



**Professor Mhairi Gibson**  
**B.A.(Dunelm.), M.Phil.(Cantab.), Ph.D.(U.C.Lond.)**

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## Summary

My research focuses on population and health issues, incorporating theories and methods from human behavioural ecology and anthropology. Based on long-term fieldwork in South-Central Ethiopia I study recent changes in reproductive and parenting decision-making among Arsi Oromo agropastoralists. I also work on the social dynamics of normative practices which are harmful to women and girls. In particular, I am interested in identifying the individual and community factors which explain the persistence of female genital cutting/mutilation and intimate partner violence in high-risk communities.

I welcome research proposals, in particular within Human Behavioural Ecology, Evolutionary Anthropology, and Applied Anthropology.

Recently supervised student topics include:

- Testing evolutionary explanations for “harmful cultural traditions”
- Developing specialized survey techniques for measuring sensitive behaviour
- Socio-ecology of infectious disease in Uganda
- Human behavioural ecology of labour migration in Ethiopia
- Infant feeding practices in Somali-born women in Bristol

## Biography

Following degrees in Anthropology at Durham and Cambridge, PhD and Postdoctoral Fellowship at UCL, I joined the University of Bristol in 2005.

## Teaching

### Undergraduate units

- Evolution and Human Behaviour
- Population Health and Development
- Dissertations

### Postgraduate units

## Memberships

## Organisations

[Department of Archaeology and Anthropology](#)

## Academics by department

- [Anthropology and Archaeology](#)

## Selected publications

- Howard, JA & Gibson, MA, 2019, '[Is there a link between paternity concern and female genital cutting in West Africa?](#)'. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, vol 40., pp. 1-11
- Gibson, M, Gurmu, E, Rodriguez, BC, Rueda, MdM & Scott, I, 2018, '[Indirect methods reveal hidden support for female genital cutting in South-Central Ethiopia](#)'. *PLoS ONE*., pp. e0193985
- Lawson, D & Gibson, M, 2018, '[Polygynous marriage and child health in sub-Saharan Africa: What is the evidence of harm?](#)'. *Demographic Research*, vol 39., pp. 177-208
- Ugglá, CE, Gurmu, E & Gibson, MA, 2018, '[Are wives and daughters disadvantaged in polygynous households? A case study of the Arsi Oromo of Ethiopia](#)'. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, vol 39., pp. 160-165
- Howard, J & Gibson, M, 2017, '[Frequency-dependent female genital cutting behaviour confers evolutionary fitness benefits](#)'. *Nature Ecology and Evolution*, vol 1.
- Gibson, MA & Lawson, DW, 2015, '[Applying evolutionary anthropology](#)'. *Evolutionary anthropology*, vol 24., pp. 3-14
- Gibson, MA & Lawson, DW, 2014, '[Applied Evolutionary Anthropology: Darwinian Approaches to Contemporary World Issues](#)'. Springer
- Nettle, D, Gibson, MA, Lawson, D & Sear, R, 2013, '[Human behavioral ecology: current research and future prospects](#)'. *Behavioral Ecology*, vol 24., pp. 1031-1040
- Gibson, MA & Gurmu, E, 2012, '[Rural to urban migration is an unforeseen impact of development intervention in Ethiopia](#)'. *PLoS ONE*, vol 7., pp. 1-8
- Lawson, D, Alvergne, A & Gibson, MA, 2012, '[The life-history trade-off between fertility and child survival](#)'. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, vol 279., pp. 4755-4764
- Gibson, M & Gurmu, E, 2011, '[Land inheritance establishes sibling competition for marriage and reproduction](#)'. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, vol 108., pp. 2200 - 2204
- Gibson, M & Lawson, D, 2011, '["Modernization" increases parental investment and sibling resource competition: evidence from a rural development initiative in Ethiopia](#)'. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, vol 32., pp. 97 - 105
- Gibson, M & Rebecca, S, 2010, '[Does wealth increase parental investment biases in child education? Evidence from two African populations on the cusp of the fertility transition](#)'. *Current Anthropology*, vol 51., pp. 693 - 701
- Gibson, M & Mace, R, 2007, '[Polygyny, reproductive success and child health in rural Ethiopia: why marry a married man?](#)'. *Journal of Biosocial Science*, vol 39., pp. 287 - 300
- Gibson, M & Mace, R, 2006, '[An energy-saving development initiative increases birth rate and childhood malnutrition in rural Ethiopia](#)'. *PLoS Medicine*, vol 3 (4, e87)., pp. 476 - 484
- Gibson, M & Mace, R, 2005, '[Helpful grandmothers in rural Ethiopia: A study of the effect of kin on child survival and growth](#)'. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, vol 26 (6)., pp. 469 - 482

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