires that affirmative action be planned by state employers. Such plans typically contain the following:
  - Annually collect and report data on the share of women and minorities in the workplace.
  - Numerically compares the percentage of minorities employed versus the percentage of total employees in the labor pool.
  - Identify areas where there are “underutilization” of minorities and “specific practical steps” the employers will take to correct that discrepancy (for example, goals and timetables).
- State affirmative action laws apply **only** to state and local government employees.
- 28 states have at some point passed affirmative action laws; some states have repealed since then.

State	Year Instituted	State Law Establishing AA	Responsible Agency	AA Ever	Later Banned
Alabama	1981	Ala. Admin. Code r. 671-X-4-.02	State Personnel Depart.	Yes	No
Arizona	1975	1975 E.O. 75-11 of August 25, 1975	Governor's Office of Equal Opportunity	Yes	Yes (2010)
California	1977	Statutes of 1977, Chapter 12 added to Part 2 of Division 5 of Title 2 of the Government Code Relating to State Civil Service	State Personnel Board	Yes	Yes (1996)
Connecticut	1975	Public Act No. 75-536	Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities	Yes	No
Georgia				No	
Illinois	1973	Governor's Executive Order 73-9	Department of Human Rights	Yes	No

Table 1. Timeline of States that Initiate Affirmative Action Laws.<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

- Controversy in Affirmative Action Policies
  - Supporters believe that affirmative action helps enhance diversity and mitigate the effects of historical discrimination between groups.
  - Opponents argue that affirmative action implies unfair preferential treatment for underrepresented groups.
- Given the policies' controversial nature, changes in affirmative action policies may affect personal relationships between people of different races. **How do these policies affect the likelihood of entering an interracial marriage?**
  - Increasing minority representation in the workplace:
    - Increasing exposure to people of a different race → **increasing** interracial marriage.
    - Increasing animosity towards people of difference races → **decreasing** interracial marriage.
- Kalmijn (1993); Emerson (2010); Jacobson and Johnson (2006); Perry (2010)
  - All suggest that increasing women and minorities in the workplace could achieve positive attitudes toward interracial marriage.
  - However, much of this literature is based on self-reports within surveys vs. actual choices and behaviors.
- This paper is the **first** that links affirmative action policy to interracial marriage to understand the changes in interpersonal relationships.
  - This study is inspired by Kurtulus (2013), which studies the impacts of state affirmative action bans on the employment of women and minorities in the public sector.

## Data and Sample Restrictions

Data:

- 2008-2017 American Community Survey (ACS)

Sample restriction:

- Married U.S.-born males and females who are either white or black.
- Individuals who report having a job.

## Empirical Strategy and Results

Empirical Strategy:

Triple-difference model:

$$I_{ismt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * SE_{ist} * AA_{sm} + \beta_2 * AA_{sm} + \beta_3 * SE_{ist} + \beta_3 X'_{ist} + \gamma_s + \lambda_m + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{ismt}$$

- $I_{ismt}$ : =1 if individual  $i$  living in state  $s$  in year  $t$  who married in year  $m$  is married to a person of a different race.
- $SE_{ist}$ : =1 if person  $i$  is a public-sector employee in state  $s$  in year  $t$ .
- $AA_{sm}$ : =1 if there was a state affirmative action law in place in state  $s$  in year  $m$ .
- $X'_{ist}$ : vector of control variables. The vector includes a series of age and education dummy variables, as well as the racial composition of the state.
- $\gamma_s, \lambda_m, \delta_t$ : state fixed effects, year of marriage fixed effects and survey year fixed effects, respectively.

Results:

- The likelihood that a white male working in the public sector has a black spouse increases by 0.12 percentage points if he married in a year when there was an affirmative policy in place in his state of residence.
- Suggests that affirmative action → induces exposure to people of a different race → improves race relations at least for some.
- State affirmative laws do not appear to impact the likelihood that white females marry a black husband. But they have an impact on marriage patterns of black males or females.

Panel A

	White Male		White Female	
	(1) Black Wife	(2)	(3) Black Husband	(4)
Public-sector Employee*AA State at the Year of Current Marriage	0.0012*** (0.0002)	0.0012*** (0.0002)	0.0002 (0.0003)	0.0001 (0.0003)
AA State at the Year of Current Marriage	-0.0003 (0.0002)	-0.0003* (0.0002)	0.0010** (0.0004)	0.0004 (0.0003)
N	2,462,252		2,184,365	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.001	0.001	0.003	0.003
State FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year of Marriage FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
State Specific Trends	N	Y	N	Y

Panel B

	Black Male		Black Female	
	(1) White Wife	(2)	(3) White Husband	(4)
Public-sector Employee*AA State at the Year of Current Marriage	-0.0192*** (0.0041)	-0.0190*** (0.0041)	-0.0106*** (0.0022)	-0.0105*** (0.0022)
AA State at the Year of Current Marriage	0.0054 (0.0036)	0.0043 (0.0027)	0.0016 (0.0026)	0.0032 (0.0023)
N	156,715		142,394	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.073	0.075	0.038	0.040
State FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year of Marriage FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
State Specific Trends	N	Y	N	Y

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table 2. Triple Difference Estimation for the Impact of State Affirmative Action Policies on Interracial Marriage.

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