

# Participant Information Sheet

This Information Sheet is for potential interview participants.

## Date Information Sheet Produced:

13/06/2022

## Project Title

The Witches' Turn: the Magic of Popular Media

## An Invitation

I am a doctoral candidate at Auckland University of Technology in my second year of study towards my PhD. I have been practicing Witchcraft and have identified as a Witch for most of my life. I would like to invite you to participate in an interview where we will discuss how your Witch identity and Witchcraft practice have been inspired, influenced, and instructed by popular media.

I would like you to know that I am reaching out to this community from the inside. Some of my best teenage memories are of making myself reading lists from Witchvox forums, and I don't know where I'd be today without an app to remind me the full moon is coming up. Popular media has always been an integral part of my own practice and I am sincerely interested in how it has shaped yours. I hope you are interested in contributing knowledge to this study and if you are, please reach out with your expression of interest.

## What is the purpose of this research?

This project is an ethnographic study of the contemporary Witchcraft community focused around the question: What is the relationship between occultural popular media and the processes of self-identifying Witches in the 21st century?

Occulture is a term that has recently been coined to describe the relationship between popular media depictions of "occult" subjects and their influence on theoretical and practical approaches in magical spaces. I have chosen to use this term as it reflects that media that is not explicitly about Witches or Witchcraft may still have a significant degree of influence to members of our community.

While there have been several academic studies regarding the influence of popular media on Witch identity and Witchcraft practices, the most recent of these studies is over a decade old. Additionally, the existing literature does not reflect the increased availability of Witchcraft content through the Internet, particularly in the forms of digital media and social media.

While the available scholarship addresses the fundamental relationship between representations of Witches across popular media and practices of Witchcraft, it is not clear if the texts that have been identified are still of relevancy to members of the contemporary Witchcraft community. In my years in this community I have seen so much growth in the diversity of our members and our respect for differing interpretations of Witchcraft. It is my hypothesis that this wider cultural shift will have impacted which texts are still regarded well and considered influential within our community.

The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations and will be utilised in my doctoral thesis.

## How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You identify as a Witch or as practicing Witchcraft and are willing to discuss the relationship occultural popular media has to your journey. To participate in this study you must be over the age of 18, able to give consent on your own behalf, and able to complete the interview in English.

Once you have expressed your interest in being interviewed, you will be entered into a pool of potential candidates from which ten interview participants will be randomly selected.

You are being invited to participate in this interview so I can form case studies of *how* Witches utilise texts.

Identification of texts that are popularly influential within the community provides some valuable data, but I am extremely interested in how the ideas we gather from various media become part of our identity and practices, which is an area that few scholars have researched.

## **How do I agree to participate in this research?**

You must contact me via email to express your interest as an interview candidate. Solicitation of potential participants is prohibited.

Please send your email to [astrid.crosland@autuni.ac.nz](mailto:astrid.crosland@autuni.ac.nz) with the subject line "Interview Expression of Interest" by the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2022.

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

## **What will happen in this research?**

After the initial consideration period has closed, if there are more than ten expressions of interest, each potential participant will be assigned a number. I will then use a random number generator to draw ten candidates to issue an invitation to schedule an interview. You will have a further 28 days to consider this invitation. If you have not responded within 14 days, I will email you one reminder (only).

If one of the potential participants declines the invitation or does not respond after the consideration period has elapsed, I will draw a new number and send an invitation to that person with the same consideration period.

If you accept my invitation, you will be asked to engage in a one-on-one interview with me that will take up to an hour.

You will be asked to either complete an interview consent form, or complete oral consent protocol, before the interview can take commence.

If you are local to Auckland, this interview may take place on the Auckland University of Technology campus. Otherwise, the interview will take place via Zoom. I am located in Auckland, New Zealand, which is the time zone GMT+12. I am willing to offer flexibility in scheduling the interviews, but some times and/or dates may not be possible or practical.

I will ask you some general questions about you Witch identity and Witchcraft journey, ask you to define your understanding of the terms "Witch" and "Witchcraft," and then ask you about the media you have engaged with over the course of your Witchcraft journey and how you feel that has inspired, influenced, and instructed your identity and practices. I will ask you to think about your journey in a loose chronological order, starting at the beginning of your practice or decision to identify as a Witch, through to your current practice and identification.

If at any point you are not sure what context I am using a term, you may ask me to provide a definition.

I will adopt a conversational style while conducting the interview. I have prepared a series of questions to help guide the discussion, but I may ask you to elaborate of some points or omit questions that do not seem relevant to you or I feel you have already answered.

I might take some manual notes during the interview, particularly if I want to check I have the correct spelling of something, but I intend to remain engaged with you throughout the interview as your time is valuable and I want to make the most of the hour we have.

All interviews will be conducted before the end of December 2022. If you have not received a response to your expression of interest by this time, you have not been selected to participate in the stage of the study.

I will not contact you to conduct any additional research. You may contact me at any point in the research process.

## **What are the discomforts and risks?**

I am acutely aware that discussing the reasoning behind your Witch identity and Witchcraft practice is a potentially sensitive topic, as all subjects of belief, faith, religion, and spirituality are. You will be treated with respect and your contribution to this research is incredibly valuable to me and will be treated as such.

## **How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

The interviews will be confidential. The only people present during the interview will be you and me.

I will treat the raw data with extreme care to ensure you are not identifiable. The consent forms, which will state your name and contact details, will be stored securely in a locked office separate to the interview data, which will be stored in a separate locked office location.

I will transcribe the raw data personally. If you have revealed any potentially information during the course of our interview (such as your name or precise location) this will be redacted before it is published in any form.

If you are uncomfortable answering a question, I will not pressure you into providing a response.

If it would make you more comfortable to know why I am asking a question, I can offer my reasoning as to why I have included it.

If you express you no longer wish to participate in this study at any stage during or after the interview, your responses will be excluded and a new interview participant will be chosen from the remaining pool. If you wish to withdraw from the study before the interview is complete, the interview will be terminated without completion. It may not be possible to remove data identifiable as belonging to you after the research have been published.

### **What are the benefits?**

When complete, this study will address a significant gap in the current scholarship that will provide future scholars with insight into the contemporary Witchcraft community. It will also offer identification of recent popular media texts that are not addressed by the existing scholarship as well as discussion of the role of the Internet in contemporary Witch identities and practices that is currently lacking in the available literature. The completed thesis will also be uploaded to Tuwhera Open Theses and Dissertations, an online repository available to members of the public.

### **How will my privacy be protected?**

No identifying data will be published and any potentially identifying data will be redacted before the data is made available to anyone else. Your identity and contact details will only be known to me and my two supervisors. They will only be used provide you will a summary of the results. Your consent form will be stored in a secure location on Auckland University of Technology campus for six years following the completion of the study. The interview data will be stored in a separate secure location for the same period. After this time has elapsed, this data will be destroyed. This is a requirement for ethical approval by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee.

### **What are the costs of participating in this research?**

The interview is anticipated to take around an hour.

### **What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

You have until 31 October 2022 to contact me expressing your interest in being an interview candidate.

### **Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

Once the data has been analysed, a summary of the findings will be will be emailed to the address you provide in your contact details The final analysis is expected in late 2024. A summary of the findings will be made available to you via the following URL links here: <https://www.aut.ac.nz/study/study-options/maori-and-indigenous-development/research/popular-culture-research-centre>.

I will also post this links to the same boards/forums I posted this invitation once it is live.

### **What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Professor Lorna Piatti-Farnell, [lorna.piatti-farnell@aut.ac.nz](mailto:lorna.piatti-farnell@aut.ac.nz) phone: (+64) 9 921 9999 Ext. 6831

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz) , (+64) 921 9999 ext 6038.

### **Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

#### ***Researcher Contact Details:***

Astrid Crosland, [astrid.crosland@autuni.ac.nz](mailto:astrid.crosland@autuni.ac.nz)

#### ***Project Supervisor Contact Details:***

Lorna Piatti-Farnell, [lorna.piatti-farnell@aut.ac.nz](mailto:lorna.piatti-farnell@aut.ac.nz)