

# MICHELLE RAO

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## FIELDS

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Development Economics (primary), Political Economy, Gender

## EDUCATION

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### London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)

PhD in Economics 2025 (expected)

6th year of PhD (*Part time since Aug 2022*)

Advisors: Rachael Meager, Oriana Bandiera, Gharad Bryan, Robin Burgess

MRes in Economics (Distinction) 2018-2020

BSc in Economics (First Class) 2012-2015

### Oxford University

MSc in Economics for Development (Distinction) 2015-2016

## JOB MARKET PAPER

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### Program Evaluations and Policy Spending

Program evaluations are motivated in part by a desire to improve policy effectiveness. Yet there is limited empirical evidence on the efficacy of evaluation itself. This paper examines the systematic relationship between program evaluations and changes in policy spending, in the context of Conditional Cash Transfers in Latin America and the Caribbean. Using a novel dataset of 128 program evaluations mapped to spending on the corresponding evaluated programs, I find a robust zero relationship between research results and spending. This holds for several definitions of evaluation outcomes: more statistically significant, larger magnitude, more surprising, or more positively framed results, do not correspond with larger increases in spending. As policymakers may learn from cumulative evidence rather than individual studies, I then use a Bayesian hierarchical approach to aggregate evaluations. I find a zero association between a country's cumulative evidence base and its spending. Finally, I explore mechanisms for this result by considering heterogeneous responses to evaluations that are more credible, actionable, or generalizable. I find that credibility and generalizability are unrelated to spending, but evaluations conducted quickly (within four years of the effect year) and attributable to the political party in power, are significantly predictive of spending. Thus, timeliness may be an overlooked aspect of the evidence-to-policy pipeline.

## PUBLICATIONS

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Men are from Mars, and Women Too: A Bayesian Meta-analysis of Overconfidence Experiments, with Oriana Bandiera, Nidhi Parekh & Barbara Pentrongolo, *Economica*, 2022

## WORKING PAPERS

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Women and Cash Transfers: How program design and local conditions relate to causal estimates of impact, with Gabriela Diaz-Pardo

Gender differences in Altruism: A Bayesian Hierarchical Analysis of Dictator games

## WORKS IN PROGRESS

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Targeting Barriers to Gender Evidence Use, with Michael O'Sullivan and Léa Rouanet

Peer learning and Productivity Across NGOs, with Jack Thiemel

## EMPLOYMENT

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Consultant in Research Uptake team, World Bank Africa Gender Innovation Lab	2020-
Economic Consultant, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	2020
Economics Analyst, Ernst & Young	2016-2018

## TEACHING

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Development Economics, IZA-FCDO, Head Class Teacher	2024
Quantitative Methods for Public Policy, LSE, TA for Mark Schankermann	2023-2024
Microeconomic Principles, LSE, TA for Dimitra Petropoulou	2022-2023
Development Economics, LSE, TA for Oriana Bandiera & Robin Burgess	2020-2021
Microeconomic Principles, LSE, TA for Dimitra Petropoulou & Timothy Besley	2019-2020

## AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS

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Excellence in Education Awards, LSE	2024
Teaching Bonus, based on student evaluations, LSE	2019-2024
Class Teacher Award, highly commended, LSE	2021
Luca D'Agliano Prize for Best Extended Essay, Oxford	2016

## PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

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**Referee service:** Economic Journal, Economica, Journal of Economic Behavior and Organisation

**Presentations (incl. scheduled):** 2025: CSAE; 2024: OXDEV, Doctorissimes Paris School of Economics, Oxford Policy Engagement Network, IFS/STICERD/UCL Development Work in Progress Seminar

**Outreach:** Founding member of LSE Diversity and Inclusion Committee in Economics

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

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**Languages:** English (native), Mandarin (native), French (intermediate)

**Citizenship:** US, Taiwan, UK (indefinite leave to remain)