Project Overview

This research project, entitled "*Investigating the Mental Health Needs of People Exiting High Demand Groups,"* is led by Dr. Smart at the University of Victoria. Others who are involved in the project are Rayann Gordon (graduate student at the University of Salford), Nazanin Babaei (graduate student at the University of Victoria), and Amanda Reaume and Sydney Klassen (undergraduate students at the University of Victoria). The study follows a trauma-informed approach to ensure sensitivity and participant well-being, offering breaks, resource materials, and mental health supports as needed. You can contact the lab at **smartlab@uvic.ca** if you believe you may be eligible to participate.

What is the study?

This study aims to investigate the lived experience of individuals who have exited a high-demand group (or 'cult') that was either fully online or hybrid online/in-person. The study aims to learn more about the challenges and needs of people leaving these groups, including their mental health, identity changes, coping strategies, and access to support services. It is hoped that the results of this project will inform ways to improve mental health care and resources for individuals leaving these environments.

Who is eligible?

- Adults aged 19+ who identify with having been in a cult (e.g., religious, political, new age, and so on),
- Adults aged 19+ who identify with having been in an online high-demand group (e.g., QAnon/RedPill/Incel/Pick-Up, influencer led communities,
- Individuals who have been out of their group for between 1 and 5 years,
- Individuals who are English speaking, have access to a computer,
- Individuals who are not in active crises and who can identify a support person (i.e., a therapist, friend, family member).

What's involved?

1) You can first reach out to our lab at **smartlab@uvic.ca** to express interest. The lab will then be sent a brief screening survey that will determine your eligibility.
2) If you are eligible, we will send a link to a 45-minute online questionnaire.
3) If you decide you'd like to participate in a subsequent 60–90-minute Zoom interview, our research assistants will schedule you for one.
4) You will be offered $20 per hour for your participation. For a 60–90-minute interview and approximately 45 minutes of questionnaires, the estimated compensation is $50. If only the questionnaire portion is completed (even partially), you will receive $20. If the interview goes longer than expected, you will be reimbursed in 30-minute increments.