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## Norm enforcement on and of Reddit

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# Norm enforcement on and of Reddit: Rules of engagement and participation by Daniel Trottier and Frazer Woodhead

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## Abstract

The social platform Reddit hosts a set of communities that denounce offensive behavior, invoking scrutiny and shame on (categories of) individuals. Despite varying in their targets, they all promote actionable content to an audience who can view, share and comment on it. These groups allow a global public to air grievances, enabling both accountability and abuse. Following high profile scandals, Reddit routinely sanctions and purges problematic ‘subreddits’. As a matter of self-preservation, subreddits that watch over the public also maintain heightened scrutiny of their own members. Group rules and other prescriptive texts are a means to instill this scrutiny among a broader audience. In analyzing rules and other content management practices in 68 shaming based subreddits, this paper considers how these groups temper platform-based denunciation.

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## Introduction

Online shaming is a persistent risk in contemporary social life. Consider an anonymised case that gained viral notoriety on Reddit. Someone is denounced for a series of gravely offensive actions they recorded when destroying the memorial for two victims of a drunk driving accident that they caused. They posted footage online, and it was reposted on a Reddit group to a proximate and eventually a site-wide audience. The first observation that one makes on this page is offensive content with a vitriolic title. This is followed by a stickied post from the group’s moderators calling for civility among users. The next thing one notices when scrolling further are user comments deleted by the moderators.

A set of online communities practice norm enforcement as a persistent flow of entertainment. Norm enforcement refers to enactment of often informal rules in a particular social context like public transit (*cf.*, Horne, 2004). For Reddit, a normative understanding of norm enforcement depends on decentralized

communities expressing and enforcing appropriate conduct among users. Reddit is a social news platform composed of countless such communities. Although partly decentralized through thematic groups, Reddit pushes for coherence not only through regulations, but also on the ‘main page’ where popular content can reach a site-wide audience. Beyond internal relations, Reddit belongs to a broader media ecosystem that generates and distributes content, as seen in popular attempts to chart a pipeline from 4chan downstream to Reddit and 9Gag and eventually on parental Facebook accounts [1].

Many prominent subreddits (or subs) cast attention to offensive individuals. While denunciations are normally solicited by state authorities (Bergemann, 2017), these users offer unsolicited condemnations to a global digital audience, with the most immediate authority instead being the platform and volunteer subreddit moderators. These groups vary in terms of what they denounce, sharing a common set of protocols: directing attention to actionable behavior on a public platform, to an audience who can view, share and comment on this footage in the name of some form of accountability. They make objectionable people and events visible, making their own actions visible as platform users with searchable posting and comment histories. These are arranged, framed, published and managed in ways that reveal who has control over these practices, and whose datafied autonomy and reputation matter.

These groups allow a global public to air grievances, enabling accountability and abuse. They mark a tension where platform governance is both a matter of top-down mandates from platforms alongside lateral practices from moderators and users. As we will see, the latter is to some degree shaped and made meaningful by the former. These platforms are vying for economic success based on individuals denouncing others, while avoiding excessive legal or political backlash that would affect advertising and other revenue streams. Subreddits’ internal rules attempt to maintain balance between engagement and reputation economies. These groups have recently changed following prominent cases of abuse on Reddit alongside privacy concerns (Chandrasekharan. *et al.*, 2017) leading to anti-vigilantism sentiment (Myles. *et al.*, 2020). This leads to questions over who exerts editorial control over platforms like Reddit, and how these struggles are manifest during attempts to ‘clean up’ sites. Group rules and other prescriptive texts express this cleanliness to the public. These are texts that users prominently and routinely encounter. They are an external proxy for governance, as low-cost management for a business model based on mutual watching.

Building on scholarship about discursive practices surrounding “participatory guidelines that govern” platforms like Reddit [2], and extending beyond the enforcement of rules in misogynistic “incel” subreddits (Gillet and Suzor, 2022), we consider guidelines for unsolicited denunciation by users as a generalized development on the platform. We focus on how serial shaming to a digital media audience is managed across prominent groups as a socially acceptable practice. In analyzing rules and other content management practices in 68 shaming based subreddits, this paper considers how these groups temper platform-based denunciation. The next section provides an overview of scholarly work and developments in terms of being made visible through Reddit and other digital media, and how this process is regulated. This is followed by a methodological account, including a brief description of our selected groups and thematic clustering. Our analysis of group rules considers group sensemaking of participants and targets through moral, cultural and technical framing. A discussion of their implications leads into a conclusion addressing limitations and directions for future research.

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## Reddit rules and the management of mediated visibility

Reddit is one of many emerging and contested platforms for digitally mediated visibility. Novel and disruptive visibility is a contemporary social condition (Thompson, 2005), in part due to expansion of digital media in virtually all aspects of daily life. This extends policing practices through new venues where crimes occur, and new crimes to monitor. Digitalization also facilitates user-led policing and self-policing. Digital media users can publish content about content about others. In turn, this is experienced as disruptive

to existing social activity, such as conduct in public and semi-public spaces like public transport. They may not disrupt prevailing relations of power and influence, yet digital media practices enable new partnerships and social morphologies. Police and other institutions may temporarily align with commercial entities or even private citizens to identify and apprehend criminals (Shearing and Wood, 2003; Haggerty and Ericson, 2000). Commercial platforms may also side-step state agencies by enrolling their user bases to report legally or morally actionable behavior (Trottier, 2014).

These practices also fuel business models of platforms like Reddit and Twitter that depend on affect-driven engagement of the user base, including through emerging terms like ‘rage-scrolling’ or ‘doom-scrolling’. Reddit enables and financially depends on digitally mediated forms of justice seeking. Recent scholarship has framed these practices in terms of vigilantism, highlighting that this is a form of justice seeking largely excluding police and state oversight (Nhan, *et al.*, 2017). Public and scholarly accounts of these practices are ambivalent in terms of their outcomes. User-led denunciations can address long ignored harm such as sexual abuse and harassment (Jane, 2016). Yet they also enable harassment and abuse of targets and their families in ways that exceed proportionality (Trottier, 2020a). Digital vigilantism not only differs from earlier forms because of its reliance on contemporary devices and platforms, but also because these tools enable a form of participation akin to media consumption. Digital vigilantism often serves a dual purpose of justice and entertainment seeking. The packaging of actionable behavior as content to scroll through enables audiences to be mobilized and participate in some capacity (Trottier, 2020b). Routine exposure to and consumption of personal data about others may culminate in offence taking, and coordinated responses by media users who would otherwise have no intention in joining in on so-called ‘Internet pile-ons’.

Reddit activity is assembled by a plurality of actors, often starting with a person committing an offensive act. Someone else captures footage of the offence, sharing it with a local network. A third person may upload it to a public Facebook group, and a fourth posts it in a relevant subreddit. When referring to the ‘original poster,’ ‘author’ or ‘content creator’ there is unspoken and unresolved tension about who is identified. This leaves questions about user agency, namely who is deemed responsible for online shaming? Is it individuals who denounce or otherwise partake in the shaming and harassment of targets? Is it the moderators or even the platforms that host, support and otherwise cultivate these practices as a business model? Rather than exclude one or the other from our focus, we consider the interface between platform and user, and in particular the forms of (self-)management or governance by which platforms mobilize users to watch over each other, in turn watching over other people misbehaving.

Reddit has a controversial history of mobilizing users to watch over and denounce others. Platform revisions are in response to public outcries surrounding hate speech, harassment and illegal as well as immoral content. By targeting inappropriate communities in the 2015 “ban wave” along with other policy changes (u/reddit, 2012; u/landoflobster, 2018a; 2018b) Reddit sought palatability while extending on-site advertising to commercial entities. Policy-policing groups imposed sequestration of subreddits (*i.e.*, “Reddit blackout”, see Matias, 2015) and highlight the Reddit dialectic (Massanari, 2015): the disparity of attitudes toward content moderation, free speech, and to an extent, normative moral proclivity (Matias, 2015; Squirrell, 2019; DeCook, 2022). The creation of subreddit r/WatchRedditDie in 2015 exemplifies opposition by users (DeCook, 2022) to the changes of Reddit administration implementing anti-harassment policies on the platform. R/WatchRedditDie (and related policy-policing subreddits like r/DeclineIntoCensorship; r/HiddenPolicy etc.) were an attempt by users to self-govern and resist the shift in Reddit policy, documenting the supposed withering of the platform (DeCook, 2022).

Subreddits can be understood as semi-sovereign spaces where users post and interact with niche-specific textual and audio-visual content. Subreddits are set up by users without direction from site administration and operate under the purview of volunteer moderators. Despite this supposed autonomy, subreddit moderators are compelled to follow site wide guidelines, and to ensure their own members also abide by these rules. We may therefore examine how subreddits are autonomous from yet equally influenced by and dependent upon the larger platform. Fiesler, *et al.* (2018) noted how Reddit is a community-oriented platform that upholds rules that are particular to each subreddit yet also share commonalities across them.

Users subscribe as members of subreddits, but by default (including all groups we examine), their content is accessible to non-members, as one does not need to be a Reddit member to be a Reddit user. Going to Reddit.com takes users to r/all, a front page for recent popular content (the default setting to sort content by ‘Hot’ is a combination of recency and popularity), including content from the groups that we analyze. The path of least resistance to Reddit brings users to popular content from groups to which they likely do not belong. This generates new engagement by bringing popular content by default beyond group borders. Reddit users fall along a continuum of engagement (Robarbs, 2018) and subreddit rules provide a set of parameters lurkers may abide by after spending time observing and learning from established users (Niemeyer and Schönfeld, 2018; Robarbs, 2018).

Although subreddits are distinct spaces, they are connected to niche-adjacent subreddits (Hessel, *et al.*, 2016) that may or may not share moderators, users and content. These associated subreddits may be equivalent, complementary or oppositional. Stemming from this pattern of membership overlap or divergence, related subreddits tend to share cultural tropes and memes that align with their close network more closely than with Reddit proper (Robarbs, 2018). A subreddit’s culture can be understood to be unique to its own space, whilst also composed of translatable elements that may be found (re)appropriated and spread throughout the platform (Massanari, 2015; Literat and van den Berg, 2019). These patterns of content cross-pollination form a central trait of the Reddit community and appear to reflect normative notions of participatory meme culture (Massanari, 2015).

Norm enforcement thus generates controversy in matters of privacy and harm to its targets, and platforms may in turn define and enforce appropriate site conduct. This leads to norm enforcement of norm enforcement through each subreddit’s own decentralized rules. We are concerned with how this negotiation of acceptability occurs regarding users’ conduct in the subreddits, and elsewhere on the Internet. The subreddits that avoid sanction do so by remaining below a threshold of acceptability. These groups make up a normative iteration of norm-enforcement. Their practice is currently deemed acceptable, though this would change if (as one example) Reddit were to come under heightened scrutiny by advertisers.




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## Research methods

Subreddit rules demonstrate how scrutiny and shaming are made meaningful on a platform itself subject to extensive public scrutiny and denunciation. A qualitative assessment underscores negotiation of appropriate conduct online, in light of interests held by various media actors, including unwitting data subjects targeted by these groups. Given Reddit’s decentralized nature, subreddits serve as sites of analysis. These include groups for which scrutiny is a sole purpose, and those with a broader reporting focus that includes misdeeds. We exclude closed groups, as well as those with less than 1,000 followers. Our data collection follows a multistage process starting with a familiarization period of observing groups over a six-month period leading into May 2021. We identify 68 groups through browsing the main page (r/all), searching news coverage of Reddit, the above literature, and groups either mentioned in cross-posting, or in other group rule text. We then generate a snapshot of all official rules, including stickied comments and pinned posts. We return periodically to groups to verify any changes to rules, understanding how scrutiny practices are further negotiated and consolidated. We occasionally add groups to our dataset, until achieving saturation in rules and underlying discourses. This dataset provides a representative sample of prominent and generalized norm enforcement of norm enforcement, as it is cultivated by a set of communities that make up a significant part of a default Reddit browsing experience.

Much of the rules we analyze refer to (and appear discursively downstream from) official normative documents like Reddit’s own “reddiquette” (Reddithelp, 2021). Framing it as “an informal expression of the values of many redditors, as written by redditors themselves” makes reddiquette seem organic and fluid. Yet the original English language version of the text is identified as canonical, suggesting a need for rigid interpretation. Given its inclusion of terms like “witch hunts” and “remember the human”, we include

reddiquette as a central node in the networked media practice we are observing, alongside moderator guidelines (Redditinc, 2023), user agreement and other documents, including all those in the dropdown menu in the guidelines. Reddit asks users to continuously review their rules, including in the following self-referential appeal: “**Read the reddiquette.** Read it again every once in a while. Reddiquette is a living, breathing, working document which may change over time as the community faces new problems in its growth” (emphasis in original). Both the platform and rules meant to govern platform behavior are not only contextually bound and thus subject to revision, but so too is appropriate conduct within these spaces. This is also why our snapshot is supplemented with periodic returns to chart developments within particular groups and on a site-wide level.

We engage in a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to identify and cluster prominent patterns in our data. This includes concept-driven stages based on previous research on digital scrutiny and shaming (Trottier, 2020a). We also maintain data-driven phases in our analysis by accounting for observations that do not immediately map onto existing conceptualization, yet remain relevant for our inquiry. Upon developing a thematic overview of Reddit rules, we develop a critical discourse analysis (van Dijk, 2015) guided by questions that shape terms of acceptability in online shaming, including *What topics are appropriate for denunciation? How are media users instructed to denounce? Where are individuals compelled to denounce? And finally, Who can denounce, and who can be denounced?*

Our analysis focuses on public groups, and on their public-facing content in particular. No personal or otherwise identifiable data within public groups is included below. We engage as non-member users. This brings asymmetry in mutual visibility between researcher and research subjects. Yet our approach reflects a lurking ethnography (Squirrell, 2019), albeit one targeting communicative routes that structure interactions in these groups. Under the umbrella of scrutiny and shaming based communities, we thematically cluster 68 subreddits as: generic and explicit ( $n=10$ ); built-in retribution ( $n=4$ ); target particular demographic ( $n=8$ ); target behavior ( $n=5$ ); target low quality craft ( $n=3$ ); gender-based grievances ( $n=10$ ); anti-racism ( $n=5$ ); platform specific ( $n=4$ ); denounced as attention seeking ( $n=5$ ); consuming misery of others ( $n=6$ ); self-imposed ( $n=2$ ); and general that may include denunciation ( $n=6$ ). [Table 1](#) provides further detail about these groups. These popular subreddits appear frequently on r/all, facing minimal or manageable backlash at the time of writing. Our analysis includes groups under the banner of denouncing targeted people for diverging reasons. These include ideological divisions, notably between feminist and men’s rights groups.

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## Analyzing Reddit rules

The rules unpacked below present the sanitized version of shaming and justice-seeking as pervasive scrolling-based entertainment. We structure our analysis along guiding questions listed above. These subsections overlap to some degree, and some concepts crosscut this structure, with practices like doxing bearing implications in terms of people, practices and spaces.

### *What to denounce — Acceptable grounds for mobilization*

Some rules specify what conduct is targeted, and what is not covered by these groups. In ensuring the right kinds of denunciation end up in appropriate communities, these rules also draw boundaries for offences considered ‘fair game’ for mediated attacks. Across communities thematic fit is enforced. In the case of r/niceguys there is a stated requirement that targets must claim to be nice. In a broader context of gender-based denunciations, this provides a consolidated focus on a particular subset of problematic behavior, which in turn supports a broader platform-wide categorization of targets. Likewise, groups like r/holdmybeer and r/holdmyfries must include an eponymous moment in which the target knowingly does something that puts them in danger. The user may thus feel assured by a shared understanding that the target deserves the harm that comes in consequence. We can presume these kinds of targets exemplify denouncing others and consuming their misery.

Rules frequently invoke an affective reaction to determine the fit of content within subreddits. r/holdmyfeedingtube states “posts should be funny but not overly graphic”, whereas r/sadcringe demands a combination of “sad” and “cringe”, such that either alone is insufficient. Beyond policing content not fitting a theme, these rules maintain a focus on a desired outcome in the denunciation. This is reflected in r/justiceserved’s demand for a “clear display of justice”, and r/bybyejob stating “Action Needs to Have Been Taken”, implying resolution to outrage comes pre-packaged with the content. These rules stipulate that posts include information about the consequences the target faced. Proof of job loss may involve providing information about a target’s former employer, which in turn constitutes doxing, a practice that these groups forbid.

R/winstupidprizes frames appropriate content in terms of an outside observer deeming target actions to be a “bad idea”. The subject position of this outside observer is not clarified, implying orthodoxy for example in terms of neurodivergence and cultural conduct. This framing sustains an unspoken assumption of seemingly decontextualized common sense. This is also seen in r/iamverybadass’ “reasonable person rule”:

Some badassery is reasonable and should not be here. If this is something that a reasonable person would do then it should not be posted here. (...) Examples of this are things like a parent making bold statements about someone that hurt their children. A reasonable person would be angry about people hurting their young children.

Following the above, an assault on a young child reasonably warrants retribution, though past a certain age this may be dismissed as posturing for Internet clout. By presenting these two elements, the group gives the impression it cultivates a full account of events: bad outcomes occur against those who deserve it based on content included. Yet any footage is likely a partial account, with other perspectives excluded to preserve this ‘cause and effect’ narrative. Likewise, in r/iamverybadass denouncing is considered inappropriate if the target is understood as being provoked. We may wonder what constitutes an appropriate provocation, as a customer service interaction could escalate to an argument, while framed as one-sided abuse. What remains are targets that appear to ‘deserve’ their outcome, the kind of content one would expect from a sanitized online space, in contrast to controversial fora like 4chan.

Rules often state content should not be staged. Seemingly authentic footage may be engineered to some degree when a homeowner sets up a camera expecting to record a thief, or a dashcam to capture a pedestrian. The person being targeted must be excluded from this process. Taken together, these imply an acceptable range of content authenticity. R/publicfreakout asks that participants “[c]omment with tact in videos which may involve mental disorders”. The term ‘tact’ underscores the ambivalence of socially acceptable serial denunciation. Mental health issues are not evident in how they are manifest, with contextual factors like affect and alcohol further complicating interpretation. Ultimately those who make the rules exercise a final say on content, and offer a just-so justification for their decisions. For instance, r/shittyfoodporn states “If we don’t like it, we’ll remove it”. The people included in this “we” are not specified. We expect it to be moderators, but also extend to the subreddit’s in-group, who may be able to downvote, comment and otherwise flag content from those not culturally acquainted.

### ***How to denounce — Governing mediated shaming***

Next to acceptable targets of scrutiny and shaming, rules also proscribe practices more broadly. Inappropriate content is a recurring and loaded term carrying many forms, including (a) low technology, (b) low effort, (c) repeat posts, (d) a lack of context and (e) poor fit. Technical and editorial matters also prevail. Some groups forbid screenshots, while others prefer them. Likewise, some forbid links to original sources (r/rage), presumably because such links identify targets. In these cases screenshots are preferred (also r/justiceserved). However, r/instantkarma demands a link to the original video. Posting a text-based description is “not acceptable” and that the “original” version of the incident “has to still exist”. Originality

invokes notions of rights and ownership, presumably of the denouncer-cum-content creator, often at the expense of the target's rights. Many subreddits including r/idiotsincars stipulate a ban on compilation videos, suggesting content curation cannot be performed in advance. The poster and their community are expected to perform the curation themselves. These rules sustain an abstraction of targets of scrutiny and denunciation, where they are described as inappropriate, low effort and repetitive postings, rather than as people or data subjects. We can speculate that it is easier to manage the burden of potentially exposing and harming individuals by reducing them to content.

On the use of inappropriate terms, r/IncelTear showcases the boundary between mediated visibility and use of pejorative insults, with the latter deemed inappropriate:

The use of offensive insults and slurs (...) are not permitted.  
Strive to be civil, and remember the human behind the screen.  
Don't make fun of someone for something they can't control,  
criticize the soul, not the body. Please treat others with respect.  
[3]

Here and in similar instances like r/letsnotmeet, it is unclear whether this refers to civility towards the people being targeted by these groups, or towards other members posting in the group. “[B]ehind the screen” seems to identify fellow group members placed before their devices, as opposed to the person ‘on the screen’. Moreover, “criticize the soul, not the body” draws a normative line at body shaming, a prominent practice on earlier Reddit groups. In contrast the soul is deemed fair game for denunciation, implying someone deemed an appropriate target — based on screenshots or dashcam footage — is a fundamentally vile person. This emphasizes highly visible and searchable measures of self-worth, as opposed to nuanced and contextually grounded representations.

A common finding among groups is prominent anti-doxing rules. This includes identifying the person targeted, but also whoever first posted the content online in the case of r/iamatotalpieceofshit. This broad definition reflects doxing's prominence as a weaponised data practice that people accuse others of committing in ideologically curated contexts, similar to ‘cancel culture’. By preventing incidents from being linked to their original context, anti-doxing rules prevent triangulation of the index offence with information that may corroborate or undermine the denunciation narrative. There are circumstances when doxing is acceptable: r/thathappened asks that posters redact all non-verified usernames. Thus, a verified status — which may be acquired based on different criteria on Instagram or Twitter — is equated with a target's public status as appropriate for public denunciation. Framing ‘no doxing’ rules in absolutes means permission can be interpreted as not only endorsing identification of the target, but all other steps associated with doxing such as gathering any available data about them (including confidential details about their family and employer), appealing to others to do the same, and circulating those details widely. R/gatekeeping take a more restricted approach to identification in stating users “may post faces from public officials in publicly available photographs”, while r/byebyejob states “[p]ublic figures whose actions or statements are public information do not have to be censored”. These brief rules rely on unspoken interpretations of terms like “public official”, “public figure”, “public information” and “publicly available”, permitting exploitation of individuals and their personal information.

In some cases users are required to identify a target, as when r/menwritingwomen stipulates that author name and titles are included in posts about actionable depictions of women. This ensures users do not fabricate posts that are largely text-based. There is also an embedded assumption that much like a verified user, publishing renders someone a fair target for public scrutiny and denunciation. Such assumptions seem uncontroversial when discussing a *New York Times* columnist, though these media figures also decry the abuse they receive in consequence. Such assumptions also neglect the extensive opportunities for people lacking affiliations to publish on prominent venues like *Medium*. In such cases is no oversight in the designation of an individual as a public figure. We can identify a tension in balancing privacy and dignity of those involved in content, and the engagement they generate. R/letsnotmeet is more explicit in unpacking this tension, in cultivating user practices that preserve immersivity:



Use fictional names, don't tell us they're fictional: Fictional names are required, to preserve privacy for yourself or anyone else in the story. However, do not tell us they are fictional, and do not use initials to refer to a person, as these break immersion when reading.

The term witch-hunting flags inappropriately aggressive pursuit of targets, in contrast to — and rehabilitating the reputation of — the consumption of people's reputations these pages exploit. This term appears in the platform's reddiquette: "We all get outraged by the ignorant things people say and do online, but witch hunts and vigilantism hurt innocent people too often" (Reddithelp, 2021). R/cringetopia defines witch hunting as "seeking out subjects of posts with the intent to attack due to their beliefs or ideals", whereas r/livestreamfail frames it as "large-scale action against a particular person or group of people, e.g., calling for people to mass report a Twitch channel". These definitions rely on discriminatory elements of this practice, suggesting non-witch hunting denunciations are based on equitable grounds. R/ImTheMainCharacter appears to arrive at a sense of appropriate conduct by proscribing witch-hunting. Here they acknowledge that identifying details are an embedded feature in a lot of content, including videos, but position intent as a deciding factor between acceptable and unacceptable ways of making someone visible to a prominent audience: "Just don't. If you are sharing anybody's information with mal intent you will be banned. We understand that some posts will include someones name (TikTok specifically), but tagging somebody directly to harass them will not be tolerated here". Intent is in this case measured in deliberate steps like tagging someone's identity to content allegedly featuring them.

Other practices are invoked as inappropriate, including "no spamming" in r/awfuleverything, "no Solicitation of Votes or Views" in r/videos and "no self-promotion or request for writing advice" in r/menwritingwomen, who clarify: "This sub is meant to call writers out and warn consumers, not for you to test out your [writing]". These rules acknowledge that engagement via prominent screen presence is a limited and valuable resource, especially in how it mobilizes financial capital via solicitation and self-promotion to "consumers", as well as social and network capital in obtaining professional feedback. R/justiceserved states "don't be a bot or a karma farmer", which further dehumanizes promotional practices by attributing user practice to automations.

Denunciation on subreddits is meant to be civil, as reflected in reddiquette claiming "choosing not to be rude" brings communal benefit "for all of us". And while reddiquette does not prohibit political content, civility in group rules enables depoliticization of practices and discussion, even if content is contextualized in contentious framing, as when a public assault has an ideological component. R/instantkarma takes a concise and under-defined prescription of civility in stating "Don't be a jerk. You can have disagreements and strong opinions, but please *remember the human*" (emphasis added). If this rule is focused on those active on the subreddit, we can presume the human in this case is a fellow participant, and not the target. Civility is based not only on one's own behavior, but also refraining from engaging with other uncivil actors, as in r/byebyejob's "Don't Feed the trolls". The use of the term troll, along with others like bot, dehumanizes those regarded as malicious actors (Bergstrom, 2011). De-politicization is explicit in some cases (r/nobodyasked: "no politics"), and implicitly sought elsewhere. R/mildlyinfuriating articulates this by stating "Posts that push an agenda of any sort is also prohibited", while r/trashy identifies soapboxing as expressing a side on socially contentious issue, taking a 'both sides' approach to inappropriate attitudes in naming both "feminism" and "men's rights, incel rhetoric, etc.". This interpretation of politics forbids some expressions of grievances and conflicts while tolerating others, in asserting a right to denounce actionable behavior. R/niceguys warns that if "huge comment chain appears" these "may be removed" by moderators. They also proscribe "debates about sexism/gender roles", asserting their community as "a lighthearted subreddit". Through these rules politics are rendered non-negotiable. These spaces are rendered civil by enforcing a ban on political debate.

***Where to denounce — Mapping the rest of Reddit and beyond***

As seen above, ‘politics’ are designated for some other space. There is often acknowledgement of the polarizing nature of content curated in these groups. On the surface, it seems that politics are directed towards other subreddits and other corners of the Internet, as when r/nobodyasked states: “We are literally not interested in any political submissions in any form. There are plenty of subs out there for that. Try taking your submission there”. Depoliticization of these spaces assumes that while deliberation is an important social function, there is somewhere else that fulfils this need. This is also seen in r/nohowgirlswork (“political posts belong elsewhere”) and r/winstupidprizes (“There are plenty of subs dedicated to political discussion”).

Some subreddits provide a lateral mapping of other relevant subs, for instance, when r/letsnotmeet refers to r/creepyencounters and r/nosleep as venues for off-topic content. Doxing is starkly framed on r/thathappened along a broader set of practices occurring outside the subreddit:

ABSOLUTELY NO OFFSITE ACTIVITY. Don’t make an attempt to find, contact, or help other people find or contact people featured in these posts. Online or IRL. Do not brigade other threads, on or off of reddit. Do not doxx someone featured in a post. You will be permanently banned and reported to the admins.

This subreddit forbids audiences from going beyond the subreddit. Yet these groups sustain themselves through links to the outside (online) world when sourcing external content. Users are thus tasked to find external content, while any other kind of practice outside the subreddit is problematic. This distinction has implications for an engagement economy. A well-behaved user may navigate to other pages and screenshot content. Yet more visible and substantial engagement is reserved for spaces where this is deemed appropriate.

Not only are other communities linked to illicit practices, but subreddits occasionally acknowledge their own role in contributing to these. R/badwomensanatomy asks users to not “mess things up elsewhere”, here referring to voting in linked threads, brigading, harassing and stalking. Brigading is also against site wide rules, as r/amitheasshole notes, adding “Don’t participate in threads you have found through crossposts and links outside of this subreddit”. This wording assumes the person reading these rules is by default aligned with their own world view, and should therefore refrain from any kind of participation elsewhere on Reddit. This implies they are incapable of diplomatic engagement with other subs, but remain jointly dependent on Reddit, and can maintain that through unobtrusive forms of watching over these other groups. R/nicegirls outlaws “direct linking to [outside] reddit threads”. However, screenshotting is permitted: “Take a screencap instead”. Some form of hostile engagement is permitted, but it requires discreet lurking in communities that are ideologically opposed, yet rely on the same platform. This is a minimally disruptive way of generating outrage and engagement on Reddit, allowing subreddits to avoid being banned by the platform.

Screenshots and lurking serve to shape relations with the rest of Reddit and beyond. R/iamatotalpieceofshit demands screenshots, but not screenshots of Reddit, presumably to avoid internal conflicts. This suggests divergence in policies towards screenshotting other subs among groups, which may become harmonized over time. R/cringe prohibits engagement on a particular platform: “no posting comments on YouTube”. Comments should remain within the subreddit and not posted on the target video in question. Others take a more pragmatic and exploitative approach to screenshots of other social media spaces when describing themselves as dependent on screenshots, including r/attheonion and r/sadcringe. R/inceltear describes itself as a “subreddit for posting screenshots of hateful, misogynist, racist, violent, and often bizarre content created by hateful ‘incels’ (involuntary celibates)”. They take a measured approach to screenshots, instructing users to:

edit out any personally identifiable information. This includes anything that could identify someone in real life. The spirit of

this rule is to prevent harassment on and off Reddit. You don't need to censor anonymous usernames that are not associated with users' real identities, but it's best to err on the side of caution and do so anyway.

This rule acknowledges the difficulty in assessing appropriateness of identifying people, suggesting a cautious approach in omitting personal details while positioning their subreddit as a publicly acceptable space for denunciation. They are ambivalent about offensive content elsewhere, noting the most appropriate way to "enjoy" this content is within the borders of their own sub:

Links to posts or comments on hostile subreddits may be removed at moderators' discretion. Post screenshots instead. Yes, there are people posting awful things, we get it. But don't take matters into your own hands and brigade those corners of the Internet. Instead, enjoy them here, instead!

Some subreddits are discerning in their reliance on screenshots of other online spaces. R/beholdthemasterrace demands screenshots of excessive bombastic racism: "It's not enough that they just be a racist, they need to be SUPREME. Screencaps of random racist redditors don't make the cut". As alternatives they name five other subreddits hosting less 'supremely racist' content.

Some policing of screenshots is based on proximity to Reddit, as opposed to other platforms. R/insaneparents bans screenshots "of reddit post or comments", while r/iamatotalpieceofshit states:

DO NOT POST SCREENSHOTS OF REDDIT CONTENT.  
DO NOT POST REDDIT DRAMA THAT YOU ARE INVOLVED IN. You will be banned if you post screenshots of anything that can be found on Reddit from the information in the screenshot or from comments in your user history. We are not your personal army.

The term "personal army" is also prominent in reddiquette, restricting access to the platform's socially mobilizing features (*cf.*, Myles, *et al.*, 2020). More generally, r/noahgettheboat prohibits posting of screenshots from its own community, on grounds of this being self-referential, or "meta": "Meta content is anything that directly references the subreddit or Noah's Ark. This includes posts that refer to the post above or below it, screenshots of the subreddit, memes about the subreddit, and wholesome 'break' posts". By prohibiting references to their own venue within their venue, their approach echoes tabloid coverage of so-called 'Internet mobs' that overlooks their own role in cultivating these clusterings (Trottier, 2020b).

Groups like r/inceltears refer to "hostile subreddits", and engagement with these subs is prohibited for active members (lurkers may presumably occupy both spaces). These rules acknowledge cultural polarization still pervades Reddit, despite recent culls. Likewise, no "brigading" is permitted in these spaces, referring to a collective hostile engagement with another subreddit. This term appears in 10 subreddits' rules. Not only is brigading prohibited, but behavior that may cause others to engage in it is discouraged. R/nicegirls prohibits reposts from FDS (female dating strategy, though this is not clarified), noting such engagement "will result in an immediate permaban", signaling the severity of the offence through the severity of the retribution. Denouncing FDS is considered "extremely low hanging fruit", with their relationship characterized as "they hate us, we hate them". Immediate and permanent punishment reinforces a barrier between these subs. This ensures r/nicegirls' survival by containing possible 'Reddit drama' alongside ensuing harms and complaints. This also ensures Reddit's own viability as able to benefit from the respective engagement from these two spaces, without the fallout arising if they were visibly entangled. For the time being, r/nicegirls and r/FDS are assumed to generate acceptable content and engagement, and can co-exist on Reddit if contained. Reddit strategically dampens the network logic of connectivity (van Dijck and Poell, 2013) which is maintained by the subreddit moderators, who in turn

impart these commands onto users.

### *Who can denounce, and who can be denounced*

Digital platforms are framed as accessible, as when Reddit's help document states: "Whether you're into breaking news, sports, TV fan theories, or a never-ending stream of the Internet's cutest animals, there's a community on Reddit for you". Not included here are denunciation-based communities that do not provide a good first impression of Reddit, yet make up a significant part of its engagement. Less wholesome yet highly-visible forms of denunciation are quietly tolerated. Despite this semblance of openness, rule-based descriptions of acceptable practices are embedded with assumptions about local knowledge. These groups are accessible to non-members, often appearing on the front page. Yet their rules and descriptions employ esoteric terms without explanation. Internet colloquialisms include flamewars, brigading, witch hunts, (out)rage bait, NSFW, Wheaton's Law, and guttersnipes. R/badwomensanatomy states "Counterjerk is OK as long as it's not too much". As for what constitutes too much they claim "We'll know it when we see it". Lacking a definition and appropriate boundary, counterjerk appears out of any relevant context, such that its regulation is intuitive and exclusionary. This reflects a 'just-so' approach that positions this subreddit as engaged in reasonable consumption of misery. Likewise, r/holdmyfeedingtube states "Don't be a meanie: Just don't. If you have to ask, you probably are. This includes saying people deserved to be injured". This reflects a need to establish moral high ground, compared to the hastily conjured "meanie" (also seen in their "No death!" rule: "We also don't like watching people die"). In unpacking an innate knowledge of appropriate consumption of misery, the above quote offers consideration to targets. While r/holdmyfries prohibits inciting violence or telling others to "kill themselves" they re-assert consuming the misery of the target in stating "[t]heir cholesterol is probably doing that already".

There is also an assumption of frequent engagement with the platform in r/aimverybadass' call for "no reposts from within the past 3 months". This requires familiarity with past content through continued visits, or follow reddiquette by searching for repeats via keywords, synonyms and images. These demands may go beyond low skill users who risk sanctions on these grounds. Subreddits like r/justneckbeardthings employ compact rule explanations that assume users already know how to denounce appropriately. Others like r/wellthatsucks refer to reddiquette in passing, assuming users know what it is and where to find it, while r/nobodyasked recommend users follow site-wide rules. As a counterpoint, r/cringetopia provides concise explanations of these terms. Over time we can expect public-facing subreddits to reference platform-endorsed guidelines. This may help make these spaces more accessible, or conversely further exclude by raising the curation burden on those wanting to participate. In either case it marks further alignment between subreddits and the platform itself in prescribing user practice.

These subs implicitly clarify which individuals are appropriate to denounce. Building a reliance on a 'public' designation, r/rage states screenshots must be of notable public figures, including "politicians, celebrities, online personalities". These are positions with no commonly agreed upon definition or threshold, and a long tail of private individuals at the margins of such sectors. It bears noting this sub frequently identifies private individuals when linking to tabloid coverage in which they are named. Additionally an exception to this rule is made if the post has been shared by a substantial amount of people (ex:  $\pm 1,000$  retweets, likes or upvotes). If targeted individuals have already passed a threshold of visibility, further degradation is considered appropriate. Reddit circumvents ethical considerations about whether someone is a public figure and therefore a viable target of shaming, by assuming that other media platforms have made conscious decisions on these matters.

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## **Conclusion**

Both Reddit and subreddits implore users to "remember the human", though the actual human in question remains unclear. Users may engage in hostile interactions with other users in their comments, overlooking

how they are jointly consuming the reputation and suffering of somebody photographed against their will. This takes place in communities built for this exact purpose, on a platform that is omnivorous in the engagement it generates. Reddit maintains an appropriate level of socially acceptable targeted denunciation. “Remember the human” is discursive makeup over the scrutiny and shaming from Reddit’s more overtly problematic era. As a mantra it extends from the platform center to semi-autonomous groups at arm’s length from Reddit’s administrators.

Platform based media practices assemble a range of actors. Intermediaries like moderators play a pivotal role in localizing appropriate conduct. They are an accessible representation of an engagement economy that feeds off the reputation of individuals. Reddit rules provide discursive positioning of key actors in mediated shaming. Fellow posters are humanized, while targets are reduced to scrutinized content. Subreddit communities seek precise contextual flavors in which they consume someone’s public standing, relying on assumed and unspoken notions of reasonable behavior. Practices seen as diverting attention such as soliciting are heavily policed. So too is doxing, though this term serves as a discursive containment for a fluid set of data practices deemed problematic. Screenshots and lurking in contrast are permitted, as they are vital to the steady flow of new content.

At the time of writing there is variance in the level of detail among subreddit guidance, between a handful of one-line rules without elaboration and those maintaining wikis alongside extensive updates. We anticipate prominent and controversial groups will provide more extensive descriptions of rules. We can also speculate whether there will be more standardization of rules across prominent subreddits. It bears repeating that the groups we observed are the palpable version of denunciation activity on Reddit, let alone other platforms. These groups will maintain their public standing through internal norm enforcement, while marginal groups operate out of step with reddiquette, however briefly.

We acknowledge our position as lurking non-members of these communities. This provides ample familiarity with the public facing component of these communities. It also generates questions about obscured activity on these subreddits, to say nothing of private and errant communities resisting the enforcement of acceptable shaming. Subsequent research can benefit from scaled up data collection across subreddits, but we also recommend in-depth exploration of communities, including those explored here. A sustained mixed-methods engagement with users and their content can help unpack how moderators and contributors make sense of Reddit’s governance model, as well as ways in which ‘appropriate’ forms of doxing and shaming are subverted. 

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## Notes

1. <https://comic.fosslien.com/post/123653577551>, cf., Zannettou, *et al.*, 2018.

2. Myles, *et al.*, 2020, p. 333.

3. The expression “remember the human” appears frequently in rule text, and is also the first point raised in the reddiquette text.

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**Table 1: Description of subreddit communities.**

Subreddit name	Category	Members	Description	Sidebar info
r/beholdthemasterrace	Anti-racism	239,000	Content showing caucasians who express racial supremacist views yet are degenerative	“Supremacists of any shade displaying their supremacy and then the mockery of them. Hail Hortler!”
			Content that	



r/fuckthealtright	Anti-racism	178,000	ridicules Republican and alt-right statements, including content featuring political opponents	A subreddit dedicated to shitting on the racist, misogynist, antisemitic, adolescent clusterfuck known as the “Alt-Right”.
r/againsthatesubreddits	Anti-racism	129,000	Focus on hate-based subreddits, as opposed to racist individuals	The purpose of this community is to draw attention to reddit’s contributions to the growing problem of radicalization on social media. We call for moderators and admins to take responsibility for their roles in the memeification & normalization of bigotry, hate, and violence. “Let not any one pacify his conscience by the delusion that he can do no harm if he takes no part, and forms no opinion. Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends, than that good men should look on and do nothing.”
r/cringeracism	Anti-racism	1,800	Collection of screenshots, filmed footage and other content that disparages comparatively mild racial abuse	This is a place to share the dumb things that racist people say or do.
r/AntifascistsofReddit	Anti-racism	104,000	Anti-fascist community that includes denunciation of hostile and racist content online, including filmed content	Here you’ll find news and discussion related to the anti-fascist movement. Please check the subreddit rules before commenting or posting.
			Content features objectionable online behaviour that	“Images or stories of people losing their job, a

r/byebyejob	Built-in retribution	279,000	results in a consequence for the subject (e.g., job loss; expulsion; scholarship denial)	scholarship/admission, or another kind of opportunity due to their actions online or in person.”
r/instantkarma	Built-in retribution	2,000,000	Content features an immediate reaction to a objectionable event negatively impacting the wrongdoer	“People experiencing karma that is instant.”
r/justiceserved	Built-in retribution	1,800,000	Content featuring a negative event that impacts the perpetrator of a transgressive act	“We would like to remind all of our users and subscribers that we still do not tolerate them.”
r/winstupidprizes	Built-in retribution	1,600,000	Content features examples of individuals who are met with proportionally bad outcomes stemming from their actions	“Sub dedicated to gifs and videos of people playing stupid games and winning stupid prizes.”
r/holdmybeer	Consuming misery of others	1,200,000	Content depicting everyday stunts that end in failure or success	““Hey man, hold my beer. Check this out’ the classic words that end in either awesomeness or injury.”
r/holdmycosmo	Consuming misery of others	1,500,000	Content highlighting normative female-centric misdeeds	“Girls failing at life in funny ways, usually drunk. Hold my cosmo aka HMC.”
r/holdmyfeedingtube	Consuming misery of others	937,000	Content focused on amusing instances of predictable self-inflicted	“A place to watch people come to the neck-breaking realization that somebody is gonna have to hold their feeding tube.”

			injury	
r/holdmyfries	Consuming misery of others	669,000	Content showcasing obese individuals engaging in idiocy	“Welcome to holdmyfries.”
r/wellthatsucks	Consuming misery of others	2,500,000	Content about mundane catastrophes	“For everything that happens in everyday life that makes you say ‘well, that sucks’.”
r/watchpeopledieinside	Consuming misery of others	3,300,000	Content featuring individuals as they are overcome with anguish	“Subscribe to r/turtlefacts”
r/iamverybadass	Denounced as attention seeking	1,100,000	A subreddit for posting about “[p]eople trying too hard to appear tough”	“People trying too hard to appear tough.”
r/iamverysmart	Denounced as attention seeking	1,600,000	A subreddit for posting about “[p]eople trying too hard to look smart”	“People trying too hard to look smart.”
r/nobodyasked	Denounced as attention seeking	342,000	Content about people who disclose unsolicited and discrediting information	“A sub for people who were never asked and yet, still explained far too much.”
r/oopsdidntmeanto	Denounced as attention seeking	944,000	A subreddit for posting about “[p]eople pretending they didn’t deliberately do it”	“People pretending they didn’t deliberately do it.”
r/thathappened	Denounced as attention seeking	1,300,000	Content featuring people grossly exaggerating or fabricating events	“Sure Jan, I totally believe you. Everyone clapped at the end. This is a place for posting people telling outrageous tall tales that would make Walter Mitty proud.”
			The subreddit	

r/badwomensanatomy	Gender-based grievances	469,000	draws attention to examples of malinformed opinions that are expressed related to female biology and function	“Women are made of sugar and spice and all things nice. Except their vaginas which are sqwicky and attract bears.”
r/creepyasterisks	Gender-based grievances	434,000	This community signposts occasions where text that denotes creepy meta-language or physical movement via a pair of asterisks (*)	“*tickles you*”
r/creepypms	Gender-based grievances	718,000	This subreddit hosts screenshots of private message conversations where an individual fails to abide by good-taste social standards	“A place for people to share the strange and disturbing PMs they get from all over the internet.”
r/justneckbeardthings	Gender-based grievances	778,000	“A subreddit for mocking” neckbeards ( <i>i.e.</i> , socially incapable men who are physically unattractive and obsess over obscure, niche interests)	“A subreddit for mocking those who adorn their necks with proud man fur.”
r/menwritingwomen	Gender-based grievances	457,000	Content featuring men depicting women in an manner that warrants denunciation and mockery	“A sample of how men who create films, books, TV, and graphic novels characterize women. (Plus memes, shitposts, and meta once in a while.)”
			This subreddit	

r/nicegirls	Gender-based grievances	746,000	disseminates content that depicts nice girls and/or nice girl behaviour ( <i>i.e.</i> , spoilt and egotistical females who mistake being entitled for deserved)	“/r/nicegirls Like /r/niceguys but different.”
r/niceguys	Gender-based grievances	1,300,000	This subreddit disseminates content that depicts nice guys and/or nice guy behaviour ( <i>i.e.</i> , “manchildren or douches, who mistake being spineless and pathetic for being ‘nice’.”)	“Self-proclaimed “nice guy” are manchildren or douches, who mistake being spineless and pathetic for being “nice”. Most posts feature men, but posts of anyone who fits the nice guy archetype are allowed. This is a lighthearted subreddit for funny, cringey images, NOT a subreddit for showcasing general acts of misogyny or for debating gender roles.”
r/nothowgirlswork	Gender-based grievances	424,000	A subreddit hosting content demonstrating a lack of awareness of women’s anatomy and bodily functions	“A place to laugh at all those clueless to how girls work.”
r/pussypassdenied	Gender-based grievances	577,000	A subreddit that publicises instances where females are subject to repercussions for their actions, seemingly in instances that reflects a male-centric standard	“Welcome to /r/pussypassdenied, where women are not allowed to use their gender as a handicap or an excuse to act like assholes. Yay equality!”
				“IncelTear is a subreddit for posting screenshots of hateful, misogynist, racist, violent, and often bizarre

r/IncelTear	Gender-based grievances	51,100	A subreddit to showcase the undesirable nature of incels (involuntary-celibates)	content created by hateful “incels” (involuntary celibates). We do not condone blanket hatred of virgins or the romantically unsuccessful. Blackpilled incels blame women, their genes, attractive men, and society at large for their inability to get dates or sex. Occasional meta discussion is also welcome.”
r/livestreamfail	General that may include denunciation	1,200,000	Content featuring negative events taking place on livestreams	“Welcome to /r/LivestreamFail: the place for almost anything livestream related.”
r/news	General that may include denunciation	23,000,000	A general focus news subreddit	“The place for news articles about current events in the United States and the rest of the world. Discuss it all here.”
r/NoahGetTheBoat/	General that may include denunciation	738,000	A subreddit that shows examples of horrific human behaviour	“Give God a reason to send the flood.   <a href="https://discord.gg/u3Wehzt">https://discord.gg/u3Wehzt.</a> ”
r/twoxchromosomes	General that may include denunciation	13,000,000	“a subreddit for both serious and silly content, and intended for women’s perspectives”	“Welcome to TwoXChromosomes, a subreddit for both serious and silly content, and intended for women’s perspectives. We are a welcoming subreddit and support the rights of all genders. Posts are moderated for respect, equanimity, grace, and relevance.”
r/videos	General that may include denunciation	25,000,000	“Reddit’s main subreddit for videos”	“Reddit’s main subreddit for videos. Please read the sidebar below for our rules.”
r/worldnews	General that may include denunciation	26,100,000	“A place for major news from around the world, excluding US-internal news”	“A place for major news from around the world, excluding US-internal news.”
			Content to	

r/cringe	Generic and explicit	1,300,000	showcase deeply embarrassing interactions or situations	“Welcome to cringe.”
r/cringepics	Generic and explicit	1,400,000	Pictures depicting an awkward or embarrassing situation	“An offshoot of /r/cringe, for those images that depict an awkward or embarrassing situation.”
r/cringetopia	Generic and explicit	1,200,000	Content featuring excessive cringe behaviour, to the extent that it may be considered additionally humorous or memetic	“In this moment, I am euphoric. Not because of any phony god’s blessing. But because, I am enlightened by my intelligence.”
r/iamatotalpieceofshit	Generic and explicit	1,300,000	Content featuring people behaving in an irredeemable manner	“post screenshots or gifs of people acting like a piece of shit.”
r/letsnotmeet	Generic and explicit	988,000	Text-based details of interactions with undesirable individuals or groups from first-hand experience	“A place to read spine-tingling, unusual, terrifyingly true stories about people you never want to meet again.”
r/mildlyinfuriating	Generic and explicit	3,300,000	Content that spurs a feeling of outrage in the viewer	“jukmifgguggh fbrlt.”
r/murderedbywords	Generic and explicit	2,700,000	Text-based replies to actionable statements	“A place for well-constructed put-downs, comebacks, and counter-arguments.”
r/rage	Generic and explicit	403,000	Content centred on incendiary material to cause rage in the viewer	“Welcome to rage.”

r/sadcringe	Generic and explicit	967,000	Content that presents awkward or embarrassing situations that promote sad affectation in the viewer	“/r/sadcringe is a place for awkward or embarrassing situations that also make you feel sad. Please note: the ‘sad’ part of /r/sadcringe is in reference to when something makes you feel sad, it’s not about calling someone out for being sad.”
r/entitledbitch	Generic and explicit	298,000	“A sub to post and read about experiences with people who think they can always get their own way and are better than everyone”	“A sub to post and read about experiences with people who think they can always get their own way and are better than everyone. Entitled People. Note: This subreddit or its name in no way intends to spread hate or abuse or to offend any party, it was created for story sharing and entertainment.”
r/attheonion	Platform specific	519,000	“A subreddit for screencaps of people who failed to see <i>The Onion</i> ’s articles as satire”	“A subreddit for screencaps of people who failed to see <i>The Onion</i> ’s articles as satire.”
r/insanepeoplefacebook	Platform specific	2,100,000	Posts here depict Facebook posts by seemingly “insane people”	“Insane social media. Post it here.”
r/insanepeoplequora	Platform specific	278,000	Posts here depict Quora posts by seemingly “insane people”	“A subreddit for insane questions or answers on question sites.”
r/subredditdrama	Platform specific	748,000	“The place where people can come and talk about reddit fights and other dramatic happenings from other subreddits”	“The place where people can come and talk about reddit fights and other dramatic happenings from other subreddits.”



r/amitheasshole	Self-imposed	2,700,000	A subreddit where people seek an audience to assess whether or not they behaved like an asshole in an earlier situation	“A catharsis for the frustrated moral philosopher in all of us, and a place to finally find out if you were wrong in an argument that’s been bothering you. Tell us about any non-violent conflict you have experienced; give us both sides of the story, and find out if you’re right, or you’re the asshole. See our ——— *Best Of* ——— “Most Controversial” at /r/AITAFiltered!”
r/roastme	Self-imposed	2,200,000	A subreddit where users post themselves to be subject to roasting (targeted “mean” jokes)	“Roasting (v.) — To humorously mock or humiliate someone with a well-timed joke, diss or comeback. (As defined by urbandictionary) Hone your roasting skills, meet other roasters, and get yourself roasted! Everybody needs to laugh at themselves! And other people, of course!”
r/publicfreakout	Target behaviour	3,200,000	Content featuring people reacting in a hostile and erratic manner in public	“dedicated to people freaking out, melting down, losing their cool, or being weird in public.”
r/gatekeeping	Target behaviour	818,000	Community centred on spotlighting individuals who unnecessarily attempt to regulate access to an object	“Gatekeeping is when someone takes it upon themselves to decide who does or does not have access or rights to a community or identity. /r/gatekeeping is a subreddit for screenshots and stories of gatekeepers in the wild.”
r/idiotsincars	Target behaviour	2,500,000	A group dedicated to denouncing poor driving practices	“When idiots get behind the wheel of a vehicle, shit gets funny.”
r/ImTheMainCharacter/	Target behaviour	268,000	Content featuring people who centre themselves	“Videos, pics, and screenshots of people who think they are the main

			when making sense of their socio-political surroundings	character.”
r/insanepeopleretail	Target behaviour	3.800	Content focused on strange events and people in retail spaces	“Absolute insanity unfolding in a retail setting.”
r/awfuleverything	Target low quality craft	1,100,000	Content showcasing non-specific subjects that are fully irredeemable	“This is the penisplace for the worst of the worst.....”
r/Justrolledintotheshop	Target low quality craft	1,700,000	A subreddit highlight undesirable vehicles and their owners	
r/shittyfoodporn	Target low quality craft	1,800,000	A subreddit that lampoons bought or self-made undesirable food	“Welcome to shittyfoodporn.”
r/trashy	Target particular demographics	2,400,000	Content featuring people appearing or behaving in a low-class manner	“Trashy stories, trashy glamour, all things fake, plastic, and downright trashy,”
r/covididiots	Target particular demographics	924,000	Content featuring people contravening public health protocols related to the COVID-19 pandemic	“A community for discussing and calling out idiocy surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic.”
r/djscirclejerk	Target particular demographics	9,600	A subreddit that pokes fun at the behaviour of disc-jockeys	“Please get better, I am losing hope.”
			Posts exhibiting caucasian	

r/fuckyoukaren	Target particular demographics	1,100,000	middle-class women that display excess entitlement in public	“Fuck you, Karen.”
r/insaneparents	Target particular demographics	1,200,000	Content that highlights the perceived poor attitudes, beliefs, and/or behaviours of parents over their progeny	“/r/insaneparents is a weird place where you can post those crazy parents who post in those woo-woo anti-vax groups on facebook and do things harmful (directly and indirectly) to their children. Things posted here do not have to be physically abusive. Abusive and insane are not mutually exclusive. The Anti-Vax mom you know isn’t legally abusive, but you know she’s insane for not vaxxing her kid.”
r/mallninja	Target particular demographics	4,600	A community making fun of the collectors of novelty/fantasy weaponry	“Welcome to mallninja.”
r/watchescirclejerk	Target particular demographics	45,600	A community that pokes fun at the behaviour of watch enthusiasts	“Welcome to WatchesCirclejerk.”
r/whitetourists	Target particular demographics	5,900	Content that shows the apparent lack of cultural sensitivity and understanding by caucasians when in non-native contexts	“A sub dedicated to exposing the infamous hypocrisy, degeneracy, disrespect, and violence regularly seen in tourists, travellers and expats from white and white settler colonial countries.”

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## Editorial history

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Norm enforcement on and of Reddit: Rules of engagement and participation  
by Daniel Trottier and Frazer Woodhead.

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