I study the economics of the family. My present work concerns the allocation of goods and time use within households, and the conditions under which identification of intrahousehold efficiency is possible.

Detecting Inefficiency Within the Family

In my job market paper, “The Power of Tests for Pareto Efficiency Within the Family,” I highlight a major shortcoming of current empirical studies of allocation within the household. These studies attempt to explain patterns of consumption across households with variables that might alter the balance of power between spouses. For example, some authors have used the favorability of divorce laws towards women as a source of variation in bargaining power. Under the assumption of efficiency, the effects of such variables on demand - “distribution factors,” as they are called in the literature - have to obey certain cross-equation restrictions. Those restrictions are often found to hold empirically, which has been interpreted as evidence for efficiency. I was able to show that the same restrictions could arise from a model of inefficient allocation, too, which calls into question the strength of much of that evidence.

But such a negative result only provokes the question of what sort of evidence would be adequate to learn about efficiency. To answer that, I show that the identification of inefficiency must come from variations in relative prices, which means going beyond cross-sectional data; or it requires data on individual, rather than household, income and consumption. But there are easier ways to achieve identification, I show, by combining stronger assumptions and better data: for example, if the relative wealth of one spouse satisfies a large support condition, and the econometrician can identify *ex ante* a public good consumed by the family, then it is possible to construct powerful tests of efficiency.

I view my results as a first step in improving the quality of the evidence we have, or can have; it obviously cannot be the last word on the question. I have also started working on the development of new methods, more Bayesian in spirit, for inference about efficiency.

Labor Supply and Time Use In Extended Families

The normative criterion of efficiency is a natural organizing principle for positive theories of the family, and the way I originally got interested in intrahousehold efficiency was by thinking about the effects that a person’s family might have on her labor supply. In many developing countries, extended or non-nuclear family structures are common, and unemployment is often high. In such environments, the motive for specialization into either “market” or “domestic” work may be much weaker than it is in developed countries. So intrahousehold efficiency may look very different there than it does in better-functioning labor markets. Currently, I am
combining information from South Africa’s 2010 Time Use Survey with longitudinal data on consumption and employment from the ongoing National Income Dynamics Study to examine the efficiency of these extended families.

**Population Dynamics, Labor Markets, and Housing Markets in Developing Countries**

A related area of my interest is economic demography. Although I consider myself a microeconomist, I think it is important to keep aggregate patterns and dynamics in view. Enormous demographic changes are happening: fertility decline and population aging in both rich and poor countries, and mass urbanization in the developing world. Of course economists are not the only social scientists to work on these questions, but what is distinctive to economics is the study of the joint dynamics of populations and of prices - of housing, or of time (i.e. wages). Broadly (very broadly!) speaking, my future research agenda is to try to understand the implications of these changes in the populations of developing countries for their labor markets, and for their housing markets. These questions obviously take me further afield than my current areas of work, but I am eager to do so.

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