

Reddit Comment Section Analysis



Introduction

- Study of communication dynamics and debate in reddit comments.
- Some verbiage:
 - **OP**: Original Poster, or the person who creates a post;
 - **Subreddit**: a subsidiary category within reddit which focuses on a specific interest or topic;
 - **Gild**: real money purchases reddit coins, which can be used to award exemplary posts or comments;
 - **Upvote/downvote**: the act of giving approval/disapproval to a post in a subreddit, which effects the post's rating and ordinal position in the subreddit;
 - **Points**: the numerical difference between upvotes and downvotes which a comment receives;
 - **Top comment**: first comment in the subreddit comment section, which has the highest points;
 - **Comment strata**: determines what line of thought a comment is responding to.
 - **Ad Hominem**: attacking a character, motive, or other attribute of a person making an argument, or persons associated with the argument, rather than attacking the substance of the argument itself.

Literature Review

- No studies specifically conducted on reddit.
- Wealth of studies regarding online disinhibition, online debate, and moderation strategies.
 - Suler, J. (2004). The Online Disinhibition Effect. *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 7(3):321-6. DOI: 10.1089/1094931041291295.
 - Min, S. (2007). Online vs. Face-to-Face Deliberation: Effects on Civic Engagement. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 12(4):1369-1387. DOI: 10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00377.x
 - Domingo, D. (2014). Fostering and Moderating Citizen Conversations. *Ethics for Digital Journalists; Emerging Best Practices*: 159-173.

Theoretical Perspective

- Online disinhibition theory.
 - Two kinds:
 - Benign.
 - Toxic.
 - Factors:
 - Dissociative Anonymity.
 - Invisibility.
 - Asynchronicity.
 - Solipsistic Introjection.
 - Dissociative Imagination.
 - Minimization of Status and Authority.
 - Individual Differences and Predispositions.
 - Shifts among Intrapsychic Constellations.
- Social categorization theory
 - Suggests that individuals place themselves and others into social groups (determined by age, gender, ethnicity, social-status, or beliefs), and then in turn assign positive traits to their own group and negative traits to other groups.

Research Question and Hypotheses

- Research Question.

- How do reddit users react to banned posts and interact with each other in the comment section?

- Hypotheses.

- H1: top comments in r/banned will more often be in support of OP than in opposition.
- H2: majority of comments in r/banned will show a support for OP.
- H3: Comments in the lower half of a comment section will show more opposition of OP than in the top half.
- H4: Comments in the lower half of a comment section will show more vulgarity than in the top half.
- H5: Comments in the lower half of a comment section will show more ad hominem than in the top half.

Method

- Deductive.
 - Hypothesis derived from literature review, field of study, and former experience with reddit.
- Quantitative research.
 - Descriptive results.
- Content analysis.
 - 319 comments in five r/banned posts.
 - Threads were archived after all variables were codified.
 - Live webpage analysis had:
 - Higher readability;
 - Low recent activity, and none that happened within time of collection.

Sample

- Posts sorted by **TOP** OF ALL TIME in r/banned, and the top five were analysed (after the first two posts, which were deemed too irrelevant)

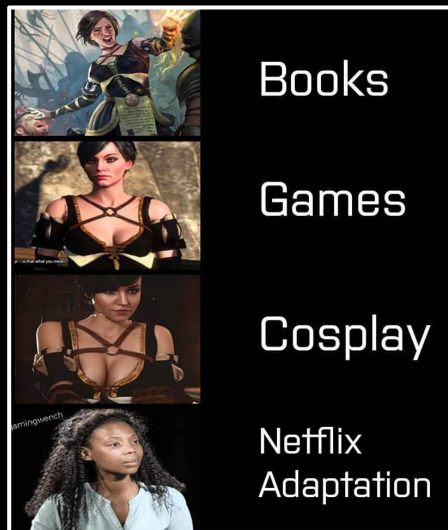
01: r/communism



02:
r/UNBGBBIIVCHI
DCTIICBG



03: r/witcher



Books

Games

Cosplay

Netflix
Adaptation

04: r/aww



- Comments sorted by **Top** and analysed from top to bottom.

05: r/food

Categories

- Researcher

- FC_01_ID_OP
- FC_03_Date_Analysed
- FC_08_ID_Commentator

- OP

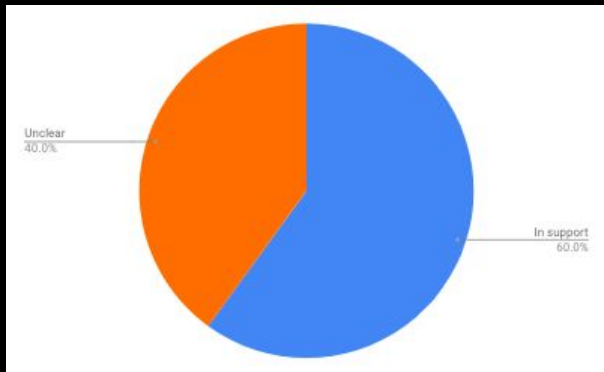
- FC_02_Date_Post_Publication
- FC_04_Username_OP
- FC_05_Banned_Subreddit
- FC_06_Banned_Content
- FC_07_Upvote_Number_OP

- Commentators

- FC_09_Username_Commentator
- FC_10_Top_Commentator
- FC_11_Gilded_Commentator
- FC_12_Deleted_Commentator
- FC_13_Strata_Commentator
- FC_14_Points_Number_Commentator
- FC_15_Support_OP_Commentator
- FC_16_Vulgarity_Commentator
- FC_17_Ad_Hominem_Commentator
- FC_18_Ad_Hominem_Recipient
- FC_19_Link_Commentator
- FC_20_Link_Reference_Commentator

Results

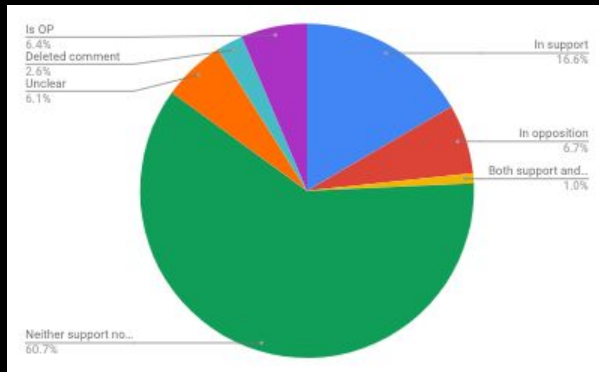
H1: top comments in r/banned will more often be in support of OP than in opposition.



FC_15_Support_OP_Commentator

1. In support
2. In opposition
3. Both support and oppose
4. Neither support nor oppose
5. Unclear
6. Deleted comment
7. Is OP

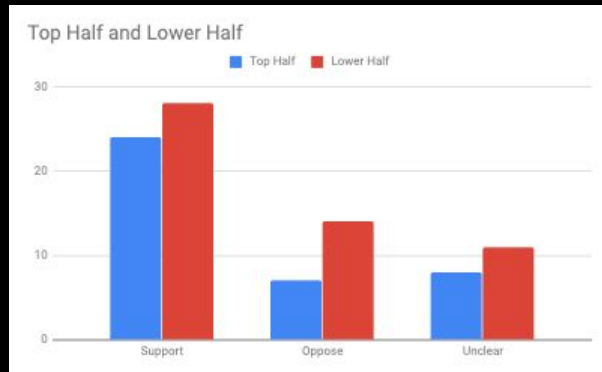
H2: majority of comments in r/banned will show a support for OP.



FC_15_Support_OP_Commentator

1. In support
2. In opposition
3. Both support and oppose
4. Neither support nor oppose
5. Unclear
6. Deleted comment
7. Is OP

H3: Comments in the lower half of a comment section will show more opposition of OP than in the top half.



FC_15_Support_OP_Commentator

1. In support
2. In opposition
3. Both support and oppose
4. Neither support nor oppose
5. Unclear
6. Deleted comment
7. Is OP

MC-noob 140 points · 5 months ago
1/3rd of the users on this site are GallowBoob's alts. You're surprised?
Reply Share Report Save

Vz_RedSlem_zV 105 points · 6 months ago
/r/madlads
Share Report Save

Whiskey-Rebellion 3 points · 5 months ago
The fuck is that sub
Reply Share Report Save

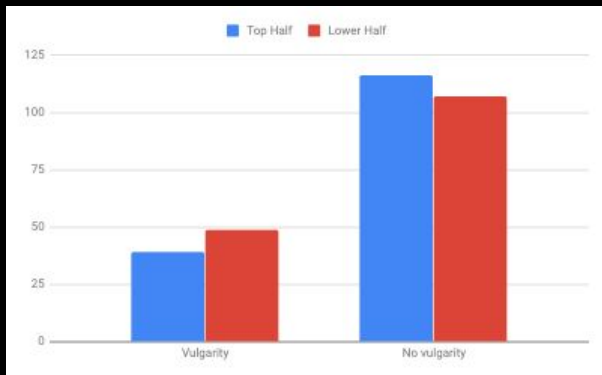
RyanMcCourt 17 points · 5 months ago
The acronym stands for "Upvoted not because girl but because it is very cool. However, I do concede that I initially clicked because girl"
Reply Share Report Save

BlackoutWB -17 points · 3 months ago
It's a shit meme
Reply Share Report Save

Johndough1066 -20 points · 2 months ago · edited 2 months ago
Of course you got banned. Did you really expect not to be? Are you that stupid?
Edit: The rules of that sub are the rules. If you break them, it's pretty stupid to be surprised when you're banned.
Reply Share Report Save

Results

H4: Comments in the lower half of a comment section will show more vulgarity than in the top half.



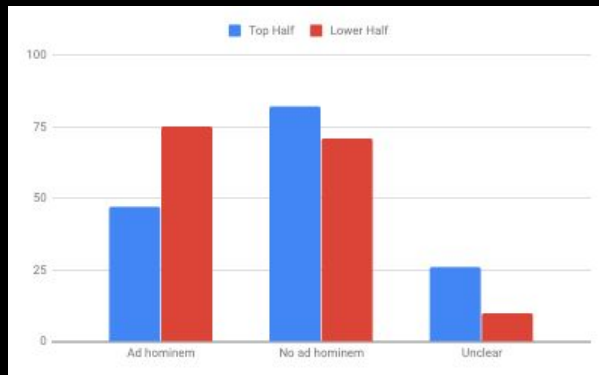
FC_16_Vulgarity_Commentator

1. Yes
2. No
3. Deleted comment

Chopsticks3 15 points · 6 months ago
Top fucking kek
Share Report Save

SpellsThatWrong 12 points · 2 months ago
It's ok this is reddit. PC af one minute, dead baby jokes the next
Reply Share Report Save

H5: Comments in the lower half of a comment section will show more ad hominem than in the top half.



FC_17_Ad_Hominem_Commentator

1. Yes
2. No
3. Unclear
4. Deleted comment

flaming_hot_cheeto 0 points · 2 months ago
Lmao ok racist
Reply Share Report Save

Johndough1066 2 points · 2 months ago
I just saw that comment of yours where you say the idea of a relationship between a 4 year old and an old man being "more than a friendship" is a nice idea.
You're a sick little child molesting SJW.
Reply Share Report Save

flaming_hot_cheeto 0 points · 2 months ago
Lmao ok racist
Reply Share Report Save

Johndough1066 2 points · 2 months ago
I just saw that comment of yours where you say the idea of a relationship between a 4 year old and an old man being "more than a friendship" is a nice idea.
You're a sick little child molesting SJW.
Reply Share Report Save

Ad hominem consumed 122 out of 319, or 38% of the total comments.

u/Johndough1066 posted 48 of 319 total comments, or 15%, and 26% of the comments in the one subreddit he engaged in (r/aww).

100% of his comments were deemed to be ad hominem

Johndough1066 -18 points · 2 months ago · edited 2 months ago
Of course you got banned. Did you really expect not to be? Are you that stupid?
Edit: The rules of that sub are the rules. If you break them, it's pretty stupid to be surprised when you're banned.
Reply Share Report Save

darthruberchicken 18 points · 2 months ago
Except for that part where their rules are only about debating sensitive subjects. Not against making jokes. But ya know, who would ever want to joke about reality?
Reply Share Report Save

Limitations

- Codifying support or opposition requires some judgement and knowledge of the subject.
 - Perhaps lack of robustness in codebook and/or coder if 6% and 30% of the data was categorized as having unclear support or ad hominems respectively.
 - On the other hand, quantifying 'semi-qualitative' data is tricky.
 - Potential solution: research a trois.
- Possible minor skew of results because analysis was made on live pages.
 - Increases in upvotes between December 14 (?) and January 15-23.



	December	January
	241 upvotes	396 upvotes
r/communism	25 comments	30 comments
r/UNBGBBIIV CHIDCTIICBG	239 upvotes	332 upvotes
	22 comments	26 comments
r/aww	223 upvotes	400 upvotes
	179 comments	182 comments
r/witcher	209 upvotes	291 upvotes
	37 comments	39 comments
r/food	197 upvotes	279 upvotes
	42 comments	42 comments

Conclusions

- Debate about the subject at hand seems to be mostly civil.
 - 98 out of 122, or 80% of ad hominem comments were neither supporting nor opposing OP.
 - 8% and 10% of ad hominem comments were made in support or opposition respectively.
- Ad hominem exchanges seem not to be a group activity.
 - Ad hominem comments were mostly found in exchanges between two people (88%), and otherwise found in introductions by one person (12%); they were not found between groups of people nor groups of people vs. one person.
- Benign online disinhibition is seemingly less prevalent than toxic online disinhibition.
 - Most people made jokes, simply stated their opinions, or asked questions, which isn't anything that would normally be considered an overgratuitous display of generosity or personal secrets.
 - Three incidences of commentators sharing similar stories to that of OP, as compared to 122 cases of ad hominem comments, some of which could have been caused by toxic disinhibition.
 - 0 gilds.

