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About the Department of Methodology

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 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 5 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.
METHODOLOGY

Academic staff

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

AUDREY ALEJANDRO
Assistant Professor of Qualitative Text Analysis
Key research interests: Discourse analysis; International Relations; politics of knowledge; sociology of science, reflexivity, language, climate discourses, participatory methods.

KENNETH BENOIT
Professor of Computational Social Science
(on secondment to the Data Science Institute during the whole of 2021/22)
Key research interests: quantitative text analysis and natural language processing; computational social science; comparative party competition; statistical methodologies for the social sciences.

SIAN BROOKE
LSE Fellow in Computational Social Science
Key research interests: technology cultures, online communities, identity politics, anonymity, inequality, gender, memes.

FLORA CORNISH
Associate Professor in Research Methodology
Key research interests: health activism; community mobilisation; participation; democratising knowledge; university-community knowledge exchange; community-led disaster recovery; dialogue.

DANIELE FANELLI
Course Tutor
Key research interests: meta-science; scientometrics; research integrity, bias and misconduct; research reproducibility; research policy; information and computation.

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

JONATHAN JACKSON
Professor in Research Methodology,
(on sabbatical 2021/22)
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 mobilities; 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 modelling; analysis of categorical data; analysis of survey data.

SONJA MARZI  
LSE Fellow in Qualitative Methodology  
Key research interests: Gender and urban challenges, gendered right to the city, migration/displacement, urban insecurity and violence, feminist participatory methodologies, audio-visual and digital methods, co-production of knowledge, remote participatory research designs, Latin America and Colombia.

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; political psychology; conflict and political violence.

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

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

RUXANDRA SERBAN  
LSE Fellow in Qualitative Methodology  
Key research interests: legislative studies; comparative politics; UK politics; qualitative text analysis; comparative research design; concepts in social science.

PATRICK STURGIS  
Professor of Quantitative Social Science  
Head of Methodology Department  
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.

CHANA 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.

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.
Professional services staff

TO BE APPOINTED
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For enquiries about: MSc Applied Social Data Science and MSc Social Research Methods, student engagement, seminar series, events and social media.

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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 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.research@lse.ac.uk for further information.

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 Department of Methodology offers a weekly online drop-in “methods surgery” during term-time only on Thursdays 10am – 12 noon and 3-4pm.

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.

It is essential to sign up on Moodle beforehand to give further details of the methods query and receive the drop-in details.

For queries about Methods Surgery please email methodology.research@lse.ac.uk

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.

Methods courses for auditing

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

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. The programme provides 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, analyse 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.

MPhil/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.
MPhil/PhD Demography (Social/ Formal)

Demography is the study of human populations, past, present, and future. It is concerned with how births, deaths, and migration determine change, and so determine key trends such as rapid population growth and population ageing. It includes the analysis of characteristics that determine the components of change and/or are affected by population structure, such as age, sex, marital and health status, and the composition of families and households.

This PhD programme aims to provide students with the skills and competencies that will enable them to successfully undertake original primary research worthy of publication in the field of demography.

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.

A sample of previous seminar series titles from 2020/21 includes:

**Factors associated with COVID-19 related mortality using the OpenSAFELY platform**

**Speaker:** Elizabeth Williamson, Associate Professor of Biostatistical Methodology, Medical Statistics Department, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine.

**Mobilizing Social Capital for Pretrial Release**

**Speaker:** Professor Sandra Susan Smith, Daniel and Florence Guggenheim Professor of Criminal Justice, Harvard Kennedy School.

**Citizen assemblies, inequality, and deliberation in rural India: An approach combining causal inference, qualitative analysis, and machine learning**

**Speaker:** Vijayendra Rao, Development Research Group, The World Bank.

**What is “urban data justice“?: Defining, conceptualizing, and exploring data use, re-use, and refusal for racial justice**

**Speaker:** Dr Matthew Bui, Provost’s Postdoctoral Fellow, The NYU Alliance for Public Interest Technology.

**An Imperfect Match? Gender and Racial Discrimination in Hiring Across Skill Matching**

**Speaker:** Dr Kate Weisshaar, Assistant Professor, Sociology Department at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill and faculty fellow at the Carolina Population Center.

**COVID Realities: A collaborative and participatory approach to understanding the experiences of low-income families during COVID-19**

**Speakers:** Dr Maddy Power and Dr Ruth Patrick, University of York.

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If you wish to be kept updated with the details of forthcoming seminars, please email 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 the applications and methods of data science. The DSI is an interdisciplinary institute founded in 2020 that forms the institutional cornerstone of data science activity at LSE and is directed by the Department of Methodology’s Professor Kenneth Benoit.

Working alongside academic departments across the School, the DSI’s mission is to foster the study of data science and new forms of data through bringing together scholarships and partnerships in data science with LSE’s unique perspective and experience. The DSI seminar series in data science will include speakers from around the world on a variety of data science topics focusing on the social, economic, political, computational, and statistical applications.

For further information on the LSE Data Science Institute and its events, please visit the website or email DSI.Admin@lse.ac.uk to be added to the Data Science Institute mailing list. You can also follow the DSI on Twitter @LSEDataScience. Recordings of DSI seminars are available on the DSI YouTube channel.

A sample of previous seminar series titles includes:

**The Art of Quantitative Editing**
**Speaker:** Dr Laura Bronner, Quantitative editor at FiveThirtyEight and LSE Government PhD researcher.

**Breaking the Social Media Prism**
**Speaker:** Professor Chris Bail, Professor of Sociology and Public Policy at Duke University.

**Using public video cameras to detect racial distancing on city streets**
**Speaker:** Dr Melissa Sands, Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Merced.

**How to detect fake news before it is written**
**Speaker:** Dr Preslav Nakov, Principal Scientist at the Qatar Computing Research Institute, Hamad Bin Khalifa University.

**Negotiating with AI: Fairness in the Labour Market**
**Speaker:** Professor Christo Wilson, Associate Professor in the Khoury College of Computer Sciences, Northeastern University.

**Tracking COVID-19 with the Financial Times**
**Speaker:** John Burn-Murdoch, Financial Times Senior Data Visualisation Journalist.

**Can Police Diversity Improve Police-Civilian Interactions?**
**Speaker:** Roman Rivera, PhD researcher, Department of Economics, Columbia University.
**Data science**

Big data is transforming almost every aspect of science, engineering, geography, and medicine, from mapping genesto 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 data sets and to answer questions regarding how organisations can make well informed data-driven decisions.

Through the launch of its new Data Science Institute in 2020-21, 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 LSE is world-renowned.

Through 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.
Research showcase

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 with emergency management 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.

FLORA CORNISH

Flora is an Associate Professor in Research Methodology in the Department of Methodology.

Flora 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 organising, 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.

Qualitative research methods allow 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 social problems play out, and how they are understood, contested, neglected or tackled, in the interest of positive social change.

Flora Cornish
Co-producing knowledge during emergencies and pandemics: developing remote participatory visual methods using smartphones

Funded by an Economic and Social Research Council Grant, Sonja is lead investigator to develop innovative remote participatory audio-visual methods to co-produce knowledge about women’s urban challenges in Colombia. In collaboration with migrant women in Colombia, and researchers and filmmakers in the UK and Latin America, she applies participatory filming remotely, using participants’ smartphones, to investigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women’s gendered right to the city. During emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face research becomes impossible because of restrictions on travel and social contact. Many researchers have been stalled immediately prior to, or during, data collection, but the need to work with research participants remains. The same can occur in contexts of climate emergencies, disasters, conflict-affected areas, or in situations where there is not enough funding available for international travel. This is particularly challenging in transnational research, even though collaborative research conducted with marginalised communities becomes even more valuable and urgent in times of crisis. A remote participatory visual methodology provides a solution to continue or initiate participatory work, whilst ensuring that co-production and impact research still holds the potential to create social change and transformation of past, present, and evolving issues. Methodologically, the research will develop, pilot, and evaluate a novel remote participatory visual method that can shift the co-production landscape and make this kind of research more accessible in contexts that have been marginalised due to the difficulties of face-to-face access to participants. Aside from producing training materials for social science researchers, the project will contribute co-produced knowledge about women’s gendered right to the city, bringing in the voices of vulnerable women who are frequently absent from commentaries of emergencies and disasters, especially in situations where face-to-face contact is impossible or undesirable. The entire research process is conducted online. Co-investigators in this research project are Professor Rachel Pain and Dr Jen Tarr (both Newcastle University) and the community-focused production company Spectacle (UK). The team will be supported by the academic documentary filmmaker Maria Fernanda Carrillo Sanchez (UACM, Mexico) and two independent local researchers in Medellin and Bogotá. Together the team will explore and test the methodological, ethical, and technical challenges and possibilities of the use of smartphones for remote participant recruitment and participatory audio-visual data collection.

SONJA MARZI
Sonja is a Fellow in Qualitative Methodology in the Department of Methodology and an Associate Academic at the Latin America and Caribbean Centre.

Sonja’s research is interdisciplinary and focuses on gendered urban challenges and inequalities in Colombia; cutting across the fields of Geography, Anthropology and Sociology. In particular, her research aims to push the boundaries of collaboration and participatory research designs under remote conditions, focusing on (re) conceptualising gendered urban challenges in Colombia. Building on cutting-edge methods of using audio-visual digital methods (e.g., film and video) to co-produce knowledge, her work centres the voices of made marginalised women and contributes to new understandings about their relationship to urban space.
**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.

**KEN 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.

* “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
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
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, systemically 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.

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.
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.

JON JACKSON AND CHRIS PÓSCH

Jon is a Professor in Research 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”, ie, 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’ 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 societally 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.

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.
Working at the Department of Methodology has been immensely intellectually rewarding. I really value the numerous opportunities I have – in seminars, office hours, methods surgeries – to discuss research methods with students and colleagues from across the School, and to learn about their disciplines and substantive interests in the process.

Alasdair Jones, Associate Professor in Qualitative Research Methodology