

A collaborative examination of the online communities of autistic individuals

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A note on language

Person-first language

Adults with autism

Adults with ASD
(autism spectrum disorder)

Identity-first language

Autistic Adults



Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

- Neurodevelopmental condition
- Differences in social communication
- Patterns of inflexible behavior (restricted and repetitive behavior)
- 1 in 66 of the population (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2018)

“There is not one autism but many subtypes, and each person with autism can have unique strengths and challenges.”

~Autism Speaks

“If you’ve met one person with autism, you’ve met ONE person with autism”

~Dr. Stephen Shore


Autism and Social Interactions

- Differences in social communication impact relationships:
 - Misunderstandings
 - Marginalized
 - Vulnerable
- Social isolation
 - because others incorrectly assume that all autistic people prefer to be alone rather than with others

Autism and Social Media


- Social media has been suggested as a potential solution.
- Reducing the demands of face-to-face conversation
- Social media may create a more welcoming environment.
- Social media might reduce isolation and enhance social interactions for autistic individuals.
 - Research: Research broader population

Reddit





askreddit


COMMENTS



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34.2k




Autistic people of Reddit, what is autism really like? (self.AskReddit)


submitted 2 years ago * by [Valkyrie_05](#) 

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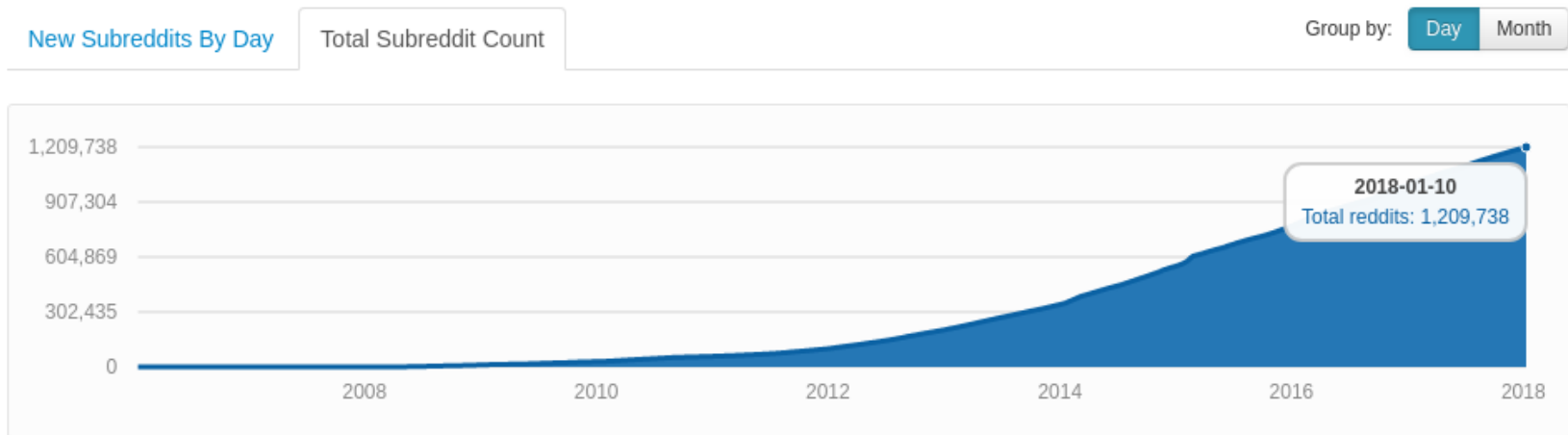



[\[-\] UnusualSoup](#) 24.0k points 2 years ago*  20

For me, horrible. I am lonely. I want to be around people so much. I love talking, they taught me to talk and forgot to talk to. I want to work, but I need supervision.

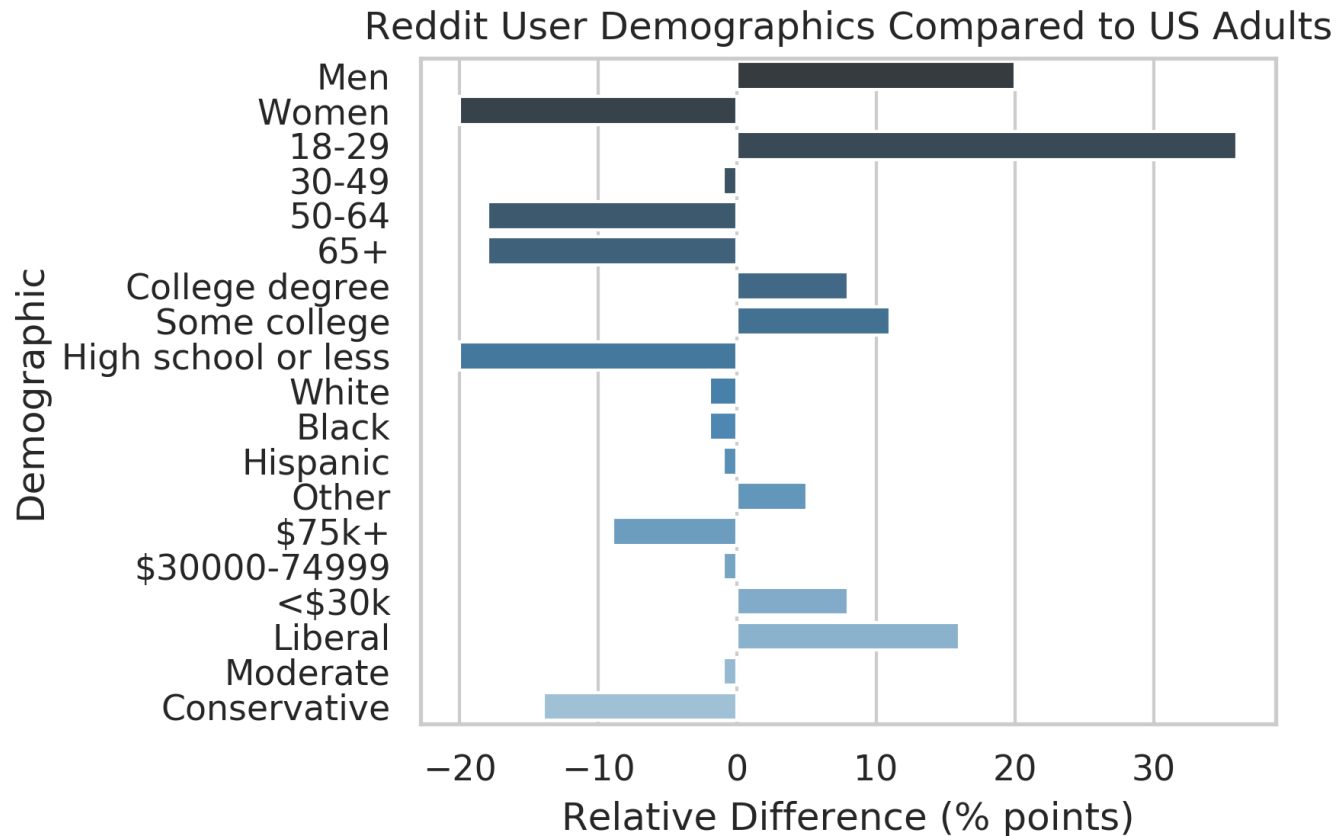
Subreddits

New subreddits by date (How Reddit grew over time)



<https://subredditstats.com/>

Reddit Users



Pew Research Centre (Reddit Survey Jan 12-Feb 8 2016
N=288 and 2015 March Current Population Survey)

Research Questions:

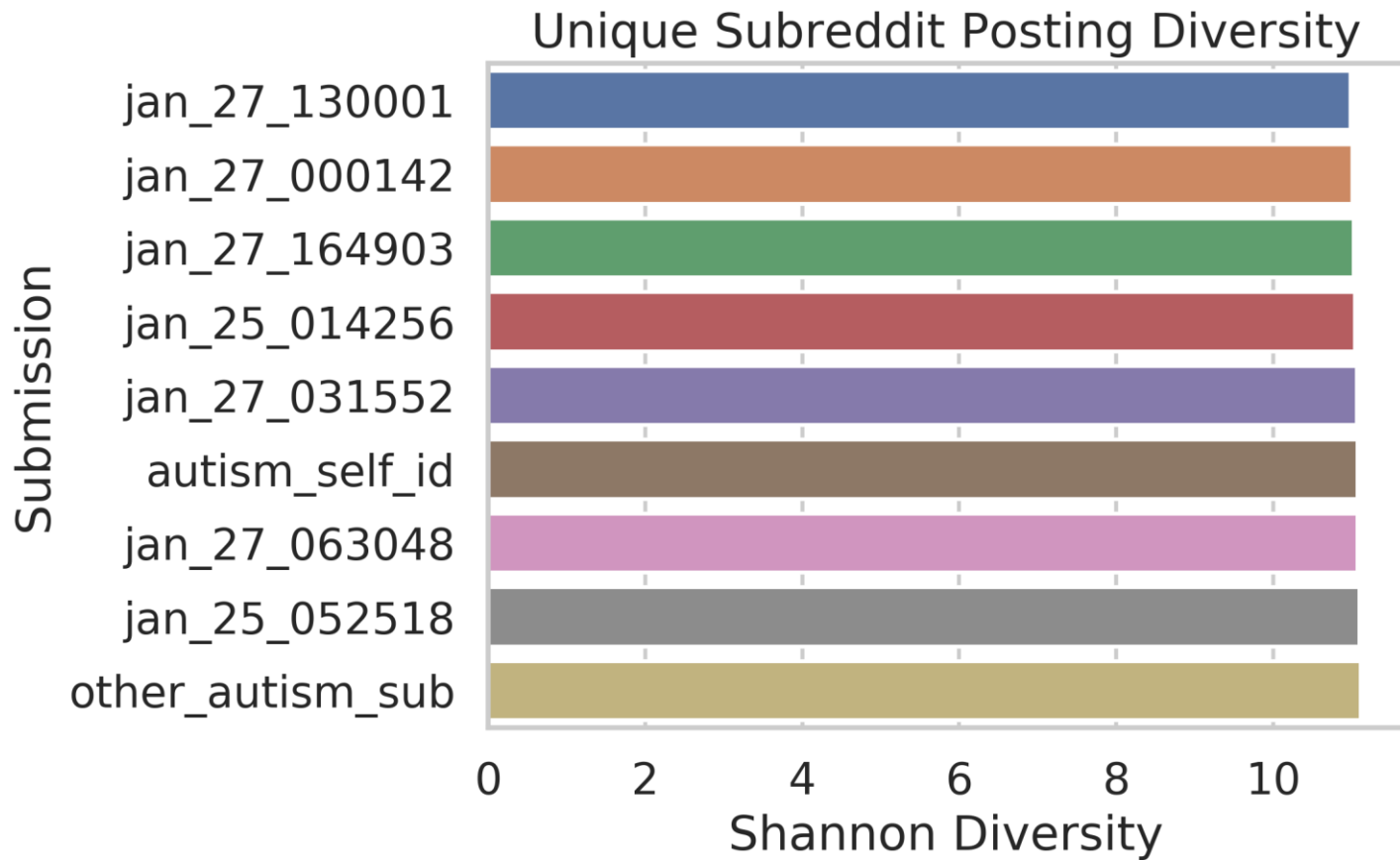
Alpha Diversity: Do autistic individuals post in as many different spots on Reddit as other users?

Beta Diversity: Do autistic individuals post in the same spots on Reddit as other users?

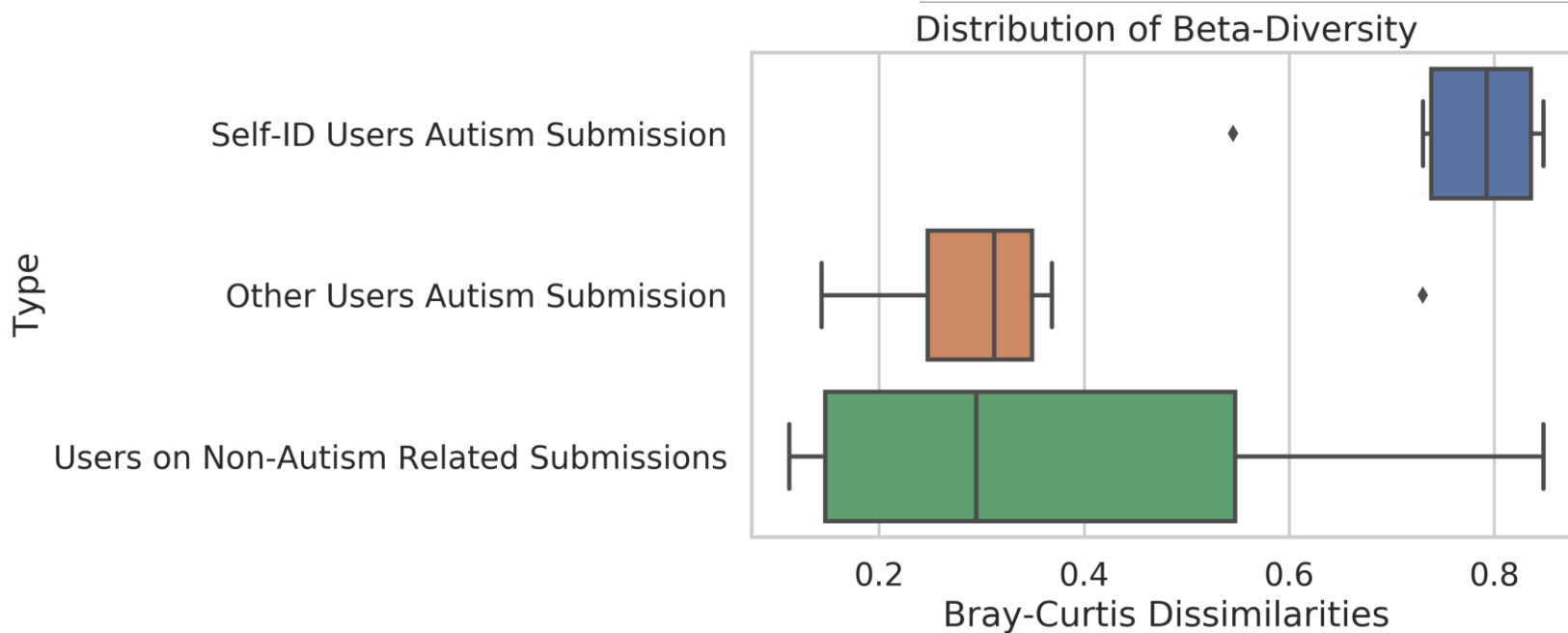
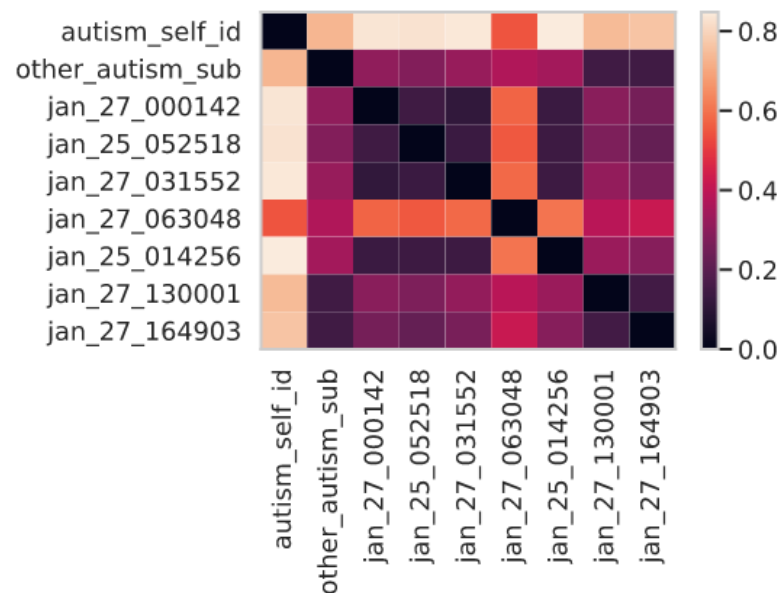
Data Acquisition

- AskReddit submission: "Autistic people of Reddit, what is autism really like?" (Jan. 2017)
- 7 control submissions (top of AskReddit day before and after autism submission).
- Classify users in Autism submission that self-identify as having autism
- Retrieve location of last 1000 posts for every user
- Encode posting location into matrix (row = submission, col = subreddit, value = number of users)

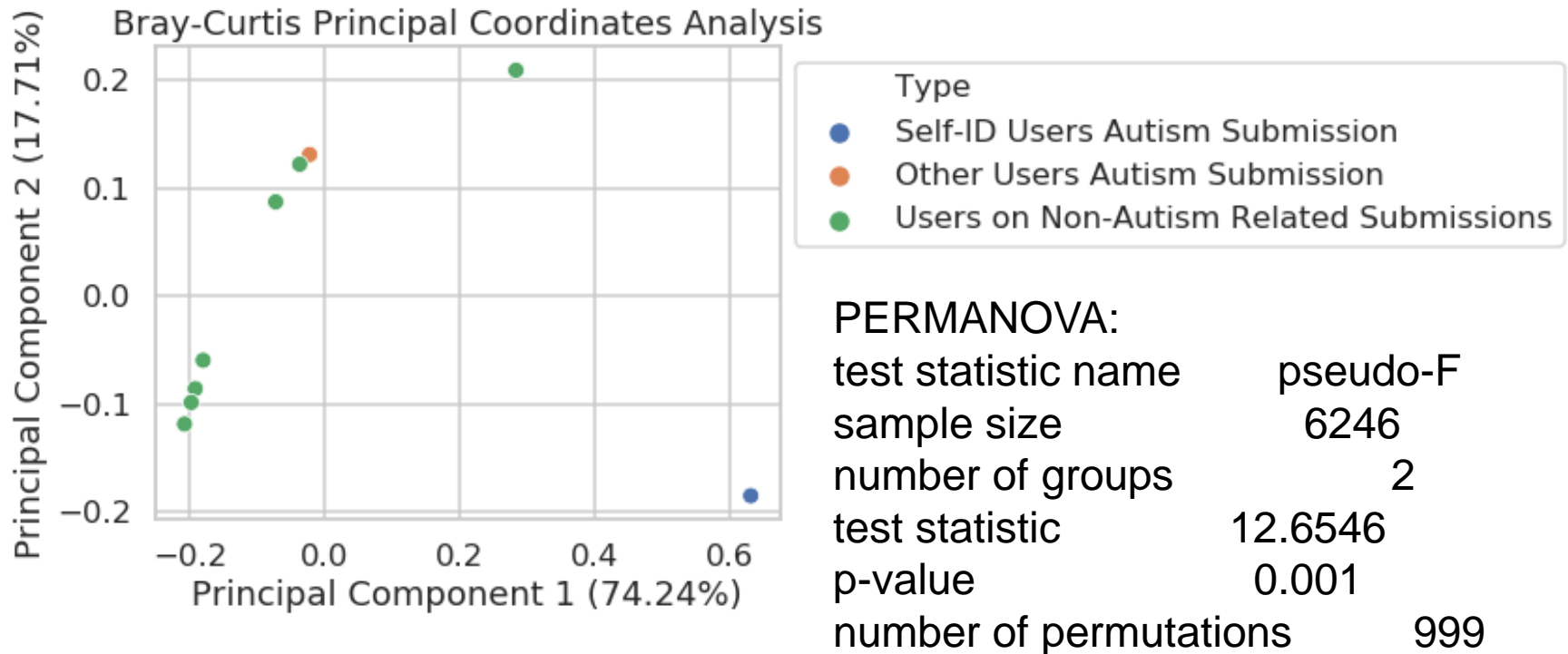
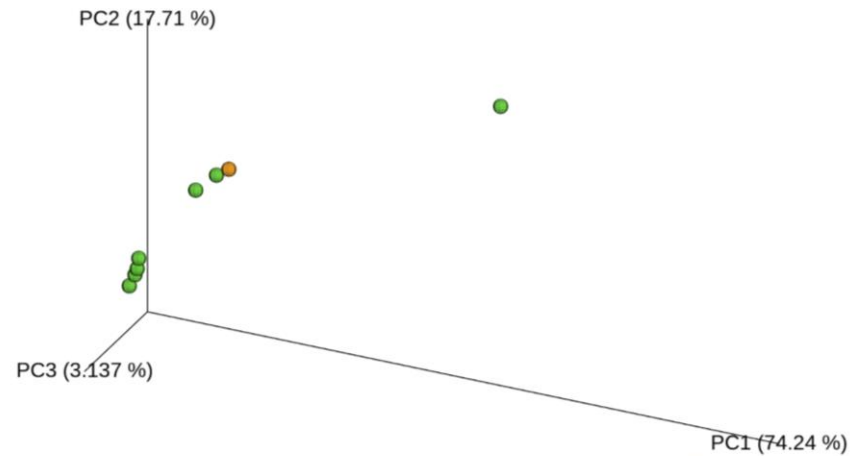
Alpha-Diversity



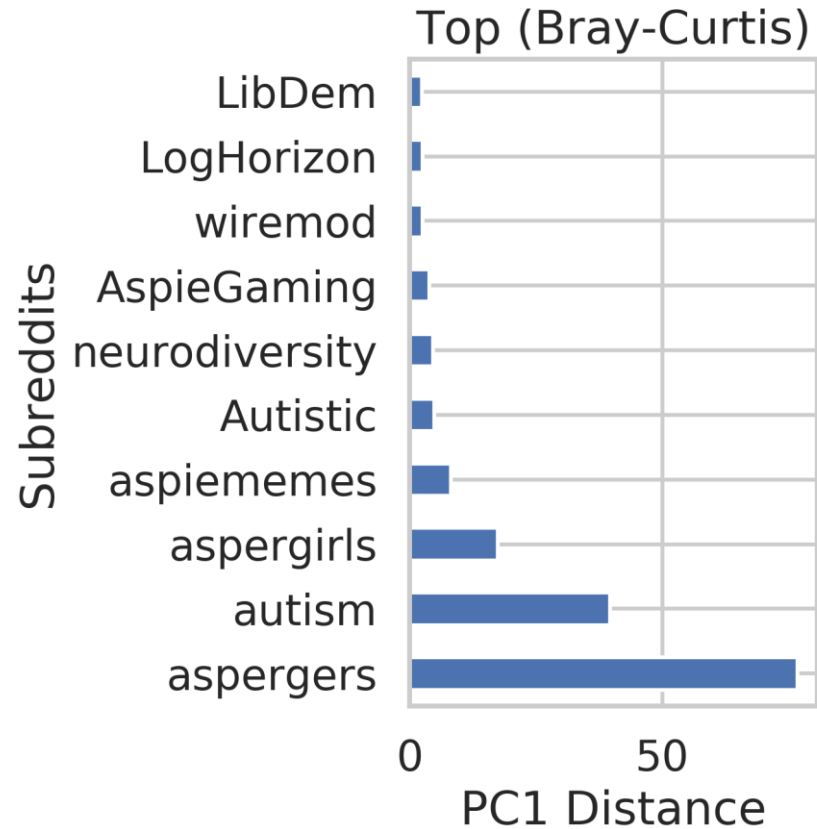
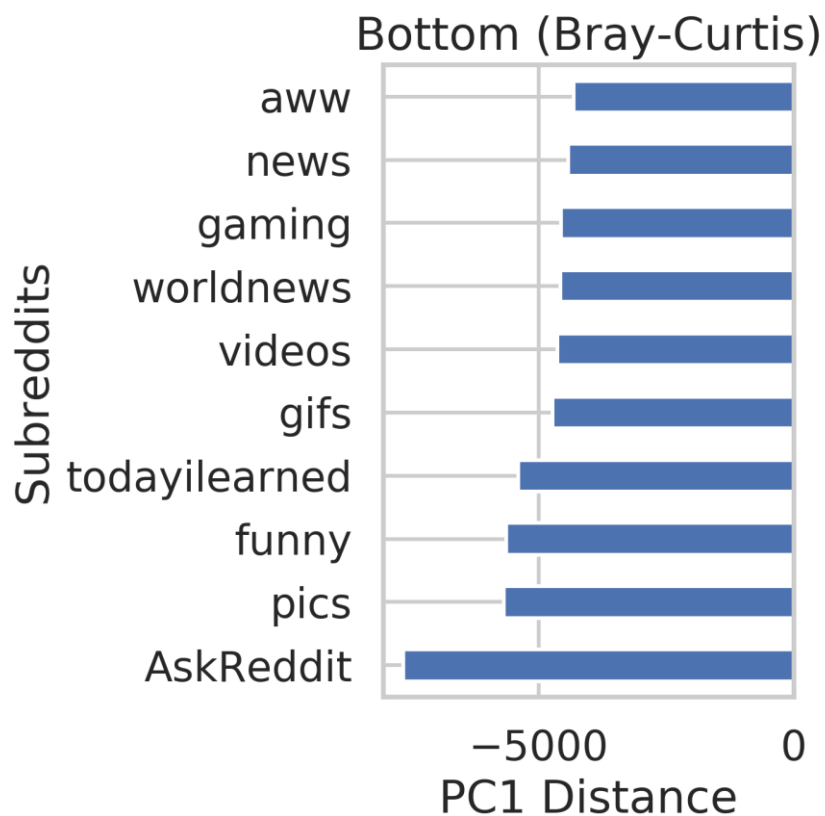
Beta-Diversity



Ordination



Activity Differences



Summary of Main Findings

- Autistic individuals post in as many different places as other Reddit users.
- Autistic individuals do not post in the same places as other Reddit users.

Where are autistic individuals posting?

- Threads related to autism
- Online community
 - Advice
 - Friendship

Future Directions

- Qualitative study of the experiences and preferences of autistic individuals
- Continued collaboration – Language use
- Focus group to include perspective of individuals not represented online

Thank you!



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