The following paper was researched and written as part of LSE GROUPS 2024.

LSE GROUPS takes place during the final fortnight of the LSE Spring Term. Undergraduate students are placed in small groups; these are cross-year, interdisciplinary, and group members do not know one another in advance. Each group must then devise its own research question and carry out every stage of a small-scale research project, in less than two weeks.

LSE GROUPS is part of the LSE commitment to students learning through enquiry and developing the skills needed for knowledge creation.

The overall theme of LSE GROUPS 2024 was *Power and Politics.*

This paper was submitted on the final Thursday afternoon of the project. Students then presented their work at a conference, on the closing Friday.

[More information on LSE GROUPS, and other papers](.)

Papers are presented as submitted by the students, without corrections.

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Power to the students? An Intergenerational Study of Perceptions of Political Agency at the LSE.

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Abstract

The London School of Economics (LSE) is reputed for its politically active student base. However, the impact of higher education, let alone LSE, on perceptions of political agency is chronically understudied, with almost every piece of literature focused on the United States.

This paper seeks to fill this literature gap following the increase of student unrest at educational institutions across the world due to geopolitical events, leading to growing political activism such as protests and encampments. This paper questions whether 'the LSE Experience' (including education, social life and community) can impact perceptions of political agency from an intergenerational perspective, focusing on quantitative comparisons amongst current students and qualitative analysis of alumni. The quantitative data investigates individual political perceptions and the impact of the LSE 'experience' on current students, meanwhile the qualitative data explores specific experiences of graduates from the mid-1960's, a politically active period (including the Civil Rights Movement, the nascency of the Vietnam War, and strikes against an LSE Director, Walter Adams). Analysing generational perspectives on political agency is important to understand the impact of LSE on these views, alongside the influence of wider societal factors. This paper indicates no significant correlation between the LSE 'experience' and perceptions of political agency for current students, although alumni hinted at the important effects of the LSE 'experience' on their political agency.

Key Words: Political Agency, Perception, LSE, Intergenerational

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1. Introduction

Universities are considered hotspots for political movements and discussion, with literature indicating a relationship between the university experience and the political activity of students, especially in the United States. (Mayer, 2011; Nie et al., 1996; Willeck & Mendelberg, 2022). However, there is minimal attention on the effects of university education on students' perception of their political agency, and thus acting to influence politics. This research focuses on the impact of university education changing students' perceptions of their political agency.

Previous literature establishes students' tendency to be politically active, and those who study politics are more likely to participate politically (Denver and Hands, 2009). This explains the selection of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) for the research conducted for this paper, to closely focus on whether this politically oriented academic institution, known for its strong history of political activism, influencing students' perception of their political agency (Webster, 2015). By focusing on political agency, existing literature is expanded to consider the issue holistically, combining variables from across previous academic studies which individually fixate on the impact of university education on voting, political orientation or protesting capabilities. This paper hypothesises that the LSE 'experience' does change students' perceptions of their political agency, utilising quantitative and qualitative data across a survey and in-depth interviews of current students and alumni to test this hypothesis and fill this literature gap. The researchers looked at current students and alumni from the 1960's.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Context

The association between higher education and political participation is one of the most "replicated and cited findings in political science" (Willeck & Mendelberg, 2022, 90 (see also: Nie et al., 1996; Mayer, 2011; Colby et al., 2007)). Data suggests that the institutional role of encouraging political participation stems from the exposure to political discussion that university provides, which, in turn, is associated with higher political activity. Universities may be unique in their efficacy and action (Klofstad, 2015; Shulman & Levine, 2012), speaking to the wider perception that university students are highly active in politics, particularly in the United States (US) (Williams, 2020). Within the US, there is a strong and established correlation between college attendance and civic engagement or the enactment of political agency (Hillygus, 2005; Simmons & Lilly, 2010). The UK is severely under-researched in this area, specifically in how UK-based universities change political agency, leading to a key shortfall in existing academic literature and niche that this paper begins to fill.

Studies suggest that an environment of political discussion can also encourage political engagement and awareness through information provision and discussions of existing levels of political agency in campus communities (Glynn et al., 2009; Klofstad, 2015; Williams, 2020). Acts such as voting, protesting, and engaging in political discussion across previous literature are also typically explored in isolation, and current literature 'neglects the diverse forms of active political participation' beyond voting (Pritzker et al., 2012. 4). Hence, this research paper explores the university 'experience' as incorporating the academic, institutional community and student community's impact on political influence, and considers the impact of the university experience on 'political agency' for mass political engagement.

2.2 Definitions

The unit of study for this paper is an individual, in this case, an LSE student or alum, believing (or not) that they hold some sort of power within the political space - 'political agency'. This paper draws 'political agency' from the work of Craig, Niemi, and Silver and 'internal efficacy', defined as 'beliefs about one's own competence to understand and to participate effectively in politics' (Craig et al., 1990, 290). This paper rejects the initial definition of political agency as a unidimensional factor, as proposed in the early works of Campbell et al., as too narrow, and the focus on 'external efficacy' of Converse and Balch as excessively broad (Balch, 1974; Campbell et al., 1954; Converse, 1972).

Evidence shows that academic and extracurricular activities that encourage political engagement have been associated with increases in political engagement (Colby et al., 2007, 8). Further, Webster (2015, 75) asserts that any research into British student protest 'must engage with the history and reputation of the ['infamously radical'] LSE' over other institutions - this highlights

that an LSE-specific study may have paradigm-determining qualities, thus emphasising the importance of this paper to the general literature.

Thus, considering the LSE's reputation for its politically active student base, this study seeks to fill current research gaps by investigating the impact of the 'LSE experience' on changes in students' perceptions of their political agency.

3. Research Design

3.1 Mixed Method Analysis

Mixed methods was chosen to gain insights from different generations, notably current students (2020's) and alumni (1960's). This is a non-comparative discussion, attempting to understand the impact of the LSE 'experience' on political agency within different generations. Information about current students (2020's) were gathered via quantitative analysis, with a survey. Qualitative was used for the alumni, with semi-structured interviews, allowing for more depth regarding the 1960's historical context.

3.2 Analysis of Current Students and 1960's Alumni

The examination of current students stems from a currently heightened period of political activity at LSE which has also involved forced changes to university operations (Elgueta et al., 2024).

The 1960's were a volatile period for Western societies generally, but especially so on the LSE campus. In October 1966, amidst degenerating student conditions, Dr Walter Adams became Chancellor to great opposition from students, who staged sit-ins, hunger strikes, and protests (Kidd, 1969). These would turn violent in a period known as the 'LSE Troubles', resulting in over thirty students being arrested, an LSE porter's death, and the closure of LSE for 25 days in 1969 (Donnelly, 2019b; Donnelly, 2019a, 1). Thus, the impact these events had upon shaping the LSE lead the researchers to question the reasoning behind the political activism of students during this time, and the differentiating nature of LSE for current students. To do this, researchers looked at the perceptions of political agency amongst these two generations: 1960's and current students.

3.3 Research Question

Does the LSE 'experience' have an influence on perceptions of political agency amongst current students and alumni?

3.4 Hypotheses

$H1_0$: The LSE 'experience' has no influence on perceptions of political agency amongst students.
$H1_1$: The LSE 'experience' has an influence on perceptions of political agency amongst students.
$H2_0$: The LSE 'experience' had no influence on perceptions of political agency amongst alumni.
$H2_1$: The LSE 'experience' had an influence on perceptions of political agency amongst alumni.

4. Methodology

The mixed methods design is composed of an online survey and semi-structured interviews. As the research question relates to personal perception, both the quantitative and the qualitative methods offer important insight - using mixed methods 'offers the chance to fill any data gaps, compared to using a single research method' (Tzagkarakis & Kritas, 2023, 551). As the researchers sought to gain perceptions of political agency from different generations, this was the most ideal method: maximized responses from current students through a survey and in-depth interviews of alumni's experiences from the 1960's.

4.1 Quantitative Analysis of Perceptions of Political Agency in Current Students

4.1.1 Survey

Participants: The survey's randomised sample was 125 student volunteers from LSE, of whom 49.60% had been at LSE for up to one year.

Materials: The materials used were two surveys designed by the researchers: one for current students (Appendix A) and one for Alumni (Appendix B), differing only in tense and both with no time constraints.

Design: The survey took inspiration from Craig, Niemi, and Silver's question set, and the prior integration work done by various authors (Acock et al., 1985; Clarke & Acock, 1989; Craig et al., 1990). One question was lifted from the text (Appendix A, Question 12) and three further questions were adapted (Appendix A, Questions 10, 11, 13).

An additional question was included to assess students' perceived change in their political agency over the course of their studies. Respondents were asked to rate their answers from a 1-7 scale, ranging from "Extremely Disagree" to "Extremely Agree".

Procedure: The link to the survey, with an accompanying informative message, was sent to LSE societies and departments. The data was then collected via Microsoft Forms, cleaned in Excel, and exported to Stata for analysis.

Univariate and multivariate regression analysis were conducted on the data to explore if meaningful correlations were found between variables. Such regression analysis was based on a strong assumption that the distances between all the ordinal scores (e.g., 1 to 2) from the survey were the same, in order to treat them as continuous variables.

Ethical Considerations: The survey was conducted following LSE's code of ethics.

4.2 Qualitative Analysis of Perceptions of Political Agency in 1960's Students

4.2.1 Interviews

Participants: The interviewees are six alumni who attended LSE in the 1960's. They were recruited via the LSE alumni centre and were interviewed voluntarily after participating in an LSE Campus Tour. The researchers acknowledge the potential bias accompanied by interviewing alumni who choose to come back to LSE after 60 years. Beyond researching the then self-perceived political engagement of the interviewees, the researchers sought to find out additional nuance, such as, 'if so, how and why'.

Materials: The material used was a topic guide outlining questions and process for a semi-structured interview (Appendix C).

Design: The topic guide was inspired by the survey and included six sections. Through this, understanding of interviewee experience and perception was achieved beyond quantitative data's limitations. The expected time of completion was 15-30 minutes, depending on saturation of information.

Procedure: Consent forms were signed before interviews (Appendix D). Each interview was completed in-person, using the topic guide, with one researcher asking the questions and one taking notes. The data was then anonymised with participants choosing pseudonyms, digitised, and subjected to thematic analysis by multiple researchers. Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, thematic analysis was employed with both bottom-up and top-down coding from different researchers to ensure blind-coding and limit researcher bias.

Ethical Considerations: The interviews were conducted following LSE's code of ethics.

4.2.2 Archival Research

Archival material was used to supplement and corroborate the qualitative data.

5. Results and Interpretations

5.1 Perceptions of Political Agency Amongst Current Students

Out of 125 survey responses, 114 were valid. Although the initial aim was to control for the departments in regressions, there was not satisfactory number of samples for each department; thus, this control could not be incorporated into the analysis.

Regressing the four independent aspects of political agency and demographic and non-demographic variables confirmed that there is no sufficient evidence to conclude years spent at the LSE has any effect on students' level of political agency. Thus, the researchers failed to reject the null hypothesis ($H1_0$).

However, a statistically significant correlation was found with perceptions of influence over policy change within LSE (Appendix A, Question 14) with both the number of years students have spent at LSE (Appendix A, Question 3) and the degree to which they feel connected to the LSE community (Appendix A, Question 7). This finding was consistent regardless of the controls of the dummy variables for educational levels (i.e. Masters, PhD). The information regarding this regression is displayed in Table 1. Appendix E shows the specifications of the multivariate regressions.

Table 1: Regression between students' perceived level of influence over policy changes within LSE and other variables

	(1)	(2)	(3)
years_lse	0.3797*	0.3616*	0.3986*
	(0.176)	(0.171)	(0.181)
connected_student_community		0.2694**	0.2641**
		(0.933)	(0.937)
dummy_master			0.27204
			(0.394)
dummy_phd			-0.94339
			(1.14)
Adjusted R-squared	0.0331	0.0909	0.0848

**$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$, Standard Errors are shown in the brackets

There was no statistically significant correlation between current students' political agency in a wider society context and their demographic information. Yet, students' perceived influence over policy changes within LSE increases as they spend longer at the university and feel more connected to the community. This suggests that the LSE 'experience' does not significantly enhance students' political agency because their perceptions toward politics and willingness for political involvement are largely formed before university. Alternatively, entering university could increase students' political agency, but this cannot be confirmed as no samples were collected from individuals before they entered the university (e.g., LSE offer holders). This latter possibility is supported by data showing that 53% of LSE students think their political agency has changed since they entered the university (Appendix A, Question 20; Appendix G), yet years spent at LSE are not correlated with

changes of political agency. On the other hand, students feel they have more influence over policy changes at LSE and feel more connected to the student body with more years at LSE, perhaps because they understand how administrative systems and student bodies' (e.g., Student Union) work with policy changes at LSE, forming new political opinions.

Overall, the paper does not have enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis ($H1_0$), meaning that the LSE 'experience' has no statistically significant influence on perceptions of political agency amongst current students.

5.2 Perceptions of Political Agency Amongst 1960's Students

Thematic Analysis (Appendix F) led to the following organising themes with the basic codes in brackets: Perceptions of LSE and LSE community (social life, demanding curriculum, and top institution), self-perception (active individuals and collective power), LSE 'experience' (political atmosphere and transferable political skills), circumstantial factors (1960's and other periods) and actions (political involvement and volunteering).

The respondents spoke about their perceptions of the LSE Community and their LSE 'experience', especially in feelings of belonging and connectedness. Many highlighted the international nature of LSE alongside their involvement in societies and interactions with peers which enhanced integration. A heightened political interest was a driving theme behind interviewee's reflections. According to Kathy, the wider community of LSE was "imbued with revolutionary politics", and Albert concurred that students felt that they could "change the world" through a united student body. The rigorous academic environment also strengthened the connection, exemplified by Kathy saying that academics gave "more depth" to current politics, alongside the activism desire.

Self-perception of political agency varied amongst interviewees but generally indicated a high level of political awareness and activity within LSE. Albert and Caroline felt they did not hold much political influence in LSE, supporting the assertion that "the students had little voice" in the university (Kidd, 1969, 10). According to the *Letter Issued by the Students Union* in 1967, students were "branded irresponsible" by LSE staff and deprived of political stance. However, all interviewees described this as a driving factor for active involvement in political activities, such as protests and discussions, both during and after their time at LSE. Albert, Caroline, Mary, and Kathy all conveyed feeling power in the "masses", reflecting their ideals on possessing political influence through the student body. Jacqueline and Paul viewed their individual political agency through voting, indicating they would have voted if eligible. Caroline's statement, "what is the point of studying economics and politics if you don't vote?", encapsulates this sentiment.

These trends convey that all the interviewees from the 1960's have an extremely strong desire for political influence.

The historical context, such as the Walter Adams controversy and voting age of 21, played a vital role in shaping views on political agency of this generation, with interviewees like Mary noting that "many of my peers went on a hunger strike" due to the lack of care for the student voice. Similarly, concerns over inequality, after the Lionel Robbins report, resulted in student action and LSE policy change, with Alfred noting that it "increased the diversity of LSE by 1966, as working-class students were given financial support to study here". *The Directors Letter to all Students in 1967* stated that the protests gave the director a "strong impression" that students had "too little information about the way the school is run, its problems and its policies", thus leading a memorandum to give students a better understanding of intra-school politics (Director Sydney Caine in 1967, via Kidd, 1969).

The overall perception of the 1960's alumni can be summed up within LSE fostering a community whereby perception of political agency was created within a collective body, which was otherwise not present on an individual level. Thus, the results lean towards $H2_1$, that the LSE 'experience' influences perceptions of political agency, amongst alumni

6. Limitations and Implications

The researchers acknowledge that limitations in timescale, scope, and funding for this project leave this study with inherent disadvantages. Critically, a lack of engagement with the qualitative and quantitative studies of current students and alumni, respectively, hampered this paper's ability to draw strong comparative conclusions about the Research Questions. This could be solved through improving vectors of outreach and implementing participatory incentives. This study also struggles with uncontrolled confounding variables, such as age, gender, and race, lending our results to risk reductivity. Finally, psychological biases, such as positive memory bias (in which people remember more pleasant than unpleasant events), may impact our results as Alumni may have overestimated LSE's impact on them (Adler & Pansky, 2020). Future researchers should aim to adapt our methods with a longer timescale to better control for these variables, especially through increasing sample sizes.

7. Conclusions

This paper has questioned whether, amongst Students and Alumni from the 1960's, the LSE 'experience' has had an impact on individuals' perceptions of political agency. This paper does suggest that the LSE 'experience' provided a platform for individuals to enact the political agency that they perceive themselves as having, particularly in the 1960's.

This paper has employed a mixed methodology research design in order to answer each of the four stated hypotheses, utilising quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to begin to understand the inner machinations of an LSE student or alum's mind and to determine whether this educational environment, in particular, was a driving force behind the perceptions of political agency which they held at the time of providing data.

This work contributes to political agency literature and to heightened levels of protests and encampments on UK and US university campuses relative to historical averages. The researchers hope to shed light, especially at LSE, on how a given institution impacts an individual's perception of political agency and encourage further study with a focus on securing an independent control sample, rather than the dependent (intra-LSE) control which this paper utilises on account of time limitations. There is especially scope to expand research to other universities to test Webster's hypothesis about centrality of the 'infamously radical' LSE to studies of British student agency (Webster, 2015, 75).

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9. Appendices

Appendix A
Online Survey for Current LSE Students

Power to the Students? LSE GROUPS 5 SURVEY

Dear participant,

Thank you for your interest in this project investigating the perceived power of students at LSE. In this survey, we hope to understand views on student agency in shaping political affairs and involvement.

Requirements

- Aged 18 or over
- An LSE Student
- *Not already completed this survey*

If you are LSE Alumni, *please access this survey tailored to your experience:* *https://forms.office.com/e/MzaR9nj9V2*

Information and consent

The information below is regarding the use of data collected for this survey and consent for participation. Please tick 'yes' if you agree to the statements below and the use of information for the study.

Involvement. This survey should take between 5-15 minutes, depending on the speed completed. The experiment includes a questionnaire where participants will be asked to select an answer from the questions below.

Participation is voluntary. There are no negative consequences for you if you decide not to take part in this study. You can also start the survey and withdraw at any point, without explanation. If you'd like to withdraw your data after taking part, contact us before 9am UK time on 12th June 2024 - you will not have to give any explanation why.

Information use. The reported study is part of a research project at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences approved by the LSE Eden CENTRE, for LSE groups.

Anonymous. Your participation will be anonymous - your name will not be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study.

Ethics. This research project has received ethics approval from the EDEN Centre.

Point of contact: Ellie Flaherty
e.flaherty@lse.ac.uk

If you agree to take part in the research, please select 'yes' below.

1. Do you consent to taking part in this research? *

   ◯ Yes

   ◯ No

Background questions

2. Are you currently studying at the London School of Economics (LSE)? *

   ◯ Yes

   ◯ No but I am an alumnus/a

   ◯ No

3. How many years have you studied at the LSE? *

   ◯ Up to 1

   ◯ Up to 2

   ◯ Up to 3

   ◯ Up to 4

   ◯ Up to 5 or more

4. What level of study are you undertaking/ have undertaken at the LSE? (Please select all that apply) *

   ☐ Level 6 (Bachelor's degrees)

   ☐ Level 7 (Master's degrees, postgraduate certificates)

   ☐ Level 8 (PhDs)

5. What department do you belong to (for the majority of your LSE studies)? *

- ◯ Department of Accounting
- ◯ Department of Anthropology
- ◯ Data Science Institute
- ◯ Department of Economics
- ◯ Department of Economic History
- ◯ European Institute
- ◯ Department of Finance
- ◯ Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa

- ◯ Department of Gender Studies
- ◯ Department of Geography and Environment
- ◯ Department of Government
- ◯ Department of Health Policy
- ◯ Department of International Development
- ◯ Department of International History
- ◯ International Inequalities Institute
- ◯ Department of International Relations
- ◯ Language Centre
- ◯ LSE Law School
- ◯ Department of Management
- ◯ Marshall Institute
- ◯ Department of Mathematics
- ◯ Department of Media and Communications
- ◯ Department of Methodology
- ◯ Department of Philosophy, Logic and Scientific Method
- ◯ Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science
- ◯ School of Public Policy
- ◯ Department of Social Policy
- ◯ Department of Sociology
- ◯ Department of Statistics

○ Other

6. If you clicked other, what was/is the name of your department?

[   ]

LSE Presence

In the following section, please rate how much you agree/disagree with the statements.

7. I feel connected to the student community within the LSE (such as LSE events, society activities, etc.) *

○ 1-Extremely Disagree

○ 2-Moderately Disagree

○ 3-Slightly Disagree

○ 4-Neutral

○ 5-Slightly Agree

○ 6-Moderately Agree

○ 7-Extremely Agree

8. I perceive the LSE as an institution in a positive light *

○ 1-Extremely Disagree

○ 2-Moderately Disagree

○ 3-Slightly Disagree

○ 4-Neutral

○ 5-Slightly Agree

○ 6-Moderately Agree

○ 7-Extremely Agree

9. I would be likely to take part in a protest during my time at LSE *

○ 1-Extremely Disagree

○ 2-Moderately Disagree

○ 3-Slightly Disagree

○ 4-Neutral

○ 5-Slightly Agree

○ 6-Moderately Agree

○ 7-Extremely Agree

Political Agency

In the following section, please rate how much you agree/disagree with the statements.

10. I consider myself able to hold political power within the LSE community (e.g through participating in SU elections, being in committees, being a representative) *

○ 1-Extremely Disagree

○ 2-Moderately Disagree

○ 3-Slightly Disagree

○ 4-Neutral

○ 5-Slightly Agree

○ 6-Moderately Agree

○ 7-Extremely Agree

11. I feel that I have a good understanding of the important political issues facing the LSE *

○ 1-Extremely Disagree

○ 2-Moderately Disagree

○ 3-Slightly Disagree

○ 4-Neutral

○ 5-Slightly Agree

○ 6-Moderately Agree

○ 7-Extremely Agree

12. I often don't feel sure of myself when talking with other people about politics and government *

   ○ 1-Extremely Disagree

   ○ 2-Moderately Disagree

   ○ 3-Slightly Disagree

   ○ 4-Neutral

   ○ 5-Slightly Agree

   ○ 6-Moderately Agree

   ○ 7-Extremely Agree

13. I feel the need of representing myself in the political field because others cannot or will not represent my opinions accurately *

   ○ 1-Extremely Disagree

   ○ 2-Moderately Disagree

   ○ 3-Slightly Disagree

   ○ 4-Neutral

   ○ 5-Slightly Agree

   ○ 6-Moderately Agree

   ○ 7-Extremely Agree

Political Participation in Policy Change

In the following section, please rate how much you agree/disagree with the statements.

14. I feel I have influence over policy change within LSE *

○ 1-Extremely Disagree

○ 2-Moderately Disagree

○ 3-Slightly Disagree

○ 4-Neutral

○ 5-Slightly Agree

○ 6-Moderately Agree

○ 7-Extremely Agree

15. I feel I have influence over political change in wider society *

○ 1-Extremely Disagree

○ 2-Moderately Disagree

○ 3-Slightly Disagree

○ 4-Neutral

○ 5-Slightly Agree

○ 6-Moderately Agree

○ 7-Extremely Agree

16. I feel I have influence over political change in wider society because... *

	1-Extremely Disagree	2-Moderately Disagree	3-Slightly Disagree	4-Neutral	5-Slightly Agree	6-Moderately Agree	7-Extremely Agree
I believe my vote makes a difference	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I am part of a government body that has policy influence	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I actively contact my representatives with the aim of influencing policy	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I actively protest	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

17. Please select '4-Neutral' to show you have been accurate with your answers in this survey *

◯ 1-Extremely Disagree

◯ 2-Moderately Disagree

◯ 3-Slightly Disagree

◯ 4-Neutral

◯ 5-Slightly Agree

◯ 6-Moderately Agree

◯ 7-Extremely Agree

Political Participation in Other Domains

In the following section, please rate how much you agree/disagree with the statements.

18. I consider myself to have taken part in political activism (such as protesting, petitioning, etc.). *

  ◯ 1-Extremely Disagree

  ◯ 2-Moderately Disagree

  ◯ 3-Slightly Disagree

  ◯ 4-Neutral

  ◯ 5-Slightly Agree

  ◯ 6-Moderately Agree

  ◯ 7-Extremely Agree

19. If my country or institution (e.g., European Union) were to hold an election tomorrow and I was eligible to vote in it, I would do so. *

  ◯ 1-Extremely Disagree

  ◯ 2-Moderately Disagree

  ◯ 3-Slightly Disagree

  ◯ 4-Neutral

  ◯ 5-Slightly Agree

  ◯ 6-Moderately Agree

  ◯ 7-Extremely Agree

Effect of LSE

In the following section, please rate how much you agree/disagree with the statements.

20. Since beginning my studies at LSE, my perceptions on having political agency have changed in which way? *

○ 1-Extremely diminished

○ 2-Moderately diminished

○ 3-Slightly diminished

○ 4-Neutral/No change

○ 5-Slightly enhanced

○ 6-Moderately enhanced

○ 7-Extremely enhanced

21. I largely attribute these changes to be a result of my time at LSE *

○ 1-Extremely Disagree

○ 2-Moderately Disagree

○ 3-Slightly Disagree

○ 4-Neutral

○ 5-Slightly Agree

○ 6-Moderately Agree

○ 7-Extremely Agree

22. I largely attribute the change of perception to... (if you do not attribute the change of perception to any, please select Neutral)

	1-Extremely Disagree	2-Moderately Disagree	3-Slightly Disagree	4-Neutral	5-Slightly Agree	6-Moderately Agree	7-Extremely Agree
The LSE curriculum	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The LSE student community (Societies, SU, Halls, Friendships)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The LSE institutional community (events, talks, campus roles)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Follow-up Interview Request

All interviews will take place until the Wednesday 12th June, at your convenience.

23. If you would like to participate in a follow-up interview (≤30mins), please kindly leave your
email address. Also please feel free to leave any additional comments and feedback here.
Thank you!

Online Survey for LSE Alumni

Power to the Students? LSE GROUPS 5 SURVEY ALUMNI ⅋

Dear participant,

Thank you for your interest in this project investigating the perceived power of students at LSE. In this survey, we hope to understand views on student agency in shaping political affairs and involvement.

Requirements

- Aged 18 or over
- An LSE Alumni
- *Not already completed this survey*

*Please reflect on your experiences **whilst you were still a student** at the LSE and answer accordingly.*

* Required

Information and consent

The information below is regarding the use of data collected for this survey and consent for participation. Please tick 'yes' if you agree to the statements below and the use of information for the study.

Involvement. This survey should take between 5-15 minutes, depending on the speed completed. The experiment includes a questionnaire where participants will be asked to select an answer from the questions below.

Participation is voluntary. There are no negative consequences for you if you decide not to take part in this study. You can also start the survey and withdraw at any point, without explanation. If you'd like to withdraw your data after taking part, contact us before 9am UK time on 12th June 2024 - you will not have to give any explanation why.

Information use. The reported study is part of a research project at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences approved by the LSE EDEN Centre, for LSE groups.

Anonymous. Your participation will be anonymous - your name will not be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study.

Ethics. This research project has received ethics approval from the EDEN Centre.

Point of contact: Ellie Flaherty
e.flaherty@lse.ac.uk

If you agree to take part in the research, please select 'yes' below.

1. Do you consent to taking part in this research? *

○ Yes

○ No

Background questions

2. Did you study at the London School of Economics (LSE)? *

◯ Yes

◯ No

3. When did you leave the LSE? *

◯ 0-5 years ago

◯ 6-10 years ago

◯ 11-20 years ago

◯ 21-30 years ago

◯ More than 30 years ago

4. How many years of study did you undertake at the LSE? *

◯ Up to 1

◯ Up to 2

◯ Up to 3

◯ Up to 4

◯ Up to 5 or more

5. What level of study did you undertake at the LSE? (Please select all that apply) *

☐ Level 6 (Bachelor's degrees)

☐ Level 7 (Master's degrees, postgraduate certificates)

☐ Level 8 (PhDs)

6. What department did you belong to (for the majority of your LSE studies)? *

◯ Department of Accounting

◯ Department of Anthropology

◯ Data Science Institute

○

○ Department of Economics

○ Department of Economic History

○ European Institute

○ Department of Finance

○ Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa

○ Department of Gender Studies

○ Department of Geography and Environment

○ Department of Government

○ Department of Health Policy

○ Department of International Development

○ Department of International History

○ International Inequalities Institute

○ Department of International Relations

○ Language Centre

○ LSE Law School

○ Department of Management

○ Marshall Institute

○ Department of Mathematics

○ Department of Media and Communications

○ Department of Methodology

○ Department of Philosophy, Logic and Scientific Method

○ Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science

○ School of Public Policy

○ Department of Social Policy

○ Department of Sociology

○ Department of Statistics

○

7. If you clicked other, what was the name of your department?

[   ]

LSE Presence

In the following section, please rate how much you agree/disagree with the statements.

8. During my time at the LSE, I felt connected to the student community within the LSE (such as LSE events, society activities, etc.) *

   ○ 1-Extremely Disagree

   ○ 2-Moderately Disagree

   ○ 3-Slightly Disagree

   ○ 4-Neutral

   ○ 5-Slightly Agree

   ○ 6-Moderately Agree

   ○ 7-Extremely Agree

9. I perceived the LSE as an institution in a positive light *

   ○ 1-Extremely Disagree

   ○ 2-Moderately Disagree

   ○ 3-Slightly Disagree

   ○ 4-Neutral

   ○ 5-Slightly Agree

   ○ 6-Moderately Agree

   ○ 7-Extremely Agree

10. I would have been likely to take part in a protest *

    ○ 1-Extremely Disagree

    ○ 2-Moderately Disagree

    ○ 3-Slightly Disagree

    ○ 4-Neutral

    ○ 5-Slightly Agree

    ○ 6-Moderately Agree

    ○ 7-Extremely Agree

Political Agency

In the following section, please rate how much you agree/disagree with the statements.

11. During my time at the LSE, I considered myself able to hold political power within the LSE community (e.g through participating in SU elections, being in committees, being a representative) *

  ◯ 1-Extremely Disagree

  ◯ 2-Moderately Disagree

  ◯ 3-Slightly Disagree

  ◯ 4-Neutral

  ◯ 5-Slightly Agree

  ◯ 6-Moderately Agree

  ◯ 7-Extremely Agree

12. I felt that I had a good understanding of the important political issues facing the LSE *

  ◯ 1-Extremely Disagree

  ◯ 2-Moderately Disagree

  ◯ 3-Slightly Disagree

  ◯ 4-Neutral

  ◯ 5-Slightly Agree

  ◯ 6-Moderately Agree

  ◯ 7-Extremely Agree

13. I often didn't feel sure of myself when talking with other people about politics and government *

  ◯ 1-Extremely Disagree

  ◯ 2-Moderately Disagree

  ◯ 3-Slightly Disagree

  ◯ 4-Neutral

  ◯ 5-Slightly Agree

  ◯ 6-Moderately Agree

  ◯ 7-Extremely Agree

14. I felt the need to represent myself in the political field because others could or would not represent my opinions accurately *

  ◯ 1-Extremely Disagree

  ◯ 2-Moderately Disagree

  ◯ 3-Slightly Disagree

  ◯ 4-Neutral

  ◯ 5-Slightly Agree

  ◯ 6-Moderately Agree

  ◯ 7-Extremely Agree

Political Participation in Policy Change

In the following section, please rate how much you agree/disagree with the statements.

15. During my time at the LSE, I felt I had influence over policy change within LSE *

- ⚪ 1-Extremely Disagree
- ⚪ 2-Moderately Disagree
- ⚪ 3-Slightly Disagree
- ⚪ 4-Neutral
- ⚪ 5-Slightly Agree
- ⚪ 6-Moderately Agree
- ⚪ 7-Extremely Agree

16. I felt I had influence over political change in wider society *

- ⚪ 1-Extremely Disagree
- ⚪ 2-Moderately Disagree
- ⚪ 3-Slightly Disagree
- ⚪ 4-Neutral
- ⚪ 5-Slightly Agree
- ⚪ 6-Moderately Agree
- ⚪ 7-Extremely Agree

17. I felt I had influence over political change in wider society because... *

	1-Extremely Disagree	2-Moderately Disagree	3-Slightly Disagree	4-Neutral	5-Slightly Agree	6-Moderately Agree	7-Extremely Agree
I believed my vote makes a difference	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I was/am part of a government body that has policy influence	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I actively contacted my representatives with the aim of influencing policy	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I actively protested	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

18. Please select '4-Neutral' to show you have been accurate with your answers in this survey *

◯ 1-Extremely Disagree

◯ 2-Moderately Disagree

◯ 3-Slightly Disagree

◯ 4-Neutral

◯ 5-Slightly Agree

◯ 6-Moderately Agree

◯ 7-Extremely Agree

Political Participation in Other Domains

In the following section, please rate how much you agree/disagree with the statements.

19. During my time at the LSE, I considered myself to have taken part in political activism (such as protesting, petitioning, etc.). *

○ 1-Extremely Disagree

○ 2-Moderately Disagree

○ 3-Slightly Disagree

○ 4-Neutral

○ 5-Slightly Agree

○ 6-Moderately Agree

○ 7-Extremely Agree

20. If my country or institution (e.g., European Union) held an election during my time at the LSE and I was eligible to vote in it, I would have done so/did so. *

○ 1-Extremely Disagree

○ 2-Moderately Disagree

○ 3-Slightly Disagree

○ 4-Neutral

○ 5-Slightly Agree

○ 6-Moderately Agree

○ 7-Extremely Agree

Effect of LSE

In the following section, please rate how much you agree/disagree with the statements.

21. During my studies at the LSE, my perceptions on having political agency changed in which way? *

  ○ 1-Extremely diminished

  ○ 2-Moderately diminished

  ○ 3-Slightly diminished

  ○ 4-Neutral/ No change

  ○ 5-Slightly enhanced

  ○ 6-Moderately enhanced

  ○ 7-Extremely enhanced

22. I largely attributed these changes to be a result of my time at the LSE *

  ○ 1-Extremely Disagree

  ○ 2-Moderately Disagree

  ○ 3-Slightly Disagree

  ○ 4-Neutral

  ○ 5-Slightly Agree

  ○ 6-Moderately Agree

  ○ 7-Extremely Agree

23. I largely attributed the change of perception to... (if you do not attribute the change of perception to any, please select Neutral)

	1-Extremely Disagree	2-Moderately Disagree	3-Slightly Disagree	4-Neutral	5-Slightly Agree	6-Moderately Agree	7-Extremely Agree
The LSE curriculum	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The LSE student community (Societies, SU, Halls, Friendships)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The LSE institutional community (events, talks, campus roles)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Follow-up Interview Request

All interviews will take place until the Wednesday 12th June, at your convenience.

24. If you would like to participate in a follow-up interview (≤30mins), please kindly leave your email address. Also please feel free to leave any additional comments and feedback here. Thank you!

  [   ]

Appendix C

Interview Topic Guide

Interviewer:

Notetaker:

DO NOT SAY THE THINGS IN ITALICS and adjust questions for alumni accordingly

Note: These are just guiding questions relating to the RQ. Also, not all questions need to be asked and they can/should be reworded, make sure to adjust tone accordingly.

RQ: Power to the students? To what extent does the 'LSE experience' change students' perceptions of having political agency? (do not share with interviewees)

Hello, thank you for volunteering to take part in this interview and for completing the survey. By agreeing, you consent to your data being used in research conducted by LSE GROUPS as part of the EDEN center at the LSE. Your participation is voluntary, and you have the right to stop at any time, without reason and withdraw your consent. Additionally, after the interview, you can still withdraw your data until the 12th of June at 12pm. I will be asking the questions, and my colleague will take notes to collect data which will be analyzed later, you will NOT be recorded.

Do you consent to taking part in the interview?

If no: Thank you for taking the time to come to the interview, we appreciate your effort!

Proceed only if YES

Icebreaker

Thank you for giving your consent, how are you today?

Do you have a pseudonym you would like us to use in our academic paper (e.g, Batman)?

Background Questions

1. Are you currently studying, or have you finished your studies? *If alumni:* What do you do?

2. How long have you/were you at the LSE?

3. Could you give an overview of your experience at LSE? *If alumni:* Do you miss it?

LSE Experience
We are interested in understanding the effects of an LSE 'experience' on certain things. By LSE 'experience', we include education (department, degree, level of study), community (societies, involvement in the student life/student union) and social life (halls/home).

4. Could you tell me a bit about your LSE 'experience'? *Make sure they talk about each aspect: education, community and social life (if they don't, probe them and directly ask about each of the three categories).*

5. *Choose one of the categories to expand on (ideally their category most relevant to the RQ) OR* Which of these do you think had the biggest impact on you?

6. Did *category X* help you feel connected to the LSE community? Why or why not?

Political Agency

7. In the political sphere, how do you perceive yourself? (*Knowledgeable? Active? Involved?*)

8. During your time at LSE, has the university and/or its students been politically active? If yes, can you name specific instances (i.e., encampment)?

9. How connected do you feel to these political movements/how involved are you?

10. Do you think your time at LSE affected your perception and/or involvement in politics? (*Positive/negative, etc...*) Why or why not? *If yes:* How?

11. Do you think the political environment of LSE influenced this? Why or why not?

12. Have you attended any other universities? If yes, which?

13. Relative to the way it affected your political perception, how would you compare the two?

14. Lastly, do you have any questions or comments or anything you would like to share?

We appreciate your time and responses. It will help our research by gaining explanatory reasons of LSE's effect on students' perception of political agency. Thank you for your answers, and please contact me if you have more questions or want to withdraw your data.

Appendix D

Example Consent Form

Interview Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of our project, examining the impact of LSE on perceptions of political agency.

By writing on this document, you indicate your consent to this interview and to us using the collected interview data in our forthcoming research project.

You reserve the right to withdraw your consent at any time up until Wednesday, 12th June 2024 at 11:59PM BST. Consent cannot be withdrawn after this time due to the publication timeline of our research project.

This interview, and the project overall, is ethics-approved by the LSE EDEN Centre for LSE GROUPS.

This interview will remain anonymous, and you have the right to choose a pseudonym. If you do not want to choose a pseudonym, or we decide that the pseudonym is not viable, we will choose one for you.

Point of contact: Ellie Flaherty – e.flaherty@lse.ac.uk

Chosen pseudonym: _____
I would like the Research Team to choose a pseudonym for me: Yes/No

Signed: _____
Name: _____

Signed by researcher: _____
Name: _____
Date: __/__/2024

Appendix E

Multivariate regressions

Linear Regression for years spent at the LSE:
$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 years\_lse$$

Where:

Y_i =   level of students' "NOSAY" aspect of the political agency within the LSE context

$years\_lse$ =   years students have spent at the LSE

Multivariate regression with a student community variable:
$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 years\_lse + \beta_2 connected\_student\_community$$

Where:

$connected\_student\_community$ =   level of how students feel connected to the LSE student community.

Multivariate regressions with controls for educational levels:
$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 years\_lse + \beta_2 connected\_student\_community + \beta_3 dummy\_master + \beta_4 dummy\_phd$$

$dummy\_master$ =   A binary variable identifying whether students are at the master's level

$dummy\_phd$ =   A binary variable identifying whether students are at the PhD level

Appendix F

Codebook

Global Theme: Perceptions of Political Agency in the 1960s			
Organizing Themes	**Basic Codes**	**Description**	**Evidence (examples and quotations)**
Perceptions of LSE and LSE community	Social	Interviewees were asked to talk about how involved they felt within LSE and the LSE community, specifically focusing on social aspects. This includes friends, societies, halls and whatever the interviewee felt sharing in relation to this.	- Caroline mentioned how they felt connected to the student community and made lifelong friends. - Jacquoline talked about LSE as a place to meet "fascinating people" and how they felt "absolutely part of the LSE community", including how diverse and international the university is. - Albert felt close to the LSE community through societies
	Education	Interviewees were asked about their involvement with LSE and the LSE community, considering academics. This includes their degree, department, public events, etc.	- Mary talked about how they could learn from other students in their course who were older than them. - Albert felt connected through academics. - Kathy found LSE academia "chaotic and challenging", but it was very enriching. - Paul stated how great LSE is academically.
	Institution	Interviewees reflected on the perception of LSE as an institution, and its political presence.	- Caroline, Jacquoline, Mary, Albert and Paul all talked about LSE in a positive light. - Albert mentioned LSE's political positioning (left-wing/right-wing) in their perception of the institution and
Self-Perception	Personal	Interviewees were asked about how they self-evaluated their political influence. This is interpreted in three levels: knowledgeable, involved and active.	- Caroline, Jacquoline, Kathy and Paul stated their political agency as active or actively involved. - Mary felt they are not active anymore but used to be involved even after graduation. - Albert did not go into politics as there was no access/ they didn't think it would make a difference / they didn't think about political issues at all.
	Community	Interviewees were asked about how they	- Caroline talked about their willingness to see changes and

		self-evaluated their communities' political influence, including friends, family members and volunteering. This is interpreted in three levels: knowledgeable, involved and active.	- calls for social equality, in the context of post-war, society crumbling. - Jacqueline talked about their parents actively involved in political parties and their partner was a local councilor.
LSE 'Experience' (as a factor of political agency)	Political	Interviewees were asked about how LSE's political background and atmosphere acting as a factor influenced their political agency.	- Jacquoline stated they weren't involved in marching as a student but affected by that atmosphere so felt more interested in politics. - Mary deeply resonated with the movements at 1960s, and felt empathy for students who are currently protesting. - Albert felt that LSE didn't directly change their political perceptions, because they had these before he came into it, from their working-class background. However, it gave the platform to elicit change. Big expansion of student demographics at LSE following Robbins Report. - Kathy talked about "power in masses/collectivity" and "Entire life (at LSE) was ensued with revolutionary ideals". The whole community is based upon it. They are glad to see the encampment as it gave them a glimpse of the campus used to be.
	Academic	Interviewees were asked about how LSE's academic curriculum and education acting as a factor influenced their political agency.	- Kathy and Paul felt their political agency enhanced because of LSE curriculum. - Kathy talked about academics and community had an equal hold on shaping her views, both massive contributions.

Circumstantial factors (for political agency)	1960's	Interviewees were asked about the specific contextual background during the 1960s. This includes hunger strikes and protests, amid Civil Rights Movements, anti-Vietnam War, and opposition of Walter Adams.	- Mary and Kathy stated it was more about the time in which the events took place rather than the university experience, as protests/revolutions were also prevalent in other universities. - Caroline reflected when they were sixth form students, were told to write "all plagues" on voting sheets to show their opinions - the very politicized and radical nature of this generation. - Mary, Caroline and Kathy mentioned many of their peers went on a hunger strike against the new principle at the time, and students were radical in the 1960s. They attribute their political agency to activist ideological trends in the 1960s. - Kathy mentioned that the general feel of wider society was about solving inequalities, post war babies had a lot of views.
	Other periods	Interviewees were asked about other contextual backgrounds which affect their political agency. This includes the 1970s, 1990s and 2020s.	- Jacquoline felt more worried about the present period, as "interesting times" "there must be a change". - Albert mentioned the students at LSE during this time thought they could "change the world". In the 1970s, voting changed so 18–21-year-olds could vote, before this they couldn't so they didn't have a say.
Actions	Political	Interviewees were asked about their political actions during/after their time at LSE. This includes protesting, voting, contacting representatives.	- Caroline mentioned that the voting age was 21 so students did not hold much political agency in wider society. The only way was to be collective and in unison with other students. - Caroline, Jacquoline, Albert and Kathy stated that they always vote.
			- Mary participated in anti-Vietnam war marching in the 1968. - Kathy talked about political views reinforced, confidence gained in speaking in political rooms. - Paul actively contacted representatives with the aim of influencing policy, actively protest.
	Volunteering	Interviewees reflected on their volunteering actions after their time at LSE.	- Caroline stated their volunteer experience of teaching English to achieve equity.

Appendix G

A graph indicating changes in perceived agency, per results from quantitative data

Number of Occurences for each Perceived Change Agency Score