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Quantitative Social Science (QSS)
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Dear Committee Members,

I am applying for the role of Lecturer in Quantitative Social Science at the Social Research Institute at University College London. I completed my PhD in 2023 at the Department of Political Economy at King's College London and I am now a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Psychology at Royal Holloway, University of London. I believe I am a suitable candidate for the role due my advanced training in quantitative methods, strong interdisciplinary profile, extensive teaching experience and well-developed research agenda in the field of political psychology.

In terms of research, I have an established and growing publication record in political science. For example, in my most recent paper, *"The Populist Impulse: Cognitive Reflection, Populist Attitudes and Candidate Preferences"* (forthcoming in *Electoral Studies*), I examine the relationship between cognitive reflection – i.e., the ability to suppress one's spontaneous intuition and engage in higher order cognition – and support for populism. This paper uses an original survey to employ a two-pronged approach measuring i) the relationship between cognitive reflection and populist attitudes and ii) a conjoint experiment to test the interaction between individual-level cognitive reflection and candidate-level populism in the determination of electoral preferences. As another example, my paper entitled *"Stability or Stagnation: Non-Monotonic Association Between Party System Closure and Satisfaction with Democracy"* was published in *Political Studies Review* earlier this year. The paper examines the country-level relationship between party system closure – i.e., stable and predictable inter-party relations at the governmental level – and average levels of satisfaction with democracy using data from Eurobarometer, Who Governs Europe and the European Social Survey. In the paper, I argue that party system closure represents a trade-off between representation and accountability, which I demonstrate empirically via an inverted U-shaped relationship between party system closure and satisfaction with democracy. Looking ahead, I aim to continue to develop my publishing record. For example, I plan to submit a current working paper entitled *"Motivated Reasoning and the Effects of Peer Observation on Belief Polarization"* to the *American Journal of Political Science* in the coming months.

I also have a series of collaborative and interdisciplinary publications. As a PhD student, I collaborated with researchers from King's College London, Brunel University of London, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, University of Toronto, Cornell University and Dartmouth College on two papers examining behavioural public policy interventions in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, one paper published in *Scientific Reports* examines support for stringent booster policies as a function of the effectiveness of the booster vaccine itself. We find that citizens are more likely to support more stringent policies when the booster reaches a threshold of 70% effectiveness of preventing infection. Meanwhile, another paper published in *PNAS Nexus* deals with the effect

of automatic booster appointments on vaccine intentions and finds that these policies reduce vaccine intentions relative to non-automatic appointments. Again, looking forward, my experience working the department of psychology at Royal Holloway, has resulted in a number of interdisciplinary projects spanning political science, psychology and economics. I believe this inter-disciplinary background can allow me to make a particularly meaningful impact on an interdisciplinary research centre like that of QSS.

In terms of experience of obtaining grant funding, I have a well-developed research proposal which builds on my PhD thesis. This project has passed the outline stage of the Leverhulme Trust's grant application process and is currently being revised for a detailed submission. In this proposal, I aim to uncover the causality underlying the relationship between support for populism and a collection of interrelated cognitive and epistemic traits (e.g. cognitive reflection, conspiracy mentality, need for cognition, tolerance of ambiguity etc.). To achieve this, I propose several studies which utilise a wide array of experimental and quasi-experimental techniques from cognitive psychology, neuroscience, political science and economics. These techniques include cognitive load tasks, neuromodulation, vignette experiments, regression discontinuity design and difference-in-difference models. Aside from this proposal, I have nascent ideas for another proposal exploring the relationship between personal ethics and political behaviour.

In terms of the methods used in my research, I have used Stata, R and Python to collect and analyse data. For example, in a paper published in *Party Politics*, I used a series of OLS fixed effects regressions to estimate the association between left-right ideology and strategic voting. Moreover, I also utilised a logistic regression to infer an incentive to vote strategically using electoral results. Meanwhile, in my paper on satisfaction with democracy and party system closure I use a quadratic term in an OLS regression to estimate the inverted-U shape relationship described above. Similarly, my paper on the relationship between populism and cognitive reflection employs a series of OLS regressions with interaction terms to measure the interaction between candidate-level populism and respondent-level cognitive reflection. Aside from regression techniques, I have estimated heterogeneous treatment effects in the study on vaccine appointment scheduling using causal forest models with the grf package in R. Moreover, I have used the crosswise model of indirect questioning to estimate the prevalence of sensitive traits with the cwise package in R. Finally, I have also used the umx package in R to fit ACE decomposition models with twin data. With this experience I am well placed to teach quantitative methods at varying levels of sophistication using R.

Turning direct attention to my teaching experience, I have wide-ranging experience with students at varying stages of academic development. In Autumn 2022, I was a visiting lecturer convening *"EU490 Evidence and Analysis in Policymaking"* at the European Institute of the London School of Economics. In this time, I was responsible for delivering lectures and computer lab sessions. This course was designed to advance students with no previous experience of quantitative methods to an intermediary level in the subject. As module convener, I was tasked with various administrative and organisational duties. For example, staff meetings, assessment, managing the Moodle page, etc. I also prioritised the delivery of detailed feedback to students, particularly when it came to formative assessment. I did so while maintaining a positive tone; highlighting the things which students did well and demonstrating ways in which students can improve upon their work. Moreover, I took the time in computer lab sessions to ensure that each student was following the material and encouraging students to ask for clarification whenever experiencing doubt or confusion. I made myself available for one-to-one guidance via office hours. The module was well received, as evidenced by an evaluation score of 4.0/5. In particular students were impressed with my availability and openness, as well as the detailed feedback they received throughout the term. As a result, I was nominated by students for a teaching excellence award for excellent communication and feedback.

I also have experience teaching at the undergraduate level. From 2019 to 2023, I was employed as a teaching assistant at King's College London. As part of this experience, I taught modules on introductory political science, introductory quantitative methods, and advanced quantitative methods. For example, the introductory

political science module *"Comparing Political Systems"* covers topics including electoral systems, political parties, public policy etc. As a seminar leader, I was tasked with leading discussions on these topics. This involved creating a positive environment in which students felt comfortable to answer questions and also encouraging students to engage with one another. I did so by structuring these discussions around a number of points relevant to that week's topic and gently leading the conversation the direction of those points. I also illustrated concepts via applied examples. For instance, applying different electoral formulae to actual UK election results to demonstrate the mechanical effect of electoral systems. Moreover, I used my background in teaching quantitative methods to encourage students to engage with statistical aspects of required readings. Finally, I was also able to provide advice on essay writing by emphasising the importance of sufficient engagement with the literature, imposing a clear structure on one's work, and adopting an appropriate academic tone. Once more, the evaluations I received for this module were highly positive (4.6/5).

Finally, I also led seminars for the modules *"4SSPP109 Quantitative Methods"* and *"5SSPP241 Statistics for Political Science II"* at KCL. These modules deal with introductory and advanced quantitative methods respectively. In the case of the former, topics included descriptive statistics, probability, and hypothesis testing. Meanwhile, in the case of the latter, topics included OLS and logistic regression, interaction effects, and regression visualisation. As a seminar leader, I assisted students with problem sets in classroom and computer lab sessions alike. This involved creating a positive environment in which students felt comfortable to answer questions and also encouraging students to engage with one another. I also endeavoured to make every step required to resolve a problem has clear as possible. For instance, taking the time to directly explain the syntax of a particular Stata command or the logic underlying a particular concept. Finally, I was also able to provide advice on applied academic research emphasising how the methods taught in these modules can be applied outside the context of the module. For example, in essays and dissertations. Once more, the evaluations I received for this module were highly positive (again, 4.6/5).

In sum, I believe my proven track record in academic publishing, strong interdisciplinary profile, advanced expertise in quantitative methods and extensive teaching experience make me a suitable candidate for the role. I have a well-developed research agenda and collaborative experience meaning I can make a valuable contribution from the outset. Moreover, I have experience of both convening a module and working as a teaching assistant meaning I can take on wide-ranging responsibilities.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my application. Please do not hesitate to contact me via email at andrew.hunter6@gmail.com.

Kind regards,

Andrew Hunter