I am an applied economist. I use modern econometric methods to answer empirical, policy-relevant, thought-provoking questions. My research to date studies two broad questions:

- How does marriage policy affect coupling?

- How can we reduce racial disparities in policing outcomes?

In the future, I will continue researching issues of great social and policy relevance.

Economics of the Household

Recent legal, social, and demographic changes make marriage and cohabitation increasingly distinct and give same-sex couples the right to marry. These changes provide policy variation that lends itself to answering causal questions about marriage policy. Along with the popularity of marriage, the importance of child-rearing, and household decision-making, these changes also affirm the importance of continued research on the topic of marriage.

I leverage a change in the federal government's definition of spouse to estimate how spousal visa policy affects couple formation and marriage rates in my job market paper, "Spousal Visa Policy and Mixed-Citizenship Couples: Evidence from the End of the Defense Of Marriage Act." By recognizing same-sex spouses, the federal government gives same-sex couples access to spousal visas for the first time and legalizes same-sex marriage for non-permanent residents. In response, the marriage and coupling rates for same-sex couples with a citizen and non-citizen partner increase dramatically.

My job market paper is the first to study an extensive margin change in access to spousal visas. I use a difference-in-differences-in-differences design to estimate the treatment-on-the-treated effect of the policy on coupling and marriage rates. Same-sex couples with a citizen partner and a non-citizen partner are the treatment group. The triple difference design removes selection bias due to coupling trends in other same-sex or mixed-citizenship couples. I also implement this with a Poisson count model. This has two advantages. First, the log-linear relationship permits interpreting the estimates as effects on rates in addition to counts. Second, unlike other log-linear models, the Poisson model preserves zeros in the outcome variable, so the sample maintains representativeness.

I find that access to spousal visas causes an increase in coupling rates by 36% and marriage rates by 78%. Hence, spousal visa policy substantially benefits non-permanent residents with citizen partners. Back-of-the-envelope calculations suggest that millions of people directly have their current partners thanks to spousal visa policy.

Legalizing same-sex marriage provides fertile ground for promising empirical research on the effects of marriage. I plan to leverage this variation in future research. In my current early-stage work, I ask if access to the legal marriage contract affects assortative mating or the surplus generated by matches. If so, marriage law favors the creation of some couples over others. I answer this question using variation in state-level same-sex marriage legalization. I calibrate a model (Ciscato, Galichon, Goussé JPE 2020) that quantifies the relative extent of assortative mating and matching surplus across marriage markets. State, year, and couple type (same-sex, different-sex) define the marriage markets. I then estimate how same-sex marriage legalization affects these quantities, using a staggered difference-in-differences design.

My research adds to the contemporary marriage literature that recognizes the distinction between cohabitation and the legal marriage contract. Underappreciating this distinction can confuse analyses of marriage. My research also reframes the experiences of the LGBTQ+ population. In addition to understanding this understudied population, we can learn about significant policies that impact everyone.

Economics of Crime and Policing

Policing is a substantial expense for municipalities, and there is growing concern regarding the outcomes of policing. Heated public debate over crime and policing demonstrates the urgent need for research on these topics.

My co-author, Romaine Campbell, and I have detailed administrative data from a large urban police department in the United States. We exploit these data to gain policy-relevant insight into police officer behavior.

In our working paper, "Officer Language and Suspect Race: A Text Analysis of Police Reports," we construct an officer-level measure of text-based racial slant. We then leverage the random assignment of officers to 911 call dispatches to estimate the effect of police officer racial slant on arrest probability. Preliminary results suggest that officers exhibiting racial slant make disproportionately more arrests in white neighborhoods.

To create the measure of racial slant, I use Natural Language Processing: machine learning methods that allow me to use text as data. I use adjectives and adverbs from thousands of police reports to predict the observed suspect race with an elastic net logistic regression. The elastic net optimally combines ℓ_1 (lasso) and ℓ_2 (ridge) penalties on the word coefficients, setting many to zero. Therefore, the machine learning model implicitly pinpoints words that encode

suspect race and neutral words. We interpret the closeness of the predicted and true suspect race as a measure of a police report's ability to encode race implicitly.

In work-in-progress, we use these administrative data to estimate the effect of body-worn cameras on dispatch outcomes. The police department we work with was not an early adopter of body-worn cameras and was institutionally unwilling to adopt them with a randomized control trial. Therefore, it may reflect an average police department better than one willing to implement a randomized control trial. We compare dispatches made in broad daylight to those made at night before and after the rollout of body-worn cameras, using a difference-in-differences design. Preliminary results suggest that requiring officers to wear cameras changes their propensity to initiate interactions with civilians.

Our research contributes to a growing literature on policing. We hope to provide much-needed evidence on effective policing to help policy-makers find appropriate solutions to pressing problems.

Future Directions

I plan to further develop my text analysis skills in future research projects. These methods are increasingly popular in social science and develop our econometric toolkit to tap into the world of text. I am also grateful for the new difference-in-differences literature clarifying how to implement staggered treatment designs. These designs fit many meaningful contexts. I plan to continue to employ these and other methods to estimate credible causal effects of meaningful policies.