The Department of Methodology is an internationally recognised centre of excellence in research and teaching in the area of social science research methodology. The disciplinary backgrounds of the staff include political science, statistics, sociology, social psychology, anthropology and criminology. The Department coordinates and provides a focus for methodological activities at the School, in particular in the areas of graduate student (and staff) training and of methodological research.

The Department is an interdisciplinary group and its primary role is to facilitate collaboration between departments and to provide courses where appropriate. The Department provides methods training to students from across the School. The Department is central to the LSE’s Doctoral Training Partnership scheme.

The Department offers its own MSc and PhD programmes and also provides advanced level courses in methodology for students across the School, in the form of seminars and workshops in research design, quantitative analysis and qualitative methods (see page 4 for further information). Many other departments in the School require students to take Department of Methodology courses as part of their MSc and PhD programme.

The Department of Methodology’s latest frontier is in data science. MSc in Applied Social Data Science trains and provides students with core skills in data manipulation and analysis, computer programming, and research design for applications in data science, preparing them for a variety of careers in the private, non-profit and public sectors.
Academic staff

**FRIEDRICH GEICKE**  
Assistant Professor  
Key research interests: Reinforcement learning, natural language processing, statistical machine learning, deep learning, macroeconomic fluctuations, innovation, political economy, computational economics.

**DAVID HENDRY**  
Assistant Professor in Research Methodology  
Key research interests: laboratory, survey and field experiments; social networks; social pressure; cultural evolution; racial and ethnic politics; survey design; event history analysis.

**JONATHAN JACKSON**  
Professor in Research Methodology, Head of Methodology Department  
Key research interests: criminology, legitimacy, trust, punishment, measurement.

**ALASDAIR JONES**  
Associate Professor in Research Methodology  
Key research interests: public space; built environment; behaviour relationships; urban mobility; socio-spatial networks; sustainable living practices; ethnographic methods; qualitative methods in evaluation.

**ELEANOR KNOTT**  
Assistant Professor in Qualitative Methodology  
Key research interests: identity and citizenship; politics of ethnicity and nationalism; post-Soviet politics (Crimea, Ukraine, Russia, Romania and Moldova); comparative methods.

**JOUNI KUHA**  
Professor of Social Statistics  
Key research interests: statistics for the social sciences; measurement error; misclassification and missing data; latent variable modeling; analysis of categorical data; analysis of survey data.

**MARTIN LUKAC**  
LSE Fellow  
Key research interests: computational social science; network analysis; latent variable modelling; agent-based modelling; survey methodology; economic sociology.

**SONJA MARZI**  
LSE Fellow in Qualitative Methodology  
Key research interests: gender and insecurity in urban space; socio-spatial mobility and inequality; gendered right to the city; urban youth; co-production and participatory methodologies; remote participatory methods using smartphones.

**BLAKE MILLER**  
Assistant Professor of Computational Social Science  
Key research interests: text as data methods; machine learning; substantive: Chinese politics; information control; comparative political behaviour; psychological computing; conflict and political violence.

**ELEANOR POWER**  
Assistant Professor  
Key research interests: social network analysis; ethnography; religion; South Asia; signalling theory; social capital; inequality.

**INDRANEEL SIRCAR**  
Course Tutor  
Key research interests: comparative politics; Europeanization; EU enlargement; environmental governance; rule of law; western Balkans; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Serbia.

**PATRICK STURGIS**  
Professor of Quantitative Social Science  
Key research interests: research design; survey methodology; psychology of measurement; structural equation models; longitudinal data analysis; comparative surveys; public opinion and political behaviour; social mobility.

**KATE SUMMERS**  
LSE Fellow in Qualitative Methodology  
Key research interests: economic advantage and disadvantage, economic inequality, working age social security policy; welfare reform; sociology of money; in-depth interviewing; focus groups; participatory and deliberative approaches.

**RUXANDRA SERBAN**  
Assistant Professor in Research Methodology  
Key research interests: legislative studies; comparative politics; UK politics; qualitative text analysis; comparative research design; concepts in social science.

**CHANIA TEEGER**  
Assistant Professor in Qualitative Research Methodology  
Key research interests: inequality; race; education; collective memory; culture; transitional justice; elites; research design; in-depth interviewing; ethnography.

**ALIYA RAO**  
Assistant Professor  
Key research interests: work and occupations; gender; family; emotions; economic sociology; social psychology; qualitative research methods.

**EDWARD ADEMOLU**  
LSE Fellow in Qualitative Research Methodology  
Key research interests: Qualitative Research and Methods; Diaspora; Identities; International Development; Postcolonial Discourse.

**MILENA TSVETKOVA**  
Assistant Professor of Computational Social Science  
Key research interests: computational social science; online experiments; network analysis; cooperation; social contagion, inequality.

**ELLEN WATTS**  
LSE Fellow in Qualitative Methodology  
Key research interests: political communication; popular culture; qualitative text analysis; media research and ethics.
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Methods training and support

The Department of Methodology offers workshops under MY530 and MY560 on a variety of specific, advanced topics in qualitative and quantitative research methods, open to all postgraduate students. These workshops run separately from the usual timetabled seminars. If you wish to attend these workshops, sign up via the LSE’s Training and Development System (apps.lse.ac.uk/training-system). The link to do so will go live two weeks before the workshop is scheduled. MY530 and MY560 workshops are usually held in the PhD Academy over the course of a single day consisting of a two-hour lecture in the morning followed by a two-hour practical session in the afternoon. These courses are non-examinable.

Workshops usually take place towards the end of Michaelmas Term and mostly during Lent Term, with the schedules available from the MY530 and MY560 Moodle pages. Each workshop is self-contained and may be attended independently.

A small number of places on MY530 and MY560 are reserved for external visitors at the cost of £30 per place. Interested parties should email methodology.admin@lse.ac.uk for further information.

The 2020/21 format is currently under review.

Workshops in Advanced Qualitative Research (MY530)

These workshops address advanced problems in qualitative social research. The programme will (a) bring together software developers and researchers, (b) will present examples of researchers who put computer tools to creative use and (c) provide a forum for discussing key papers in qualitative research. The workshop will be a forum for open discussion on philosophical and technical issues that arise in qualitative research practice.

This programme consists of workshop modules at PhD level, offered by research active experts from LSE. Each module focuses on one particular technique or issue for qualitative research. Students are welcome to raise issues or questions from their own research for discussion.

Topics covered usually include: In-depth Interviewing, Thematic Analysis, Discourse Analysis, Research Ethics, Focus Groups, Small-n Case Studies and Comparative Analysis, and Participant Observation.
Workshops in Advanced Quantitative Analysis (MY560)

MY560 is a series of workshops on advanced topics in quantitative research methodology. These workshops assume a background in quantitative methods at least covering basic statistics, linear and logistic regression. While many of the workshops are part of a series on related topics, each workshop is self-contained, and can be attended without attending prior workshops.

Topics covered usually include: Agent Based Modelling, SQL and Large-scale Online Databases, Matching Methods for Causal Inference, Statistical Analysis with Missing Data, and Collecting and Analysing Ego Network Data.

Methods Surgery

The 2020/21 format is currently under review. In previous academic years, the Department of Methodology has offered a walk-in ‘methods surgery’ weekly during term-time on Thursdays 10am–12pm in the PhD Academy on the 4th floor of the Lionel Robbins Building. Staff and postgraduate students can drop in for advice on methods related problems they may have.

Two members of staff, one with a background in quantitative methods and the other in qualitative methods, are present at each session to help with a range of methodological problems. Please note that entrance is only via the Portugal Street side of the building. The PhD Academy cannot be accessed via the LSE Library.

MSc in Social Research Methods

Central to the Department’s activities is the MSc Social Research Methods, which provides advanced training in core social research methods skills, while simultaneously providing students with the opportunity to develop sophistication in research design and quantitative and qualitative research while maintaining a focus in a social scientific discipline. Students will acquire skills of “practical scholarship” and the ability to design, conduct, analyze and report a social research project.

This programme draws on the range of expertise available within the Department, as well as related academic departments, in order to provide an advanced training in social research methodologies, combined with a focus on substantive social science disciplinary interests. The syllabus for the MSc goes beyond the ESRC’s requirements for the first year of a 1+3 PhD programme, and it is designed as a training for doctoral research and as a preprofessional training for careers in social research in the public and private sectors.

MSc in Applied Social Data Science

The MSc in Applied Social Data Science provides training in data science with an emphasis on real-world applications to social, economic, and political fields. With the rise of new and big forms of data, and computation and analytics forming ever-increasingly important elements of a wide range of professions. This multi-disciplinary programme provides students with core skills in data manipulation and analysis, computer programming, and research design for applications in data science, preparing them for a variety of careers in the private, non-profit and public sectors.

Students on the MSc programme in Applied Social Data Science take a series of data, programming, and applied quantitative methods courses. They learn to use a variety of programming languages and applications, to create and manipulate large databases, and to think creatively about how to deploy these skills in the context of specific projects. This programme shares core courses with the MSc in Data Science (Department of Statistics), but differs in that its focus is more applied and is specifically designed for students without a formal computing or statistical background.

Students also have the opportunity to choose substantive electives, allowing them to tailor the programme to their particular interests. The programme culminates in a Capstone project where students creatively apply the technical skills learned to a project of their own design.

Methods courses for auditing

Students from across the School may audit a variety of methodology courses with permission. Please visit our Auditing webpage at lse.ac.uk/Methodology/auditing to learn about the courses available, and to complete an application form prior to attending courses.

Top tip: If you need methods advice for your dissertation, please ensure you plan this well in advance in the academic year, as the Methods Surgery is available in term time only.

MSc and PhD programmes

Top tip: If you need methods advice for your dissertation, please ensure you plan this well in advance in the academic year, as the Methods Surgery is available in term time only.
PhD in Social Research Methods

The Department of Methodology welcomes applications to its PhD programme from students with proposals in qualitative and quantitative research, as well as interesting ways of combining them. Candidates should demonstrate a potential for methodological innovation as well as a firm grounding in a substantive area of research. This could involve collecting innovative new data, new analytic techniques, method comparison, evaluation or validation, method critique, applying existing methodology in new contexts, or cost-benefit analysis of methodologies. At the end of the first year, students produce a 10,000 word research proposal, outlining the theoretical and conceptual framework, the aims and methods of the thesis, and defend this proposal before a committee. In second through to the fourth year, students spend more time on independent study under the guidance of a supervisor. This will involve the collection, organisation and analysis of data, and writing up the results. PhD students also contribute to research seminars by presenting papers and joining in the discussions.

Department seminars

The Department of Methodology holds five seminars per term on Thursday afternoons during Michaelmas and Lent Terms. A sandwich lunch is provided. These are open to everyone (including members of the public) and places are given on a strictly first-come, first-served basis.

Where the speaker permits, seminars are recorded for a downloadable podcast. The 2020/21 format is currently under review.

A sample of previous seminar series titles from 2019/20 includes:

How the Financial Times uses data visualisation to find and tell stories
Speaker: DJohn Burn-Murdoch, Senior Data Visualisation journalist, Financial Times

When form leads to function: social network closure, social identity threat, and performance among women entrepreneurs
Speaker: Dr Raina Brands, Assistant Professor in Organisational Behaviour, London Business School

Deliberating Inequality: using focus groups to study the social formation of beliefs about economic inequality
Speaker: Dr Kate Summers, Fellow in Qualitative Methodology and Associate of the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE), London School of Economics

If you wish to be kept updated with the details of forthcoming seminars, please e-mail methodology.admin@lse.ac.uk with a request to be added to the seminar series mailing list.

Data science seminars

Through the newly created Data Science Institute (DSI), the department co-sponsors seminars in applications and methods of data science. Part of an interdisciplinary new institute founded in 2020, and directed by the Department of Methodology’s Professor Kenneth Benoit, the DSI brings together scholarship and partnerships in data science with the LSE’s unique perspective and experience on problems of the social, economic, and political world. The DSI seminar series in data science will include speakers from around the world on a variety of data science topics focusing on social, economic, political, computational, and statistical applications.

For further information on DSI and its events, please see lse.ac.uk/dsi or email dsi.admin@lse.ac.uk to request to be added to the Data Science seminars mailing list. You can also follow the DSI on Twitter @DSI_LSE.

A sample of previous seminar series titles from 2019/20 includes:

Matching with text data: An experimental evaluation of methods for matching documents and of measuring match quality
Speaker: Aaron R. Kaufman, PhD Candidate, Harvard University

Peer influence and the spreading of music at Spotify
Speaker: Dr Marc Kueschnigg, Associate Professor/Deputy Director, Institute for Analytical Sociology, Linköping University

Living with intelligent machines
Speaker: Dr Nello Cristianini, Professor of Artificial Intelligence, University of Bristol

Exposure to opposing views on social media can increase political polarisation
Speaker: Chris Bell, Professor of Sociology and Public Policy, Duke University

Pursuing the UN data revolution for sustainable development
Speaker: Dr Viktoria Spaiser, University Academic Fellow in Political Science Informatics, University of Leeds

Personalised dynamic pricing with machine learning
Speaker: Dr Gah-Yi Ban, Assistant Professor of Management Science and Operations, London Business School

Automated text analysis to detect rare social problems
Speaker: Leke de Vries, PhD Candidate and National Institute of Justice Graduate Research Fellow, Northeastern University

Tourism and terrorism: The impact of news reporting
Speaker: Professor Sir Tim Beasley, Department of Economics, LSE
Big data is transforming almost every aspect of science, engineering, geography, and medicine, from mapping genomes to exploring galaxies. In the study of human affairs, there is an emerging ‘data society’, in which increasingly comprehensive aspects of human behaviour and the economy are quantified through data.

Data science is a discipline concerned with the processes and systems required for extracting knowledge and insight from datasets, which are then translated into meaningful action. This data can come in many forms: it can be structured or unstructured, and its scope and scale can vary dramatically. The theoretical foundations of data science often lie at the intersection between statistics, mathematics and computer science. In an increasingly data-driven age, governments, organisations and researchers are questioning how to harness the good that can come from responsible use of data while at the same time minimising inherent risks to individuals, groups, and society at large.

By leveraging its position as a world leader in social science research, LSE aims to develop the necessary tools for analysing large datasets and to answer questions regarding how organisations can make well-informed data-driven decisions.

Through the launch of its new Data Science Institute in 2020-2021, the LSE will consolidate its emerging focus on data science and its application to the study of human behaviour and institutions, leveraging computational social science and the study of big data to produce new insights into the study of the social, economic, and political worlds for which the LSE is world-renowned.

With the launch of the Department of Methodology’s MSc in Applied Social Data Science programme, the department is at the forefront of equipping students with the knowledge and skills to work in this industry. A number of Methodology’s faculty specialise in data science, have expertise in computational methods, natural language processing, the analysis of social networks, social media and machine learning, and are taking take this initiative forward.

For further information on DSI and its events, please see lse.ac.uk/dsi or email dsi.admin@lse.ac.uk to request to be added to the Data Science seminars mailing list. You can also follow DSI on Twitter @DSI_LSE.

Methodology staff carry out research in a number of disciplines. Below are some examples of the current qualitative and quantitative research in the Department.

### Community-led recovery after the Grenfell Tower fire

How can a community produce positive change as part of its post-disaster recovery? And can university-community collaborations contribute to empowering locally-owned recovery stories?

The Grenfell Tower fire, in June 2017, devastated a West London community. It is widely accepted that community groups and individuals took leadership of the response to help their neighbours in the first hours, days, and months of uncertainty as the state assessed matters, apologised, set up processes, progressively lost local legitimacy, preserved core functions and insulated itself from damage. The ramifications of that situation are still unfolding. Using a model of community-engaged research, Flora Cornish is currently researching community-authority relations in the aftermath of the disaster through a 2-year ethnography and interview study, and an experiment in ‘public social history’, working collaboratively to produce locally-authored stories of recovery. Grounded in respect for the community’s role in producing its own recovery, the project aims to contribute to understandings of community resilience for future disaster responders, and to academic understandings of mechanisms of social change and stasis.

The project has begun as a knowledge-exchange project, marshalling materials with which to build accounts of the process of recovery from different points of view, collaborating with community members on their own stories of recovery, as a foundation for developing academic versions. The project also enables knowledge exchange between professionals and policy-makers in the interesting of improving the environment for community-led disaster response and recovery. It is funded by an LSE Knowledge Exchange and Impact grant.

Qualitative research allows us to investigate grassroots, frontline, and ‘ordinary’ experiences and practices, often revealing how those realities differ from the official, formal, or idealised versions that get a lot of airtime. We study how significant changes take place and fail, and how they are understood, contested, neglected or tackled, in the interest of positive social change.

Flora Cornish is a community psychologist investigating the role of grassroots mobilisation in improving public health, both through local-level community responses to health crises, and through wider organisational, coalition-building and campaigning. She aims to do research that has transformative potential, with an interest in democratising knowledge, using qualitative methods, community collaborations, and theoretical resources that resonate with health promoting struggles. Flora received her PhD in Social Psychology from LSE in 2004.
SONJA MARZI
Sonja is a Fellow in Qualitative Methodology in the Department of Methodology. She received her PhD from the School of International Development at the University of East Anglia in 2016. Sonja’s research is interdisciplinary and focuses on urban issues in Latin America cutting across the fields of International Development, Urban Geography and Sociology. Sonja is particularly interested in socio-spatial mobility within urban space and place. Her current and recent research asks questions of how the neighbourhood, a sense of place, issues of societal insecurity, the built environment and urban development interrelate with women’s and young people’s aspirations and social mobility opportunities. Prior to joining the LSE, Sonja was a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Leeds.

Migrant women in Medellin and their right to the city
This research explores how migrant women in Medellin, especially mothers and heads of household, negotiate their ‘right to the city’. Through an analytical lens of place-making, Dr Sonja Marzi is exploring migrant women’s right to the city with a special focus on their everyday socio-spatial mobility, their access to public goods and resources, and how they manage the challenges of their private and economic lives. This research examines important new insights about migrant women’s needs in relation to the use of urban space and will provide vital information for future urban development to contribute to the knowledge creation for more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable cities. This project uses a participatory action research approach that combines traditional qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups with participatory methods. The participatory methods include visual methods such as mapping, video and photography as well as participatory workshops. A special focus is on the inclusion of migrant women as co-researchers, which includes them to a high extent in the collection, analysis and dissemination of the project data and findings. This research is funded by the Fritz-Thyssen Foundation, Germany.

Quanteda: quantitative analysis of textual data
Quanteda is an R package for managing and analyzing textual data developed by Ken Benoit and other contributors. It was supported by the European Research Council Grant QUANTESS. The package is designed for R users needing to apply natural language processing to texts, from documents to final analysis. Its capabilities match or exceed those provided in many end-user software applications, many of which are expensive and not open source. The package is therefore of great benefit to researchers, students, and other analysts with fewer financial resources. While using quanteda requires R programming knowledge, its application programming interface is designed to enable powerful, efficient analysis with a minimum of steps. By emphasizing consistent design, furthermore, quanteda lowers the barriers to learning and using natural language processing and quantitative text analysis even for proficient R programmers.

Social data science involves the application of scientific analysis to data from the social, economic, and political world, especially big data, using statistical and computational tools such as machine learning. Our focus is not just on teaching the methods for doing this, but also in a thorough grounding of the social scientific approaches to the research questions we can use such tools to answer.

Kenneth Benoit

Ken Benoit is a Professor of Computational Social Science in the Department of Methodology. Ken’s research focuses on automated, quantitative methods of processing large amounts of textual and other forms of big data – mainly political texts and social media – and the methodology of text mining. He is the creator and co-author of several popular R packages for text analysis, including quanteda, spacyr, and readtext. He has published extensively on applications of measurement and the analysis of text as data in political science, including machine learning methods and text coding through crowd-sourcing, an approach that combines statistical scaling with the qualitative power of thousands of human coders working in tandem on small coding tasks. He received his PhD in Government with a specialisation in statistical methodology from Harvard University.
One of the best things about the Methodology Department is that it fuels the LSE’s dedication to robust and innovative research methods. No matter what you’re interested in studying, our department has expert researchers who can help you figure out the best methods. Don’t be shy to seek out insight from all over the department.

Denise Baron, PhD in Social Research Methods student

Police in schools: a national police youth engagement project

Police officers have been involved in delivering personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) lessons in some of the schools and regions of England on topics such as drugs, or online safety education. But it is unknown what impact this has on the students’ knowledge and perception of the issues, the police, and the justice system in general.

This project is a clustered-block-randomized controlled trial to estimate the causal effect of having a police officer giving a lesson on drugs and policing, compared to either a teacher delivering the same content, or there being no lesson at all. Jon and Chris also assess whether having an officer in the classroom talk about the harm of drugs and the realities of policing is an important moment of legal socialization among young people, particularly because the officer is meeting them in their space to present sessions designed to engage and encourage discussion. To estimate the causal effect at both the individual and aggregate level, Jon and Chris use a clustered-block-randomized design and a three-wave panel with children from hundreds of schools across England. Their robust design permits multiple ways of analysing the data, to answer this question, including the assessment of matched school trios, multilevel modelling, spillover-effects, and many others.

From coercion to consent: social identity, legitimacy and a process model of police procedural justice

The concept of legitimacy lies at the heart of democratic policing — police must seek and maintain public support by acting impartially, using coercion proportionately and persuading the citizenry that they are an institution that is entitled to be obeyed. But there are multiple highly marginalised communities for whom perceptions of police illegitimacy, non-compliance, conflict, criminality and experiences of police coercion are the norm.

In this three-year project (that started in the late 2018) Jon and Chris focus on fairness, legitimacy, identification between police and public, and normative compliance. They run a series of laboratory experiments utilising virtual reality simulations of police-citizen encounters to, among other things, systematically examine the role of social identity in perceptions of police fairness and legitimacy, and test causal effects of manipulating the procedural fairness or unfairness of the officer. Using actors, a producer and a director Jon and Chris film (using a 360 degree camera) a variety of different versions of police-citizen encounters; use a Los Angeles-based company to turn the recordings into VR; and take VR headsets out into schools in relatively deprived areas across the country to run experiments. They also undertake a parallel programme of ethnographic research to gather direct observation and other empirical evidence on the policing of marginalised communities, defined as groups where relations with police are problematic and policing issues are either controversial and/or regularly linked with conflict and/or accusations of illegitimacy.
The emergence of inequality in social groups

From small organisations to entire nations and society at large, socioeconomic inequality is one of the most significant problems facing the world today. Funded by the Volkswagen Foundation, this four-year project will approach the problem of inequality from a new perspective and with new computational social science methods. An interdisciplinary team of sociologists, computer scientists, and physicists will develop and conduct large-scale controlled experiments online. This method will allow the construction of “artificial societies” comprising dozens of individuals who interact over days or weeks. Manipulating the structure of these multiple parallel worlds will help identify the structural conditions that give rise to inequality and inform policy and managerial interventions that reduce it.

MILENA TSVETKOVA

Milena Tsvetkova is an Assistant Professor of Computational Social Science. Milena’s research interests lie in the fields of computational and experimental social science. She employs online experiments, network analysis, and agent-based models to study fundamental social phenomena such as cooperation, contagion, segregation, and inequality. Milena’s current work investigates the structural conditions under which inequality emerges and worsens when individuals interact in large social groups. She is collaborating with computer scientists to combine gamification and citizen science and develop new methods for large-scale social interaction experiments online. She received her PhD in Sociology from Cornell University.

JON JACKSON AND CHRIS PÓSCH

Jon is a Professor in Research Methodology and the Head of the Department of Methodology.

Working at the intersection of psychology and law, his research focuses on procedural justice (the importance of fair process in interactions between power-holders and subordinates) and legitimacy (perceptions of the right to power) in the context of the criminal justice system. He is interested in clarifying the meaning and measurement of both concepts; understanding the causal mechanisms that transmit the effects of procedural justice and legitimacy on various behavioural and attitudinal outcomes; testing how well procedural justice theory travels across diverse social, political and legal contexts using methodologically equivalent research designs; and examining the importance of ‘bounded authority’, i.e. respecting the limits of one’s rightful authority. Jon received his PhD in Social Research Methods from LSE.

Chris is a Visiting Fellow in the Department of Methodology.

Chris’s research interests lie in the fields of quantitative methodology, policing, and justice perception. In particular, his research concerns the public perception of the police, especially procedural justice policing, police legitimacy, and their impact on socially desirable outcomes (such as cooperation with the police, legal compliance, etc.). He uses advanced quantitative methods to address questions regarding policing, especially causal inference techniques, such as matching and causal mediation analysis. Chris earned his PhD in research methods and statistics at LSE in 2018.