

Assignment 2: Online Observation

Prompt:

Participant observation is the collection of quantitative data through the researcher's participation with an individual or individuals, in order to observe their behaviors. By integrating themselves into a group setting, researchers are granted a closer look into how said group functions, what behaviors are acceptable, and what motives may be underlying these behaviors. This method of observation is particularly useful in the study of hate speech as researchers try to understand the motives behind why some gravitate towards such hateful rhetoric, as well as the psychological impacts on those who receive it.

Digital spaces such as blogs, chat forums, or social media platforms, provide unique venues for participant observation as researchers can enter virtually unnoticed, and watch behaviors play out in real time. More interesting still, researchers are granted access to older data through the longevity of these digital spaces, meaning that through some searching, researchers can discern larger trends of behavior in order to uncover more about a select individual, or individuals.

Assignment:

Choose one of the available online platforms (see next page) and enter as a passive observer. Here you will study the real world posts of individuals who circulate hate speech. After spending a few minutes observing the platform, make some observations about the sort of language you encounter, using the database [HateBase](#) to define any terms you are unfamiliar with. As you complete the exercise, follow the questions outlined below, or come up with your own. You want to try and come up with a simple profile of these individuals, and use the data available to get a better sense of their mental state, and motives.

Remember, you are entering these spaces as a passive observer. Do not post, update, or interact with any of the individuals on these platforms. You are merely there to observe behavior.

While completing the exercise, try to find answers to some of these key questions...

- Just from a first look, how many examples of hate speech did you find?
- What were the definitions of these terms?
- Is the hate speech obvious or covert? Why might that be?
- Who do these terms primarily target?
- Who is circulating these terms? What demographic of people inhabit these digital spaces?
- Based on your observations, who is in the "in group?" Who is in the "out group?"
- What emotions are being expressed through the speech used?
- What is the motivating factor behind some of the hate speech you observe?

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Online Spaces:

Twitter Thread

<https://twitter.com/RichardBSpencer/status/822631171653857280>

Blog <https://blackpill.club/index.php>

Reddit Thread 1

<https://www.stormfront.org/forum/>

Reddit Thread 2

https://www.reddit.com/r/MensRights/search/?q=bitch&restrict_sr=1&sr_nsfw=

4Chan Page

<https://boards.4chan.org/pol/>