

# LSE GROUPS 2016

## Poverty and Inequality in London

### Research conference

Friday 10 June 2016 11:00-16:00

Wolfson Theatre New Academic Building LG.01

### Agenda

10:30 - 11:00	Coffee
11:00 - 11:20	<b>Welcome</b> Dr Claire Gordon and Dr Esther Saxey LSE Teaching and Learning Centre  Dr Neil McLean Director, Academic and Professional Development Division
11:20 – 13:00	<b>LSE GROUPS presentations (part 1): Inclusion and Exclusion</b>
13:00 – 13:45	Lunch
13:45 – 15:25	<b>LSE GROUPS presentations (part 2): People and Places</b>
15:25 – 15:40	Tea
15:40 – 16:00	<b>Awards ceremony and closing remarks</b> Dr Claire Gordon and Dr Esther Saxey LSE Teaching and Learning Centre

## ABSTRACTS

*These abstracts are printed as provided by the groups with no revisions.*

### PART ONE - INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION

#### GROUP 9

#### Inequality in elite places: The experience of routine workers at the LSE

11:20 – 11:40

**Bashir Ali, Laura Ehrich, Reyss Wheeler, Haowei Li, Nadim Choudhury, Jinchong Ho**

This paper explores the experiences of non-academic support staff at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). There has been much research on low paid workers in London, but this research paper seeks to outline whether the working environment has an impact on one's perspective of the inequality they face. The LSE is an interesting institution to study in this respect, as it exudes immense privilege, yet maintains a strong verbal commitment to equality and has in the past been held to account for falling short of this commitment. Since the work of front-line, manual labour staff is often rendered invisible, at a prestigious institution like the LSE, they often become the face of the inequality. Surveys and on-campus ethnographic observations of LSE's cleaning, catering, security and other support staff were used to inform in-depth interviews. Our findings suggest that staff are generally satisfied in their working environment and with their pay. The majority do not express feelings of inequality - but there may be issues about work hierarchies and inclusion. Some suggestions for how the LSE can further improve the experience of its lowest-paid staff will be put forward.

**Keywords:** inequality, LSE, elite, routine occupation, hierarchy

#### GROUP 10

#### "On the fringes of LSE society?" – The impact of socioeconomic factors on student experience at the LSE

11:40 – 12:00

**Stefanos Argyros, Sian Brahach, Jimmy Ka Fung Lam, Asia Lawrance, Shirley Wang Jia Ying**

This paper aims to assess the impact of students' socioeconomic background on their experience at the LSE, focusing on sociocultural and economic barriers to achievement and integration. There is a wealth of literature on the impact of socioeconomic background in pre-university education and on post-university career progression. However, past research on inequality at the LSE has mainly centered on ethnic factors, without a commensurate analysis of the role of socioeconomic factors in the student experience. The purpose of this research project is twofold. Firstly, the research draws on surveys (155 responses) and aims to compare the experience of students from a plethora of different socioeconomic backgrounds. Secondly, the survey is complemented by semi-structured interviews (8) with students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, to build a more in-depth understanding of this group's subjective experiences at the LSE. The findings suggest that perceptions of the quality of teaching and support services at the LSE are similar across different socioeconomic backgrounds. However, students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds appear to be more susceptible to exclusion - i.e. to lie 'on the fringes of LSE society', as one

respondent put it. These students face distinctive challenges in their efforts to integrate socially and academically at the LSE. The findings of the study indicate the need to develop practical institutional solutions to promote a more inclusive environment for LSE students, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

**Keywords:** socio-economic background, LSE, class, inequality, integration, subjective experience of class

### GROUP 3

#### Overcoming educational inequality: An examination of the perceptions of Teach First

12:00 – 12:20

**Jessica Pandian, Rachel Lim Pei Yi, Mohamed Hidayat Al Rahman, Jivan Navani, Puneet Minocha, Yun Zhang**

This paper explores third-party attempts to alleviate educational inequality in London by focusing on the Teach First scheme. To provide a background of the rationale behind Teach First, a review of the existing literature on the relationship between education and poverty was carried out. In addition, visual analysis of the scheme's promotional material as well as in-depth semi-structured interviews with current applicants were conducted. This enables the critical analysis and comparison of the perceptions of the Teach First scheme and the realities experienced by those who have applied and/or have taught with the initiative. Our results suggest that potential teachers in the Teach First scheme perceive it as being conducive to achieving educational equality. However, the largely self-interested and non-altruistic motivations of our participants illustrate the disparity between the aims and reality of Teach First. Moreover, the underlying factors that contribute to educational inequality tend not to be addressed by the scheme due to the multidimensional nature of poverty and inequality. Consequently, this paper suggests that the Teach First scheme needs to be modified in order to align the values of its participants and the organisation.

**Keywords:** educational inequality, London, Teach First, poverty

### GROUP 11

#### Benefit or burden? How Londoners view immigration

12:20 – 12:40

**Grace Natusch, Mriga Chowdhary and Jialu Li**

In this article, we compare the social representations of immigrants in two London boroughs (Hackney and Kensington & Chelsea) differing in income and patterns of immigration. Immigration is currently a salient issue on the public agenda and national discourses on immigration are a prominent area in social science research. However, there is need for more research on the variations of discourse at the local community level. We use the methods of critical discourse analysis (CDA) to uncover what kinds of discursive frames are used in the local media outlets and the popular vernacular in both boroughs. Drawing on qualitative analysis of articles from two local newspapers (*Westminster*, *Kensington and Chelsea Today* and *Hackney Gazette*), we shed light on the variations in the discourse of immigrants and immigration between the two boroughs. We then augmented our findings by conducting semi-structured interviews with people from both boroughs. The social representations found in the popular vernaculars echoed the media discourse in each borough. Our research makes the contribution to

conceptualising the link between demographic properties of communities and the discursive frames on immigration that these communities use.

**Keywords:** immigration, critical discourse analysis (CDA), London, social representation, media

**GROUP 8****Can money buy access? Intersectional analysis of income and disability in London transport**

12:40 – 13:00

**Tong Li, Nathan Gu, Mahnoor Mir, Yash Salunkhe, Selin Esen, Szabolcs Botond Perniczki Bozsing, Tom Breheny**

Mobility impaired individuals typically face lower incomes and restricted access options, hindering socio-economic engagement. Previous studies mainly focused on the contrast between the travel experience of the abled and disabled community. This paper aims to examine whether income divergence results in intra-group differences in travel experiences of the mobility-impaired community in London. Both qualitative and quantitative studies were conducted employing in-depth interviews, surveys and focus groups to explore the travel experiences of individuals with mobility impairments. This paper incorporates the views of the mobility impaired population and experts. The findings demonstrated that high income cannot enable individuals to mitigate transport access issues. In addition, the extent to which the mobility impaired community within London is constrained in their transport access depends on a variety of factors, especially the severity of disabilities. The above factors produce a complex and nuanced picture. This paper complements existing research by assessing the impact of household income on the transport experiences of the mobility-impaired community in London.

**Keywords:** disability, transport, London, access, income

## PART TWO - PEOPLE AND PLACES

### GROUP 6

#### Coming in from the cold: A case study of community engagement in tackling fuel poverty

13:45 – 14:05

**Chenxu Fu, Vitaliy Komar, Rebecca Rose, Usama Shoaib, Lay Sheng Yap**

Despite the government's top-down policies to reduce fuel poverty, the number of households considered fuel poor remains persistently high. This paper aims to assess the potential of local intervention in reducing fuel poverty through community-centred initiatives such as the Winter Warmth and Healthy Home campaigns. These schemes have been put in place within Kensington and Chelsea so that policy trickles down to the fuel poor through community-specific networks. Qualitative data was collected from different stakeholders within the network. This ranged from the use of semi-structured interviews with a host of national and local charitable organisations to surveys with borough residents. Through analyzing the interactions and relationships between stakeholders, the strengths and shortcomings of the networks were identified. Our findings indicate that information dispersed via local organisations is more commonly trusted and acted upon by the fuel poor. The deeper connection between the community and these organisations also allows identification of households vulnerable to fuel poverty; many of whom would have otherwise been missed by government policies. However, we recognize that there are coordination obstacles between national and local groups which create disparities in the support available to the fuel poor in different regions. Overall, a model of community-led initiatives has to be complemented with the strengthening of local networks and national support.

**Keywords:** fuel poverty, community organisations, decentralization, coordination, networks

### GROUP 7

#### Degrees: the key to social mobility? The role of credential inflation in reinforcing inequality through employment

14:05 – 14:25

**Neethi David, Fahmi Farid, Zhaobin Guo, Andrew Ying Han Loh, Hanqing Zeng**

The London Effect has seen increased equalisation of educational qualifications across income and ethnic groups, causing London to be perceived as an extremely socially mobile city. However, evidence shows that equalisation of education has not translated into real social mobility. We hypothesize that credential inflation exists in London. Therefore education is insufficient in ensuring social mobility through employment, proposing a multitude of alternative factors which reinforce inequality in employability. By conducting semi-structured interviews with Londoners and social organisations within two London Boroughs, and through quantitative analysis of the London job market and the qualifications of its workforce, our study confirms our initial hypothesis. To analyse our data, we have coded the interviews according to broad themes, and constructed the *Credential Inflation Index* (CII) as a measure of the level of credential inflation in London and the UK. We find that saturation of higher education and heightened job competition cause qualifications to be worth less when finding a job. This in turn causes social

capital due to family background and soft skills to become more important in the job market, causing household inequality during one's educational years during to become more noteworthy in determining an individual's employability when entering the workforce.

**Keywords:** education, social mobility, job market, inequality, credential inflation

**GROUP 5**

**Hipsters and spikes: mapping gentrification and defensive architecture in Tower Hamlets**

14:25 – 14:45

**Tatiana Pazem, Sofia Lesur Kastelein, Sally Park, Robert Clark, Xinyang Li**

Within the context of London's extensive redevelopment and rising poverty rates, "gentrification", debates around redevelopment and who it should serve have gained widespread attention. Existing literature considers the role of defensive architecture in the context of securitisation of urban space, positing gentrification as a possible driving force behind this phenomenon (Petty, 2016). Gentrification here is understood as the "production of urban space for progressively more affluent users" (Hackworth, 2002). Defensive architecture, such as ground-level metal studs, is an aspect of urban design intended to render public spaces "unusable in certain ways or by certain groups" (Petty, 2016). This paper offers a pioneering attempt to link these two phenomena and contributes new empirical evidence to the debate. This research investigates the relationship between gentrification and defensive architecture. Using ArcGIS, it maps defensive architecture and 'indicators' of gentrification in the borough of Tower Hamlets. It then looks for qualitative causal links using questionnaires to examine its community impact. The research then explores the ownership, usage and perceptions of the social space in which defensive architecture is located, to answer questions about how and why urban design can be used to perpetuate social exclusion. Early-stage analysis indicates some relationship between hostile urban design and gentrified areas, tentatively suggesting wealthier owners of public space seek to discourage its use by less-wealthy individuals.

**Keywords:** defensive architecture, gentrification, social exclusion, mapping

**GROUP 2**

**Displacement and disenchantment: a longitudinal analysis of social housing provision in Earl's Court**

14:45 – 15:05

**Hari Chitnavis, Hanumanth Karri, Helen Broad**

This paper proves that there has been a statistically significant decrease in social housing in Earl's Court over the past 15 years, particularly in relation to the rest of London. Additionally, through qualitative analysis, this study finds considerable evidence of potential future displacement of social housing tenants due to the Earl's Court Regeneration Scheme. We conclude that a reduction in social housing is due to a lack of availability not a lack of need with regards to social housing. Our results are indicative of a mismanaged social housing system, which has led to distrust and social tension between local authorities and community members. Under proposed regeneration schemes, the wait for new "affordable" housing to be completed would force current social housing tenants to leave due to lack of

feasible interval housing. This leads to an increase in people looking toward private rented housing which only further lowers their income after rental payments, causing them to fall further into poverty. Earl's Court is a present day example of such circumstances.

**Keywords:** displacement, housing, Earl's Court, regeneration

**GROUP 1 & 4 Pools, pilates and people: an ethnography of Harrow Leisure Centre**

15:05 – 15:25

**Anqi Chen, Jasmine Chen, Fraser Clark, Yllka Krasniqi**

Social exclusion considers the interaction of certain people and their isolation from the community. It can take into account many factors like age, ethnicity and also health and mobility. This paper aims to use an ethnography of a “typical” leisure centre in order to investigate how the leisure centre serves as pillar in the community and works to alleviate social exclusion, bringing into the community those previously excluded. Harrow is chosen for being a highly ethnically diverse and under researched area, allowing for an original investigation of the interactions of ethnic groups with respect to the issue of social exclusion. We find that how accessible and cohesive a centre is not only affects health outcomes but also plays a wider role in the integration of excluded and often isolated groups. Hence the paper explores the fundamental issues of exclusion, health and isolation of the elderly amongst others.

**Keywords:** ethnography, leisure centre, inequality, social exclusion, community, Harrow



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