

BEN ROCHFORD

Department of Sociology, Duke University

EDUCATION

- 2023 - Present** Ph.D. Candidate in Sociology, Duke University
- 2019 - 2023** B.S. in Computer Science, Georgia Institute of Technology
Highest Honor

RESEARCH AREAS

Artificial Intelligence and Society
Political Polarization

Online Communities
Mental Health

PUBLICATIONS

Marie Neubrandner*, Markus Reiter-Haas*, **Ben Rochford**, Maxwell B. Allamong, Chris Bail, D. Sunshine Hillygus, Alexander Volfovsky. (2026). *Can Platform Design Encourage Curiosity? Evidence from an Independent Social Media Experiment*. R&R.

Ben Rochford, Cathy Lee, Michelle Qiu, Alexander Volfovsky, D. Sunshine Hillygus, Christopher Bail. (2025) *A Sociological Turing Test: Social Identity Cues Shape Who is Classified as Human Online*. R&R.

Sachin Pendse, **Ben Rochford**, Neha Kumar, Munmun De Choudhury. (2025) *The Role of Partisan Culture in Mental Health Language Online*. ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW), 2025.

Ben Rochford, Sachin Pendse, Neha Kumar, and Munmun De Choudhury. (2023) “Leveraging Symptom Search Data to Understand Disparities in US Mental Health Care: Demographic Analysis of Search Engine Trace Data.” *JMIR Mental Health*, 10, e43253

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Do Social Identities Shape Trust of AI Systems?

Co-author: *Alexander Tolkin*. The Polarization Lab, Duke University

Will We Defer to AI in Moral Judgments?

Sole author. The Polarization Lab, Duke University

People to Prompts: Does Interview Data Improve LLM Survey Simulations for Underrepresented Groups?

Co-authors: *Lorcan Neill, David Gonzales Chavez, Christopher Bail*
Duke University; University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

PRESENTATIONS

2025 “AI and Social Problems” – Invited Lecture, Duke Explainable AI course, Fall 2025

- 2025** “A Sociological Turing Test” – Roundtable presentation
Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, Chicago, Illinois
- 2025** “Very Human Biases in Human AI Interaction” – Invited lecture
Summer Institute in Computational Social Science, Lake Como, Italy
- 2025** “Bot or Not? Identity Biases in the Perceived Humanity of Online Profiles” – Oral presentation
Responsible AI Symposium 2025, Duke University, Durham, NC
- 2025** “Identity cues impact perceptions of online accounts as artificial” – Roundtable presentation
Tar Devils (Duke-UNC Sociology Symposium), Durham, NC
- 2024** “The Role of Partisan Culture in Mental Health Language Online” – Oral presentation
International Conference on Computational Social Science 2024 (IC2S2), Philadelphia, PA
- 2022** “Using Symptom Search Data to Understand Disparities in U.S. Mental Healthcare” – Poster
ACM conference on Equity and Access in Algorithms, Mechanisms, and Optimization (EAAMO), Washington, DC
- 2022** “Symptom Search and Unequal Access to Mental Healthcare” – Oral presentation
Georgia Tech Undergraduate Research Symposium, Atlanta, GA

EXPERIENCE

- Society-Centered AI Graduate Fellow** August 2025 - Present
Duke University
- Lead Program Assistant** August 2024 - Present
Summer Institutes in Computational Social Science, Global
- Graduate Researcher** August 2023 - Present
Polarization Lab, Duke University
- Summer Institutes in Computational Social Science** July 2024
University of Pennsylvania, 2024 Cohort
- Undergraduate Researcher** January 2021 - May 2023
Social Dynamics and Well-being Lab, Georgia Institute of Technology
- Software Engineering Intern, Full Stack** May 2021 - August 2021
Workforce Intelligence, Pegasystems
- Data Engineering Intern** June 2020 - August 2020
Shenandoah Telecommunications Company

LEADERSHIP & SERVICE

Organizer, Invited Lecturer <i>SICSS: Lake Como, Italy</i>	July 2025
Volunteer, GPSG Community Pantry <i>Duke University</i>	2025 - Present
Board Member, Duke Wesley Foundation <i>Duke University</i>	2025 - Present
Section Leader, Georgia Tech Marching Band <i>Georgia Institute of Technology</i>	2021 - 2023
President, Georgia Tech Wesley Foundation <i>Georgia Institute of Technology</i>	2022
Eagle Scout, Boy Scouts of America <i>Troop 30, Staunton, VA</i>	2018

SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

Graduate Research Fellowship Program – Honorable Mention <i>National Science Foundation</i>	2025
SAGE Research Spotlight Interviewee <i>ASA Annual Meeting</i>	2025
Institutional Fellowship <i>Duke University</i>	2023 - 2025
LaRoche Merit Scholarship <i>Georgia Institute of Technology</i>	2019 - 2023
Outstanding Student Leader <i>Georgia Institute of Technology</i>	2023

REFERENCES

Dr. Christopher Bail (*Ph.D. advisor*)
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Georgia Institute of Technology
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Dr. Lynn Smith-Lovin
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Dr. Jennifer Hasler
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