



LSE GROUPS 2013

GROUP RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY UNDERGRADUATE PROJECTS

Community

Research Conference

Agenda

10:30 - 11:00	Coffee
11:00 - 11:10	Welcome Dr Jane Pritchard and Dr Claire Gordon Teaching and Learning Centre
11:10 - 11:20	Dean's welcome Dr Peter Howlett, Dean of Undergraduate Studies
11:20 - 11:45	Keynote address Professor Tony Travers, LSE London
11:45 - 13:00	LSE GROUPS presentations
13:00 - 13:30	Lunch
13:30 - 15:15	LSE GROUPS presentations (continued)
15:15 - 15:30	Tea
15:30 - 16:00	Awards Ceremony and closing remarks Dr Jane Pritchard and Dr Claire Gordon Teaching and Learning Centre

Friday 5 July 2013

10.30-16.00

Hong Kong Theatre

The London School
of Economics and
Political Science

GROUP 1

11.45 – 12.00

Hidden communities? What factors influence the perception of squatting within the local community: a case study of Lambeth.**Sam Endacott, Polina Krinichanskaya, Peisi Lun, Chiwei So, Klara Svitakova**

Since the 1960s, squatting has been an identifiable and historically persistent trend within London (Reeve 2011). This is particularly relevant for Lambeth with its rich history of squatting and long-term housing issues (Kearns 1979). While the existing literature views squatting primarily through the legal and economic lens, reviewing it hints at a startling reversal that the perception of squatting has undergone in the past few years. Viewing squatting as playing an integral role in urban planning has transformed into perceiving it as an illegal and harmful activity. The purpose of this paper is to identify this change and the factors that influence perceptions of squatting within a local community. This paper employs a mixed-method approach beginning with a quantitative method that is adopted to measure the statistical significance of factors influencing trends in perception. This is then complemented by in-depth interviews with ex-squatters and residents in Lambeth to enrich possible correlations seen in the data with first-hand accounts that may allow tentative identification of the mechanisms connecting possible causal factors with wider trends. This paper shows a connection between negative perception of squatting and derivation of information from media and a positive correlation between personal experience of housing difficulties and a favourable view of squatting. The data trends, confirmed in in-depth interviews, suggest that these relationships require further inquiry to see how more informed views on squatting could redefine the debate on rising housing shortages under conditions of austerity.

Keywords: squatting, perception, Lambeth, hidden community.

GROUP 2

12.00 – 12.15

Floating bohemians? A comparative study of houseboat community dynamics in London.**Tianran Cheng, Robert Honeyman, Daniel Sippel, Anna Steiner Fan Wu**

Sense of community is well-theorised and investigated in the literature (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Francis et al., 2012) however its application to houseboat communities is little understood. Using a refined Sense of Community Index (SCI), this paper looks at the dynamics of three communities of static houseboats in London – Nine Elms Pier, Battle Bridge and Cheyne Walk, Chelsea – whilst also considering the “continuous cruisers” houseboat owners of Regents Canal. Surveying 46 residents, this study offers a comparative analysis of the differing composition and SCI of the four locations. We used in-depth interviews i.e. informal conversations and standardised open-ended interviews of groups and individuals as research method. This paper shows significant differences in community composition, such as income-levels, socio-demographics and permanency of residency. However in comparison with the permanent houseboats the “continuous cruisers” have the lowest SCI. The results show that all the locations studied can be considered to have relatively high senses of community. Yet given the heterogeneity of the peoples inhabiting such locations and the apparent strong sense of community exhibited, our paper has implications for alternative housing options in London, and more generally for composition of cohesive communities.

Keywords: Community, Sense of Community Index (SCI), Houseboats, Community composition.

GROUP 3

Evaluating the effectiveness of The Big Issue in combatting social exclusion amongst homeless people in London.

12.15 – 12.30

Muriel Levy, Jonathan Koh, Nabilah Karim, Kullanit Nitiwarangkul, Vincent Harrold

Homelessness is a pervasive and troubling issue for the United Kingdom. The scope of the issue is broad and this paper specifically examines rough sleeping in central London, a recognised problem area. Policy responses and evaluations appear to focus predominantly on alleviating homelessness through resource-provision. However, existing literature highlights the importance of non-material issues relating to homelessness such as social marginalization. This paper, therefore, adds to existing research by focussing on how social exclusion can be mitigated amongst rough-sleepers. This is done with a focus on the Big Issue Foundation, an organization aimed at re-integrating the homeless with mainstream society through the sale of 'street newspapers' by homeless vendors. The paper provides a definition of social exclusion that allows the concept to be investigated along four axes – consumption, production, social and political engagement. Surveys were constructed in order to target measurements along these axes of exclusion and carried out amongst both Big Issue vendors and the general public. Preliminary results indicate the greatest impacts of The Big Issue in promoting social engagement in both groups. However, most vendors see The Big Issue as only a step towards more independent living and political disengagement remains entrenched in the group.

Keywords: Homelessness, rough-sleeping, social exclusion, re-integration.

GROUP 4

Assessing the relationship between Londoners' level of attachment to their ethnicity, and their willingness to interact with other ethnicities.

12.30 – 12.45

Tim Delany, Matthew Pennill, Alena Cierna, Shivangi Jain, Ngoc Vu Bao Ta, Ji Hyun Park

Past years have seen researchers focusing more on the concepts of ethnic attachment and inter-ethnic interaction. However, little attention has been given to the link between these two ideas and there is scope for further research in London, given that it is one of the most ethnically diverse cities in Europe. This paper attempts to complement the existing literature by examining the relationship between the strength of one's attachment to an ethnic group and one's willingness to interact with people of other ethnicities. It is proposed that higher levels of attachment to an ethnic group lead to lower willingness to interact with other ethnicities. The study applies a quantitative method using a survey conducted in the London boroughs of Newham, Southwark and Islington on a total of 145 respondents. Although only at a weak significance level, the analysis of survey responses supports the hypothesis. The paper, therefore, provides an incentive for a more thorough examination of the hypothesis and opens up new avenues of research that can further explore the ways in which ethnic groups interact.

Keywords: ethnic attachment, interaction, ethnicity, London.

GROUP 5

12.45 – 13.00

Interdisciplinary research at LSE: holy grail or fool's gold?

Vesselina Naskinova, Olga Naprasnikova, Jonathan J. Levy, Emmeline Kerkvliet

This study provides quantitative analysis regarding the extent to which the academic departments at LSE undertake interdisciplinary collaboration. This paper has sought to challenge the underlying assumption, of numerous top-level research universities, that inter-disciplinary work should constitute a central aim of any research institution in response to the departmentalisation of universities and the onslaught of over-specialisation in the twentieth century. Using journal papers, published by LSE academics in 2008, as an indicator for academic output, the study outlines (i) an assessment of the relative quantities of academic output of interdepartmental collaborative versus non-collaborative work and monodisciplinary collaborative, at the LSE, (ii) the quality of interdisciplinary collaborative work compared to individually published and monodisciplinary collaborative work and (iii) an assessment of inter-departmental interaction at the LSE. This analysis has occurred through assessing the journals' qualities regarding number of downloads' and citations' of said journals, the authors and their relevant departments. This paper evidences the trend that there are larger amounts of collaborative work than non-collaborative work. Having assessed the upholding of interdisciplinary works by universities, this paper posits that further investigation should be undertaken to assess factors improving the quality of such activity while stating that LSE policy should continue to uphold interdisciplinary research.

Keywords: *interdisciplinary, quantitative, research.*

GROUP 6

13.30 – 13.45

What are the factors that influence students' sense of community in LSE university halls?

Alfred Yingtao Wong, Habiba Patel, Xueyu He, Geetangli Marway, Jim Shen, Jiarui Piao

This study aimed to investigate the factors which affect sense of community in residential halls for students of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), focusing on whether students prefer spending time with others of the same nationality or other nationalities, level of petty crime and nuisances, and participation rate in hall social activities. Data collection consisted of a survey to determine resident details and sense of community. A 16-item index measuring sense of community in university halls was developed based on existing literature and ethnographic data. The subjects were current and previous residents of LSE halls. It was hypothesised that sense of community would be positively correlated with resident nationality preferences, lower crime rates, and participation rates in hall social activities. Using Principal Component Analysis and multiple linear regression, the index of sense of community was calculated, and related to the three factors studied.

Keywords: *sense of community, LSE halls, nationality, petty crime.*

GROUP 7

To what extent is there a community at the LSE?

13.45 – 14.00

Muhammad Rooshan Aziz, Susan Brett, Punneet Grewal, Abhishek Sekhar, Reem Yassin, Yuhui Zheng

The LSE harbours a unique environment with its diverse student body, specialist academic focus, and its campus structure within the city. This paper aims to answer where and in what ways a sense of community exists at the LSE. We use a survey of 115 students from all levels of study at the LSE, alongside national data and interviews with members of the student body, academic and administrative staff and the Student Union. We aim to identify fundamental aspects of community and how they manifest themselves in LSE. We find that whilst separate sub-communities exist at the LSE – for example between halls, nationalities and societies – students do not feel there is one overarching community that unifies them. Our paper suggests this is due to a lack of coexistence between trade, sense of belonging and trust, which are core elements that define community. Additionally, we propose that this is amplified by a strong focus on future career prospects, the composition of the student body and an inadequate induction process.

Keywords: *Community, student satisfaction, sub-communities, sense of belonging.*

GROUP 8

A Community Currency? A study of the social and economic impact of the Brixton Pound

14.00 – 14.15

Jisoo Yoo, Aleeza Asghar, Hoa Phuong Doan, Yae Jung Joo, Jasmine Holland

Community currencies attempt to confront economic challenges by ensuring that wealth and resources are maintained within a region. Local currencies such as the Totnes, Lewes and Stroud Pounds have been introduced in the UK for such purposes. The Brixton Pound was introduced in 2009 in response to the 2008 recession. It sought to cultivate economic sustainability by encouraging more local consumption and thereby limiting the 'leakage' of money from the local economy. It also aimed to promote its national and international profile through raising awareness. This study examines the social and economic impacts of the Brixton Pound on the local community by analysing economic data as well as inspecting its successes and limitations as a functional currency through surveys and interviews. In our conclusion we demonstrate that a lack of publicity of the scheme has prevented the Brixton Pound from having a substantial economic impact on the local community; however, in combination with its unique history it has helped to enhance Brixton's distinctive sense of community.

Keywords: *community currency, Brixton Pound, social and economic impact.*

GROUP 9

14.15 – 14.30

Mobile Phones among London Students: Do the applications on your device reflect your community?

Edward Soper, Sharafath Khandoker, Ziheng Wang, Dong Yang, Luxmi Kiran

Mobile phones are an integral part of our daily lives, becoming increasingly versatile and facilitating a broad range of social interaction (Katz and Ackhous 2002). Existing academic literature contains a limited number of studies on mobile phones and their social impact (Geser 2004) and fewer if any focus on the relative importance of applications. To explore this idea further, we formulated the research question: “Mobile Phones among London Students: Do the applications on your device reflect your community?” and subsequently developed three hypotheses based on gender, level of study and ethnicity. Data from our survey of London students (n=88) allowed us to assess whether the type and number of applications reinforced our hypotheses or, to the contrary, revealed that applications were unrelated to community. Our research could potentially be used to assist in the development of future learning methods, centred around mobile technology, at higher education institutions.

Keywords: *Mobile Phone Applications, Gender, Ethnicity, Students.*

GROUP 10

14.30 – 14.45

The Impact of Social Networks: Moving On from Homelessness

Shan Yi Bong, Rachel Gregory, Dominic Hung, Jiahui Ren

Social networks are defined as inter-agent relationships (Vega-Redondo 2007). According to Dynamic Network Theory, such networks shape and influence goal pursuit (Westaby 2010). Social networks amongst homeless communities have received little attention in previous literature. Thus, this paper examines the impacts and changing nature of social networks on the reintegration process. Reintegration here is understood as the process of moving to independent living and forming relationships with those outside the homeless community. Semi-structured interviews with residents and staff at a hostel in Central London, show that types and perceptions of social networks amongst homeless people are extremely heterogeneous. There is widespread reluctance to form social networks with other homeless people, and recognition of how social networks with non-homeless people can be used instrumentally. Where strong social networks do exist, they are particularly harmful when they involve drug or alcohol abuse. During the process of reintegration, connection with these networks is lost or weakened, either voluntarily or as a consequential result. Although not their first priority, most respondents are looking forward to, and have little concerns about the prospect of making new relationships in the future with those who had not experienced homelessness.

Keywords: *Homelessness, social networks, dynamic network theory, reintegration.*

GROUP 11

14.45 – 15.00

Factors Affecting PhD Student's Sense of Community at LSE

Matteo Brunelli, Gladin Jose, Kaisa Lahtinen, Pauline Mazurier Nolin, Felicity Parsons, Jayna Patel

This paper measures PhD students' feelings of attachment to the wider LSE Community, defined in Academic, Cultural, Social, and Teaching terms. In order to quantify and analyze the existence of this community, we conducted a survey [online and in paper form] with 94 participants and 2 in-depth semi-structured interviews. We then used the survey data to create a Sense of Community Index (SCI) that takes into account the main ways PhD students participate in the LSE community. This index is then compared to the main factors of identity formation (ethnicity, nationality, religion, political affiliation). Content analysis of 2 in-depth interviews is then used to provide greater insight into the previously identified feeling of belonging. We have found a statistically-significant correlation between nationalities, as well as between different academic departments, with sense of integration in the wider LSE community. Therefore, our research seeks to inform the school's actions toward PhD students.

Keywords: *LSE Community, PhD Students, Departments, Identity.*

GROUP 12

15.00 – 15.15

Financial and Social Effects of Rising Accommodation Costs on the LSE Student Community

Mackenzie Endress, Tanieka Kargwal, Melissa Luki Andreany, Bobak Saadat

Students in London face the most expensive living costs in the UK with a significant part of their budgets allocated for paying accommodation fees. Thus, the increasing rents of student housing calls for research into the extent of the financial strain imposed on students and the resulting social consequences. In this paper, the rising costs of student housing in London are discussed in relation to their social and financial effects on LSE students. Despite evidence of increasing rents in London, there have been few studies on the resulting consequences. A survey of approximately 100 LSE students was carried out via online and paper questionnaires supplemented by a pair of follow-up interviews. The survey results are presented as descriptive statistics and are contextualized with qualitative information obtained from the interviews. The findings show that students are price sensitive to the changing costs of accommodation, adjusting their budgets for higher rents, selecting housing further away from LSE, and considering transferring to universities outside of London. Furthermore, our interviews suggest that students from low-income backgrounds are often required to work since they have limited parental allowances. Policymakers should continue monitoring the market as rising rents have the potential to deter future students.

Keywords: *Housing market, LSE, Student.*

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