

r/BlackPeopleTwitter and r/WhitePeopleTwitter

Comments in two subreddits framed by race

Jon Withers

Reddit, the self-described “front page of the internet,” can be a rich catalog of different ways that people communicate. For people who are interested in online personas, subreddits that are specifically organized around a central community can reveal insights about how people use language differently depending on where they are online. r/BlackPeopleTwitter and r/WhitePeopleTwitter are both relatively popular subreddits dedicated to highlighting social media use by people presented as belonging to specific racial categories. Do commenters and posters in these online forums talk differently? This broad question, which is of interest to researchers in a variety of fields, can be answered using natural language processing. This project uses a variety of modeling techniques to build classifiers that sort posts into these two categories. The models reveal what is the same, and what is different, about online communication in contexts that are labelled by race.