

# Marie Christelle Mabeu

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## Education

Ph.D. in Economics, University of Ottawa, 2020  
*Dissertation title: "Institutions and Immutable Causes of Human Capital"*  
*Committee:* Roland Pongou (Chair), Victoria Barham, Abel Brodeur,  
Myra Yazbeck, Matt Webb, Siwan Anderson (UBC, external examiner)

M.B.A., Finance, Laval University, 2012

M.A.(with honours), Management, International University of Tunis, 2010

B.A., Economics, Catholic University of Central Africa, 2008

## Research Areas

Development Economics, Human Capital Formation (Maternal and Child Health), Demographic Economics, Education, Gender, Political Economy

## Refereed Publication

**The Sex Gap in Neonatal Mortality and the AIDS Epidemic in Sub-Saharan Africa**, *BMJ Global Health*, 2018, 3(5), e000940 (with Sanni Yaya, Setou Diarra, and Roland Pongou)

## Working Papers

**Colonial Origins and Fertility: Can the Market Overcome History?** (with David Canning and Roland Pongou, 2020) - *Job Market Paper*

**Ancestral Norms, Legal Origins, and Female Empowerment** (with Abel Brodeur and Roland Pongou, 2020). *IZA Discussion Paper 13105* - (under review)

**Identity During a Pandemic: COVID-19 and Ethnic Divisions in the United States** (with Jakina Debnam Guzman and Roland Pongou, 2021)

**Democracy, Genes, and the Male Survival Disadvantage** (with Roland Pongou, 2019)

## Work in Progress

**Kinship Structure, Human Capital, Domestic Violence, and Female HIV: Evidence from an Educational Reform in Malawi**

**Democracy and Inequality in sub-Saharan Africa: Evidence from Individual-Level Data on Infant Mortality** (with Carmen Jacqueline Ho and Roland Pongou)

**In Utero HIV Exposure, Genes, and Babies' Health** (with Setou Diarra, Roland Pongou, and Sanni Yaya)

## Data collection in Progress

**COVID-19 Symptoms and Social Distancing Web Survey** (with Roland Pongou, Sanni Yaya and Stéphanie Maltais)

## Academic experience

**Lecturer**, Department of Economics, University of Ottawa, Canada - *June 2020–Present*  
Courses: Introduction to Microeconomics

**Teaching Assistant**, Department of Economics, University of Ottawa, Canada - *2014–2019*  
Courses: Introduction to Macroeconomics, Canada and World Economy, Introduction to Microeconomics

**Guest Speaker**, Department of Economics, University of Ottawa, Canada  
Health Economics (ECO6174), Introduction to Health Economics (ECO2123), Introduction to Development Economics (ECO2117) — *Winter 2020*  
Selected Topics in Economic Theory (ECO6900) — *Fall 2019*

**Research Assistant**, Department of Economics, University of Ottawa, Canada - *June 2015–August 2015*

## Other Relevant Employment

**Economist Consultant**, Development Impact Evaluation (DIME), The World Bank - *July 2020–Present*

**Economist Consultant**, Vice-President unit/Human Capital Project, The World Bank - *2019–2020*

**Economist Fellow**, World Bank's Chief Economist Office - *2019*

**Researcher**, National Research Council, Canada - *2015*

**Investment Analyst**, Industrielle Alliance Financial Group, Canada - *2012–2014*

**Summer Intern** at the United Nations Development Program, Cameroon - *2006*

## Grants, Awards, & Scholarships

**SSHRC - Partnership Engage Grants COVID-19 Special Initiative**, 2020-2021, Award amount: 24,139\$  
Role: Co-PI

**Ontario Graduate Scholarship** ( $\times 3$ ), 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019  
Government of Ontario and Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Ottawa

**Excellence Scholarship** ( $\times 4$ ), 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2019-2020  
Awarded by the Department of Economics, University of Ottawa

**Ph.D. Admission Scholarship**, 2014–2018  
Awarded by the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ottawa

## Skills

**Software:** STATA, SPSS, ArcGis, Matlab, SAS, VBA-Excel, MS Project, Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PPT), L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X, Experience with Content Management System (CMS)

**Languages:** English (Fluent), French (Fluent), Fuissep (Native)

## Selected Conferences and Seminars

**2020:** The ASSA Annual meeting (San Diego), the PE workshop (Harvard University), the WGAPE 2020 Regional Meeting (University of California, Berkeley), the 2nd Rosenkranz Health Policy Research Symposium (Stanford University), H2D2 Research Day (University of Michigan), NEUDC.

**2019:** The ASSA Annual meeting / CSMGEP Dissertation Session (Atlanta), the European Meeting of the Econometric Society (Manchester), the Royal Economic Society Annual Conference (University of Warwick), Population Health Sciences Workshop (Philadelphia), the 53rd Annual Conference of the Canadian Economics Association (Banff), the 18th Annual Canadian Health Economics Study Group Meeting (Banff), the WEAI Annual Conference (San Francisco), the Africa Meeting of the Econometric Society (Morocco), the Société canadienne de science économique (Québec)

## Professional Affiliation

American Economic Association, Canadian Economic Association, The Econometric Society

## References

Professor Roland Pongou (Ph.D. Advisor)  
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## Abstract of Selected Research Papers

**Colonial Origins and Fertility: Can the Market Overcome History?** (with David Canning and Roland Pongou, 2020) - *Job Market Paper*

Can market incentives overcome the long-term impact of historical institutions? We address this question by focusing on the role of colonial reproductive laws in shaping fertility behavior in Africa. Exploiting the arbitrary division of ancestral ethnic homelands and the resulting discontinuity in institutions across the British-French colonial borders, we find that women in former British areas are more likely to delay sexual debut and marriage, and have fewer children. However, these effects disappear in areas close to sea, where market access and the opportunity cost of childbearing appear to be high irrespective of colonizer identity. This heterogeneous impact of colonial origins extends to measures of local economic development and household welfare. Examining causal mechanisms, we argue that the fertility effect of colonial origins is directly linked to colonial population policies and reproductive laws and their impact on the use of modern methods of birth control. We find little evidence that the fertility effect of British colonization operates through education or income. While British colonization is linked to higher female education, this occurs mainly close to the sea while the fertility effects do not. Again, while income levels differ, the fertility gap between British and French colonies opened prior to 1980, while the income gap opened after 1990. Our analysis highlights the heterogeneous nature of the colonial origins of comparative fertility behavior and economic development, and implies that economic incentives may overcome historical determinism.

**Democracy, Genes, and the Male Survival Disadvantage** (with Roland Pongou, 2019)

Male children have a survival disadvantage in most societies, a situation largely attributed to genetic fatality. This paper examines whether, and how, change in political regime type affects excess male infant mortality. Analyzing data on more than 3.8 million live births from sub-Saharan African countries, we exploit within-mother variation in political regime type in combination with two main strategies (DID, RDD) and various robustness checks for causal identification. We find that excess male infant mortality falls by 20-30 percent of the sample mean following a transition to democracy. We identify competitiveness of executive recruitment, constraints on the chief executive, and political participation as the features of democracy that matter most. Examining causal mechanisms, we find that democracy fosters the provision of health inputs, including maternal education, tetanus immunization, breastfeeding, and normal birth weight, all of which have stronger health benefits for boys than for girls, despite being ex-ante "gender-neutral" in our setting. Moreover, analyzing twins data, we show that democracy significantly constrains genetic influences on male infant mortality. We rule out hormonal (testosterone) transfer and discrimination against girls as possible mechanisms driving our findings.

**Ancestral Norms, Legal Origins, and Female Empowerment** (with Abel Brodeur and Roland Pongou, 2020)

A large literature documents persistent impacts of formal historical institutions. However, very little is known about how these institutions interact with ancestral traditions to determine long-term economic and social outcomes. This paper addresses this question by studying the persistent effect of legal origins on female economic empowerment in sub-Saharan Africa, and how ancestral cultural norms of gender roles may attenuate or exacerbate this effect. Taking advantage of the arbitrary division of ancestral ethnic homelands across countries with different legal origins, we directly compare women among the same ethnic group living in civil law countries and common law countries. We find that, on average, women in common law countries are significantly more educated, are more likely to work in the professional sector, and are less likely to marry at young age. However, these effects are either absent or significantly lower in settings where ancestral cultural norms do not promote women's rights and empowerment. In particular, we find little effect in bride price societies, patrilocal societies, and societies where women were not involved in agriculture in the past. Our findings imply that to be optimal, the design of formal institutions should account for ancestral traditions.

**Identity During a Pandemic: COVID-19 and Ethnic Divisions in the United States** (with Jakina Debnam

Guzman and Roland Pongou, 2021)

Mobility restrictions have been imposed on over half of the world's population as part of efforts to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus. Given the economic and psychological expense of these policies, understanding how their benefits depend on structural factors is critical for optimal policy design. We find causal evidence that the effectiveness of mobility-restricting policies in the United States has been critically constrained by ethnic divisions — U.S. counties with high levels of ethnic divisions fared worse than their less-divided counterparts after lockdowns in both COVID-19 cases and related deaths. This is especially true in areas with higher racial segregation. Following President Trump's State of Emergency declaration, a one standard deviation increase in the ethnic fragmentation index (EFI) in the most racially segregated counties increased COVID-19 cases and associated deaths by 1,014 and 63, respectively; in the least segregated counties these outcomes are 112 and 4, respectively. These results highlight that ethnic divisions, rather than ethnic diversity, spurred drastic differences in COVID-19's impact. Consistent with less effective mobility restrictions in more ethnically divided counties, we find smaller mobility reductions and less mask wearing in these counties following policy implementation. These results are not driven by a lack of physical public goods or by socioeconomic differences. Instead, we interpret our findings as the result of mobility restriction policies' imperfect enforceability. Where ethnic divisions are present, communication is more sparse, pro-social norms are weaker, and communities are less able to enforce adherence by enacting social sanctions. Our results suggest that policies promoting ethnic and racial integration can allay the negative social and economic impacts of contagious disease by decreasing the likelihood of disease spread.

### **Kinship Structure, Human Capital, Domestic Violence, and Female HIV: Evidence from an Educational Reform in Malawi**

Social scientists are increasingly recognizing the role of traditional cultural practices in shaping the effect of development policies on economic outcomes. However, the literature documenting the complementarity between these policies and traditions is still in its infancy. This paper examines how a national educational reform interacts with ancestral descent rules that influence gender norms to shape female education attainment, domestic violence, and HIV. Exploiting the timing of a policy experiment that exogenously eliminated primary school fees in Malawi, I implement a Fuzzy Regression Discontinuity Design to estimate the differential causal impact of this reform in a context of kinship norms diversity. I find that the reform significantly increases female education and decreases female HIV, but these effects are much larger in matrilineal relative to patrilineal ethnic groups. Moreover, I find that relative to patrilineal women, matrilineal women experience an increased risk of domestic violence following the reform. Our findings demonstrate that, while reforms that foster human capital accumulation are important, their benefits for women critically depend on the existence of traditional institutions that promote female empowerment.

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