

UQ 2019 Winter Research Project Description

Project title:	Un-neighbourliness: The nature, causes and outcomes of problems between neighbours and their implications for suburban life
Project duration:	4 weeks
Description:	<p>Even when they are strangers, neighbours are central to our lives. As the people who live closest to us, they can be the first responders in an emergency or approached for small favours while casual encounters with neighbours can buffer against social isolation. But neighbours can also be a source of conflict. As well as potentially undermining the benefits derived from positive neighbouring, problems with neighbours can cause considerable distress for those involved. Despite widespread community concern about so-called 'neighbours from hell' and anecdotal reports that neighbour disputes are increasing, we know very little about the negative side of neighbouring. Where sociologists have extensively studied what makes a good neighbour, identifying friendliness, helpfulness and respect for privacy as the most fundamental components of neighbourliness, no research to date has documented the nature, causes and outcomes of un-neighbourliness.</p> <p>In light of this, the 'Un-neighbourliness' project is guided by four main aims:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To examine the nature, causes and outcomes of neighbour problems in different suburban contexts. 2. To consider how problems between neighbours arise and are managed in the context of neighbouring more broadly and how this shapes ongoing neighbour interactions and relationships over time. 3. To develop the concept of un-neighbourliness in order to expand knowledge on the negative aspects of neighbouring. 4. To use the study of un-neighbourliness as a starting point for advancing what is known about the norms and practices of neighbouring in contemporary suburban life.
Expected outcomes and deliverables:	All data have been collected from the project and there are rich datasets comprising 60 'street study' interviews, 35 interviews with people involved in neighbour mediation, 3500 (partly qualitative) administrative records; and city council complaint data (n=450,000 records). A winter scholar will be invited to help produce a published paper on the project using one of these datasets. The topic of the paper will be negotiated with the student who will undertake the data analysis and a preliminary literature review. The student will then be invited to contribute to the drafting of the paper if he/she wishes to be included as an author, although this will need to occur after the four-week scholarship period. The scholar will gain valuable experience in formulating a research problem and undertaking data analysis under the supervision of an experienced researcher.
Suitable for:	This project is open to social science students who have completed some level of research methods training – i.e. SOCY2019; SOCY2339 and (possibly) SOCY3329, or equivalent courses in anthropology. Sociology of BSocSc students are particularly encouraged to apply, but all quality applicants with demonstrable research training are welcome. The project will be particularly helpful to any student considering Honours study on completion of their undergraduate degree.
	Professor Lynda Cheshire
Further info:	Students are welcome to contact me at l.cheshire@uq.edu.au for further information.