The Rachael Webb Political Psychology PhD Studentship

Understanding consensus and dissensus in public decision-making on UK international relations within and beyond Europe.

Further particulars

The outcome of the 2016 UK-EU referendum has produced strong political positions within the demos which appear to be consolidating in the post-referendum period. In navigating new international relations within Europe and beyond, UK governments across the four nations need to understand the public mandate. Yet there is now a political psychological question as to the extent to which the forced binary, necessitated by the referendum, risks having the legacy of an intolerance towards different opinions on sovereignty and immigration. This intolerance can be compounded by governments, politicians and identity-entrepreneurs creating hostile conditions.

In particular new identities arising out of the referendum are hardening around a ‘Leave’ and ‘Remain’ self-categorisation. In parallel the parameters of direct democracy and representative democracy are shifting creating exciting opportunities to investigate the dynamics of dialogical and deliberative democracy.

This The Rachael Webb Political Psychology PhD studentship will examine two dimensions of the present conjuncture (i) the factors influencing citizens’ decision-making on the UK’s international relations within Europe and beyond (ii) the psychological conditions under which publics are able to sustain dialogue when confronted with an ideologically different political opinion on UK international relations within Europe and beyond.

The PhD is supervised by Dr Kesi Mahendran (Open University) with additional supervision provided by Dr Agnes Czajka (Open University) and Professor Nick Hopkins (University of Dundee).

The PhD will involve a comparative approach which takes into account the differences and commonalities across the four-nations within the UK. It will involve participants with varying degrees of mobility using the Migration-Mobility Continuum (Mahendran, 2015; 2017) and include participants in rural and coastal areas. It is suitable for candidates who have an interest in dialogical self (Mahendran, 2015; 2017), self-categorisation (Hopkins, 2008; Hopkins, Reicher & van Rijswijk, 2015) and the relationship between self and identity and models of democracy (Czajka 2017). Successful candidates will have a track record of training in both qualitative and quantitative methods as well as an interest in developing dialogical research methods which provide governments, politicians and relevant decision-makers with timely advice.

The successful candidate will become part of on-going research programme which aims to understand the role of citizenship and degree of mobility in the development of worldviews and everyday models of democracy.
References


The Open University Political Psychology PhD Studentship.

This is the first fully-funded political psychology studentship in the UK that is funded by philanthropic funding. It is funded by Rachael Webb. Rachael Webb’s funding seeks to provide citizens, government, politicians and relevant decision-makers with greater understanding of the political psychological factors that influence the public’s political decision-making. The funding is particularly focused on the voices and political positions of people who are often overlooked in social research e.g. people in rural and coastal locations. Together with the supervisory team this funding is particular directed towards innovative dialogical research methods which provide politicians and other decision-makers with timely advice.

The overall objective of the funding is to promote greater understanding, tolerance and respect between people who have different political outlooks and priorities and as such may vote differently. The funding works towards an open-minded and tolerant democracy.

For more information about this PhD studentship including copies of the relevant publications please write to Dr Kesi Mahendran kesi.mahendran@open.ac.uk.