

Invitation to Participate in Thesis Research

Study Name: Exploring Conservative Perspectives in Canadian Sociology

Dear potential participant,

My name is Benjamin Date, and I am a graduate student at Lakehead University. I am in the 2nd year of my Master's program, conducting research on politically conservative sociologists in Canada. My supervisor is Dr. Antony Puddephatt, in the department of Sociology. If you define yourself as a **conservative** (*however that makes sense to you*), I am greatly interested in learning about how you have experienced the discipline of sociology in relation to your political affiliation. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Before deciding whether to participate or not, I would kindly like to request you take a moment to read through this letter. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at bupdate@lakeheadu.ca.

Purpose of Research

This research will be led by myself (Benjamin Date – Sociology - Lakehead University) and supervised by Antony Puddephatt (Sociology – Lakehead University). I can be contacted via email at bupdate@lakeheadu.ca. Numerous sociologists have raised concerns about the narrow political spectrum and a left-liberal bias in the discipline (Lukianov and Haidt 2018; Pawluch 2019; Steeves 2022). Given this context, I am interested in learning about the first-hand experiences, observations, and ideas of conservative sociologists occupying a minority position in the discipline. The purpose of this research is to give conservative sociologists an opportunity to share their perspectives regarding the current state of Canadian sociology, as well as provide a chance to share their own experiences navigating the discipline. Further, I also hope to explore new emergent themes from more conservative positions, which might identify new promising and neglected directions for sociological research.

Participation Eligibility Criteria

In order to be eligible to participate in this research project, participants will be:

- ➔ 18 years of age or older
- ➔ Identify as politically conservative (however this makes sense to you)
- ➔ Be a current, or former, member of the Canadian Sociological Association

Participation is entirely voluntary, and participants are not obligated to answer all questions or to finish the survey. Although participants can withdraw from completing the survey at any time, once the survey has been completed, withdrawal from the study will no longer be possible due to its anonymous nature. All surveys will be completely anonymous and confidential.

What Information Will be Collected?

The survey will collect a combination of demographic information and sociological perspectives/experiences related to your political affiliation. Demographic questions can include, but are not limited to, age, gender, ethnicity, language, religion, and citizenship status. The survey will also ask questions relating to conservative experiences, perspectives, and critiques pertaining to the Canadian field of sociology, and how conservative ideas might provide interesting new research directions in the discipline.

What is Requested of me as a Participant?

This survey consists of 18 multiple choice questions with the option to provide additional information if desired. There are then 8 open-ended questions designed to allow you to discuss these complex issues in your own words. It is expected to take no more than 45 minutes to complete. If you do not want to answer certain questions, or decide not to complete the survey, that is your right. Your experiences, perspectives, and feedback are tremendously valued!

What are my Rights as a Participant?

As a participant, you have the right to decline participation or withdraw from completing the survey at any time. I will have no way of knowing who decides to participate or not. However, once the survey has been completed, you will no longer be able to withdraw from the study. This is due to the anonymous nature of the survey itself. Once completed, the results will be fully anonymous and therefore not possible to remove individual contributions. You also have the right to access the findings. Once the study is complete, I can provide a summary of the results upon request. Additionally, I can also provide you with a copy of the thesis in its entirety.

What are the Risks and Benefits?

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study due to the anonymous nature of the data collection and publication. The benefit to participating is allowing you the opportunity to voice any concerns you may have about the political leanings of the discipline, and express your views and experiences without worrying about social or professional backlash. This is a chance to present your perspectives authentically and free of political censorship, which might be cathartic. The findings of this study will not only indicate patterns of conservative thought and experience in the context of Canadian sociology and allow for critical disciplinary reflection, but may also indicate potential blind spots along with new and creative ideas for the discipline.

Will I Receive an Honourarium/Incentive/Compensation?

There are no honorariums, incentives, or compensation offered for participating in this study.

How Will My Confidentiality be Maintained?

The survey will be completed electronically online, using SurveyMonkey, and is completely anonymous. There will be no request to provide a name or any identifying information. In the rare case that potentially identifying information of any kind is provided in the text boxes, I will be sure to alter or omit this in any written reports.

Who Will Have Access to my Data?

The only people who will have access to the data are myself, as well as my supervisory committee, Dr. Antony Puddephatt and Dr. Chris Sanders, at Lakehead University. All this data is anonymous and cannot be connected to any particular individual.

Disclaimer: The research team will not share any personally identifiable information with anyone outside the study, except in the following cases and only if required by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. The Research Ethics Board may review the study records to ensure compliance with the approved research ethics guidelines. All information collected during this study, including your personal information on the consent forms, will remain confidential.

Where Will my Data be Stored?

Data from the survey will be exported from SurveyMonkey to my personal laptop computer, which is password protected. After exporting the data for analysis with SPSS and NVivo, I will delete the project from the SurveyMonkey account. Once the project is complete, I will transfer all the data to Dr. Puddephatt's office computer, which is also password protected, where it will be stored for 7 years as per the requirements of Lakehead University.

Disclaimer: Due to the use of online tools in this study, there is a small risk that your data could be accessed by third parties, including government authorities, under applicable privacy and national-security laws. While all reasonable efforts will be made to protect your confidentiality and anonymity, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed when data is transmitted or stored online.

What Will my Data Be Used For?

Your data will be analyzed to better understand the experiences and perspectives of those occupying conservative positions in Sociology, for the purposes of my MA thesis project. There is a possibility I will attempt to publish my thesis in a relevant sociological journal or present my findings at related sociological events. In those instances, the anonymity and confidentiality of participants will continue to be maintained.

How Can I Receive a Copy of the Research Results?

All participants will have access to the study findings upon request. You can send me an email at bpdate@lakeheadu.ca and I can send you a summary of results, or the entire thesis if preferred. Please note, by reaching out to access the findings, I will know you have participated in the study. Your identity will be kept entirely confidential in that case, and I will still have no way of knowing which specific survey results are yours.

What if I Want to Withdraw from the Study?

As aforementioned, participation is entirely voluntary. If at any time you wish to withdraw from the study, simply do not finish the survey. However, once the survey has been submitted, withdrawing from the study will no longer be possible due to the anonymous nature of the results. Due to the inability to withdraw anonymized survey results, please take the time to consider whether you would like to participate or not. There is no penalty or consequence if you want to look at the survey questions before deciding to fully participate or not.

Researcher Contact Information

Researcher: Benjamin Date/Graduate Student of Sociology/Lakehead University

Email: bpdate@lakeheadu.ca

Supervisor: Antony Puddephatt/Professor of Sociology/Lakehead University

Email: apuddeph@lakeheadu.ca

Research Ethics Board Review and Approval

The Lakehead University Research Ethics Board has reviewed and approved this research study. If you have any questions related to the research ethics and would like to speak to someone outside of the research team, please contact Sheena Beach at the Research Ethics Board at 807-343-8010 ext. 8933 or research.ethics@lakeheadu.ca.