

Project description

My research project proposal is to examine the construction of the 'ideal type' political subject, understood as embodying the republican notion of 'universally shared identity', with view to understand a phenomenon of self-exclusion from political activity. As such, I am interested in how intersectional factors lead some fringe groups to reject leadership by excluding themselves from politics.

Using Rousseau's conception of inequality as a socially created phenomenon, not found in man's natural state, I hope to explore how political identity is created. By understanding how personal political identity is created and how this can conflict with the 'ideal type' political subject, I will be able to explain why some people feel they are excluded from engaging in politics. In explaining this I would also hope to uncover what or who creates this 'ideal type' subject. This research therefore could importantly develop political leadership. By raising awareness of the socially constructed political 'ideal type', and how this can be alienating, this project could help ameliorate this effect. Therefore, through an improved understanding of political identity this research has the potential to disseminate an enhanced awareness of effective, inclusive leadership.

I believe that this project is distinct from the existing mainstream discussion of identity politics and cultural diversity. Rather than arguing 1) for assimilation towards universal citizenship or 2) for differentiated citizenship where distinct identities are respected within the political community, my interest is in those who reject political engagement completely. I suggest that the 'ideal type' political subject is entrenched in our notion of political identity such that when people find their personal identity so fundamentally inconsistent, they are forced to exclude themselves. My project would focus on political and personal identity thus rooting it in philosophical research although with some clear interdisciplinary overlap borrowing from political science.