

MA Defence

“Oppression in the Reddit Hivemind” By Jesse Betteridge

This is a news update from School of Communication, Simon Fraser University
News Editor: Siboc Chen

Our dear colleague, Jesse Betteridge, will defend his MA Thesis on Friday, August 19th, 2016 at Harbour Centre, Room 1505 (10 am -12 noon). Here is the abstract of his thesis “Oppression in the Reddit Hivemind: Tracing Patterns of Misogyny in Electronic Public Spaces”.

Abstract

My research specifically analyzes patterns of misogynistic discourse on the social bookmarking site Reddit, well-known for its tagline “The Front Page of the Internet.” Under that banner, Reddit is widely regarded as a neutral and universal source for news, and is often seen as being more democratic than legacy mass media. The website is also male-dominated and widely believed to foster a community that exhibits internal cultural and social biases rooted in specific power structures of hegemonic masculinity. This causes male experiences to be universalized and issues and perspectives pertaining to women to be ignored or even stigmatized within the community’s practices. These contradictions can be linked to a persistent culture of practices tracing back to older online platforms such as Usenet and more current ones such as 4chan involving meritocratic principles that inextricably form Reddit’s architecture. As a popular and influential social media platform, Reddit has potentially dangerous implications for public discourse. However, Reddit is also unique in that its open-ended nature allows for a multitude of independently functioning spaces. This includes the existence of alternative safe spaces, such as /r/TwoXChromosomes, which offer a more nuanced understanding of the site’s overall contributions to democratic public space. Using critical discourse analysis, I analyze popular subreddit communities including /r/worldnews and /r/TwoXChromosomes to see how prominent these patterns of misogyny are, how alternative spaces can function within its ecosystem and how these factors affect Reddit as an electronic public space and a contributor to democratic news discourse.

Keywords: reddit; social media; hegemonic masculinity; social fields; men’s rights; hivemind

Corresponding Editor: Siboc Chen (siboc@sfu.ca)