Oppression in the Reddit Hivemind: Tracing Patterns of Misogyny in Electronic Public Spaces

by

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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
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Chapter 1.

Introduction

Reddit (http://www.reddit.com) is a social bookmarking site that allows users to link to, aggregate and comment on material that is generally shared from outside sources. Originally launched in 2005, it is similar to a forum or message board in the way it operates. The site has a strongly-established community and is used by many to access a continual array of image and video content. Most importantly, Reddit is a popular source for news, with links to news stories being curated by the website’s community of users in a manner that is widely seen as disruptive or alternative to traditional media. This reflects a curious tendency that has emerged in recent years where people who are open to new technologies interpret electronic media like Reddit as being inherently more democratic than traditional media (Meraz, 2009). The broad interest of this thesis primarily concerns the taken-for-granted nature of this assumption.

In a related sense, the increasing adoption of over-the-top streaming platforms like Netflix has been interpreted by consumer advocates as a cultural upheaval over traditional media monopolies in Western countries (Wu, 2013; Kandell, 2015). While such consumer benefits may be legitimate, the perception that innovative digital platforms are free of the types of biases and agendas that plague traditional media is a simplification. While Reddit appears on the surface to be a neutral alternative to mass media news, its community holds a number of overlooked biases that detract from its supposedly democratic nature. In particular, the fact that Reddit is an overwhelmingly male-dominated community may introduce considerable problems for the way news is disseminated through the site’s functionality. Many of these problems emerge in the form of what is colloquially referred to as the “hivemind,” a form of social organization that can be interpreted in a few different ways. According to Mills (2011), it refers to the tendency for specific opinions and views to become repeated and reinforced within Reddit’s ecosystem. Workman (2014) characterizes the hivemind as policing a collection of
acceptable opinions across spaces in which disagreements might arise (p. 36). I would further add that these opinions tend to represent a consensus on issues that is maintained by users across the most popular areas of the site that establish the default core of the Reddit community.

Various forms of digital media are rooted in cultures of practice that stretch far beyond the functionality or convenience of any individual platform. It is very easy to lose sight of the cultural roots in which these practices have developed behind an obfuscating sense of enthusiasm. This is potentially most dangerous when disruptive platforms cross into the territory of news and public discourse. Rather than create a clean slate from which media and publicness are able to reinvent democratic engagement, many digital technologies and social media have necessitated a return to questions that have proven to be perennial problems in areas that we conceptualize as part of the public sphere (Fraser, 1990). In cases such as Reddit, these questions concern the participation of people who are not men or are not male-identified. The research that follows specifically looks at discourse related to masculinity within user comments on Reddit, and how these patterns create problems for the representation of issues likely to impact the daily lives of women in a space widely believed to represent an opening of the public sphere.

As a popular social media platform, Reddit has redefined the way many people approach news. The site provides a format in which information is voted on by registered users rather than curated and organized by a centralized media organization. This has created the widely held perception of Reddit as a news source that is truly democratic in its mediation (Mills, 2011; Weninger, Zhu and Han, 2013). The content shared on Reddit is cultivated as a one-stop shop for popular and important internet links, and the prominence of each link is determined by a scoring system in which individual users “upvote” (promote) or “downvote” (demote) posts that they deem relevant. This key functionality has led to Reddit’s rather infamous tagline: “The Front Page of the Internet.” There is a very high chance that casual readers are likely to take that tagline at face value, especially when seven-of-ten Reddit users get their daily news from the site (Barthel et al., Holcomb & Mitchell, 2016). Reddit is also unusual among major social networking sites in that its demographics skew heavily male; according to ongoing statistics from the Pew Research Centre, over two-thirds of the site’s users identify
themselves as men, and this has consistently been the case for many years (Bennett, 2012; Allen, 2015; Barthel et al., 2016).

Reddit has developed a strong reputation as an ideal alternative to the traditional mass media for news and information due largely to design and principles. In fact, these expectations of a greater democratic system are almost taken for granted, as the most consistent thing the site is criticized for is for the various ways in which it fails to attain this ideal. Reddit has been taken to task on a number of issues such as corporate ownership (it has been owned by Condé Nast Publications as of 2006), the inordinate power wielded by moderators and the commercially promotional fashion in which supposedly public discussions with celebrities were conducted (Methyl, 2015; Anderson, 2016). Even among its critics, Reddit is often admired and held to a certain standard. While many of these criticisms are legitimate, the consequences of its heavy skew toward male users is not always factored into its role and reputation within the democratic functioning of media. On various blogs, in academic research and on mainstream news sites, Reddit is frequently criticized for fostering a community that is misogynistic and anti-women (Dickens, 2012; Smith, 2012; Zuckerman, 2012; Kleinman, 2013; Hern, 2014; Workman, 2014; Allen, 2015; Dewey, 2015). By many accounts, Reddit is a male-focused and male-centred community, which may in itself not be a problem. However, the discourse that lies within the practices and values on the site often lays claim to forms of universality that deny the work of gender and power on Reddit. This produces dangerous contradictions and practices on the site that are part of the discussion in what follows.

The way in which Reddit operates as a male-dominated ecosystem has recently garnered attention in popular media. In 2014, for instance, Reddit’s former CEO Ellen Pao was forced to resign amidst hostile criticism over the questionable dismissal of an employee. This led to a rare media scenario in which wider attention was given to Reddit as a male-dominated space, as it appeared very likely Pao’s departure was in fact the direct result of sexist backlash being levelled at her within a male-dominated, anti-women environment (Allen, 2015). This media scenario prompted Daily Beast columnist Samantha Allen (2015) to highlight that these actions were the result of a website that is “not so much the generic front page of the Internet as it is its spacious, tricked-out man
The issue of misogynistic language is not isolated to Reddit. Many of the attitudes that have been observed in the large community that dominates the website as a whole bear a strong similarity to those seen on websites like 4chan, as well as social organizations noted for misogynistic practices like the GamerGate (Hern, 2015; D’Orazio, 2015). These groups often characterize progressive attitudes in a negative light by positing that a “culture war” is being fought against advocates of social justice who tend to be prominent in hashtag-based social media platforms such as Tumblr and Twitter (Baker-Whitelaw, 2013; Karp, 2014; Dewey, 2015; D’Orazio, 2015; Hern, 2015). The rhetoric attempting to establish this dichotomy tends to be highly gendered, with masculine discourse playing a dominant role in how this scenario is produced. While this particular social media battlefield holds a wealth of material to explore, Reddit is interesting in itself because it is the one platform associated with this type of language that tends to be viewed with substantial credibility, linked to the traditions of journalism and media democracy (Mills, 2011; Weninger et al., 2013). It is due to this, in addition to the site’s contradictory reputation, that I have specifically chosen to focus on Reddit for this thesis.

Initially I intended to conduct a comparative analysis of Reddit and Tumblr under the pretense that one social media platform was highly masculine and the other distinguished by its popularity among women. Some research into the histories of alternative online spaces, especially those that involve gender, suggested that basing a study around this dichotomy would be problematic on a number of levels and would also be somewhat unwieldy in a single project (Bryson, 2006; 2007). Since Reddit itself raised many questions about the type of masculine discourse that is central to the formation of many alternative online spaces, I chose to focus specifically on that site and how gendered discourses operate in what purports to be a universal electronic public space.
This research is also important to me on a personal level, as despite all of these very obvious problems, Reddit continues to be one of my main news sources, and has been for many years. In the strictest practical sense, I find Reddit to be very useful and beneficial. With so many news sources available online, it is incredibly effective as a curation system, and years of using it and gradually customizing my own settings have made accessing news stories that are important to me a regular part of my everyday routine. In this sense, it operates the way we might dream and imagine a well-made newspaper to have operated. To this experience, reading commentary from Reddit users on various news stories adds a considerable amount of perspective, and often establishes important context that traditional media sources unwittingly or deliberately leave out. Admittedly, I often read the Reddit user comments on a news story before reading the story itself to get a better idea of that context, for better or worse. Even when recognizing the potential problems that exist in the technology, this speaks greatly of the significance behind the practices of the Reddit community.

Unfortunately, after years of using Reddit I have personally found that its alternative appeal and presentation invite uncritical engagement, and embracing it in such a matter can be extremely dangerous. Considering that I fit the bill of the “young man” demographic that Reddit so readily caters to, its problems were not readily apparent to me during the years in which using the site became a personal habit. There was little reason for me to question the idea of Reddit as a universal platform. It looks objective, alternative and efficient, and doesn’t go out of its way to appear authoritative. In particular, it took me quite a long time to take notice of consistent anti-women attitude that permeates the site. At first I only occasionally noticed interactions that seemed suspect in some individual comment pages, but it wasn’t until personal friends and other online sources I follow pointed out trends of misogyny within the community that it stuck out to me in any substantial way. Soon it became clear that this was a consistent trend that was heavily tied to the way the community operates. Obviously many people younger than me (and with far better interpretive skills) also use Reddit, and are just as likely to engage with it in a manner that is uncritical to these problems. With this type of inviting engagement, social problems relating to gender can continue to be perpetuated under the guise of technical progress and an increase in democracy. Within this context,
I intend to analyze patterns of misogynistic language in Reddit comments and its possible impact on public discourse by exploring the following research questions:

• **RQ1:** Can Reddit be connected to a greater culture of practices that is misogynistic?

• **RQ2:** How do the logics of misogyny operate on Reddit?

• **RQ3:** In what way does this implicate Reddit’s claim to be an electronic public space (or “The Front Page of the Internet”)

In Chapter 2, I connect Reddit to the practices of older online communication platforms and characterize the practices of online communities within the context of Pierre Bourdieu’s (1985) theory of “social fields,” and also explore Reddit’s connection to the communities of other prominent online platforms, hacker culture and specific notions of online anonymity. In Chapter 3 I establish critical discourse analysis as my methodology by operationalizing the type of hegemonic masculinity seen on Reddit in terms of power relations in order to research the site from an archival perspective. Chapter 4 covers Case Study 1, which is a comparative analysis looking at how dominant masculine discourse operates in different subreddit communities in the context of a single news story. Chapter 5 covers Case Study 2 which is an analysis of how the community of an alternative space with Reddit, /r/TwoXChromosomes, was affected after being reclassified as a default part of the site.
Chapter 2.

Literature Review: Reddit, Social Media, and Public Communication

2.1. Introduction

In order to adequately explore possible patterns of misogynistic rhetoric on Reddit and how this may affect the site as a public space, the topic needs to be broken down into multiple facets. Even as a modern form of social media, Reddit can be interpreted in a number of ways: as a traditional online discussion forum, a news aggregator, an enabler of citizen’s journalism or a highly male-dominated space. To find cohesion in these various interpretations, I draw on Pierre Bourdieu’s (1985) theory of social fields to conceptualize Reddit as a site in which social struggle and rhetoric can exist, and establish the website as a site of research by laying out how its technical architecture is connected with the conduct of its community. With this context in place, it will become more apparent that Reddit’s goal to serve as both an alternative to mass media journalism as well as a centralized source of online information holds notable contradiction. Similar contradictions can be traced back through online communication platforms that have influenced Reddit in both design and community standards, as well as within hacker culture and notions of anonymity, both of which continue to shape values regarding identity and ethics within the Reddit community. These values have culminated in what is colloquially referred to as the “hivemind,” or the tendency for specific opinions to be reinforced and policed within Reddit’s reward structure (Mills, 2011; Workman, 2014). It is commonly believed that the presence of a hivemind, combined with an apparently large male user base, has resulted in Reddit becoming a hostile space for women, with the potential for safe spaces to emerge only in more isolated subcommunity environments within the website’s ecosystem (Dickens, 2012; Kleinman, 2013; Workman, 2014).
While a great deal of research tends to emphasize the ways social media can impact real life events, less attention has been given to the possibility that online communities function as sites of social struggle within their own respective contexts. Whether in the form of discussion forums, chat clients, instant messaging or modern social media platforms, online communication has a history of being mischaracterized as being free of the power dynamics that are linked to the registers of gender, race, sexual orientation and nationality (Sproull & Kiesler, 1991; Turner, 2006). While many online platforms are known to be inclusive and challenge traditional notions of identity in ways that may not have otherwise been possible, there has been a tendency for prominent and central internet communities to largely attract straight, white men who pose their interaction as rational, and thus absent existing power structures (Weber, 2004, p. 7; Fredrick, 1999; Dovey and Kennedy, 2006; Beyer, 2012). I believe this position is suspect and aim to explore and interpret the power dynamics that occur in different types of virtual spaces to assess the various forms of social struggle on Reddit in the sections that follow.

2.2. Online Communities as Social Fields

A meaningful framework for approaching Reddit can be found in Pierre Bourdieu’s (1985) theory of social fields, which offers a way to conceptualize online communities as something spatial despite lacking a physical dimension. Bourdieu’s (1985) theory suggests that people organize themselves into different social positions in different contexts, each of which constitutes an individual “field.” These fields contain their own unique power structures, hierarchies and possibilities for struggle. Fields overlap, resulting in endless unique systems of social relationships that interact with and influence one another (p. 211). Each of these fields develops in tandem with what Bourdieu (1985) calls a “habitus.” In the simplest sense, a habitus refers to the collection of rules, practices and beliefs that tie participants together, and is sustained through actions and practices that are carried out within a social field that adhere to these specific norms (p. 209). While a social field is not defined by a habitus, the two hold a dialectical relationship in which one is informed by the other. An online community like Reddit cannot be considered a social field in itself. However, just as the practices around
economics or law each constitute their own social field and habitus, the unique practices that constitute a space or community can be interpreted as a social field. Managing and constructing the habitus in these contexts requires the existence of “symbolic violence,” which refers to a consistent sense of threat or intimidation that must emerge in order to maintain notions of tradition and shared value and subdue any threat of splitting or opposition that would threaten the consensus of values holding the group together (p. 199). This way the field is conserved or modified in accordance with the values that form the group’s habitus. While physical violence cannot exist in an online space, the activities of individuals who position themselves within social fields can lead to different instances of violence both online and offline. Threats, harassment and targeted violence are all possible real-world extensions of community attitudes that manifest online (Hern, 2015).

Within the context of an online space, symbolic violence can emerge in the form of language that reflects normalized attitudes that reinforce racism and sexism (Beyer, 2012). Field theory helps to highlight the way that these types of contradictions and significant power structures can exist within individual communities. If we look at Reddit purely through a hegemonic analysis (Thompson, 1990), it can be interpreted as a community whose function depends on the sustained exclusion and vilification of women or perceived others. In contrast, field theory is a more flexible alternative to hegemonic theory since it suggests a multiplicity of hierarchies supported through different sets of values that can be approached in more nuanced ways. The idea that fields fluctuate in size and influence within a broader public sphere leaves much more room for values to be negotiated and changed (Bourdieu, 1985). This approach allows the contradictions and struggles that exist on Reddit to be seen and understood in their specific context and differentiated from the contradictions and struggles that exist in other forms of social media.

Of the little academic research that has been done on Reddit, much of it has focused on journalism and public action across a much broader and varied spectrum of social media technology (Gamson and Sifry, 2013; Milner, 2013). It is frequently associated with other less popular aggregation sites such as Digg and Slashdot, and treated as a neutral gauge of public opinion against both mass news media and
politically-charged bloggers (Meraz, 2009). Weninger et al. (2013) illustrates Reddit’s user-curated submissions and hierarchical commenting structure as a potential positive force in contrast to traditional media, but approaches the site as a largely consistent system without acknowledging the potential influence of its multiple subcommunities, known as “subreddits.” Reddit also tends to be acknowledged in research that focuses on major events where online activism played a pivotal role in mass public demonstrations or revolutionary actions, such as Occupy Wall Street (Gamson and Sifry, 2013; Milner, 2013). While Reddit’s functionality is explored to a degree, research of this sort largely conflates the website with the more general idea of “citizen’s media,” and explores the impact of social media platforms as a collective entity while downplaying the way that their individual idiosyncrasies and community practices influence a transition from communication to action. The fact that action materialized in the form of mobilized mass demonstrations as the result of social media use led to something of a conflation of Reddit with other forms of social media that tend to be much more focused on individual expression and operate within distinct sets of value. If we apply Bourdieu’s (1985) field theory to the way that users operate within the functionality of these different platforms, a different habitus reflecting a different set of practices, actions and values would develop as a result of the way the community operates. While differences between platforms may seem inconsequential in the context of influencing public action, that transition from online interaction to real life action is based on different systems of belief, conduct and outlook, and all warrant a unique, non-generalized form of analysis. The ability of these platforms to produce similar effects as citizen’s media is more an exceptional circumstance, as the values that influence the actions of their users are very often in opposition to each other. Reddit may in fact have played a positive role in the way it helped and continues to help contribute to movements like those listed above, but this generalized perception overlooks some of the major differences the platform holds compared to other forms of social media both in terms of community structure and the values built into its design.

Reddit is a form of social media under the broadest definition, but the practices that form the basis of the platform’s operations are of a distinctly different type when compared to Facebook, Twitter or Tumblr, and it needs to be approached with these differences in mind. In terms of community organization, Reddit has been compared to
both Usenet (a seminal hierarchically-structured online discussion platform with a culture based largely around the discussion of computing) and 4chan (a message board based around users posting images, notable as the original home of the activist group “Anonymous”) (Olson, 2013, p. 159; Workman, 2014, p. 15). Despite differences in functional format, all of these platforms appear to follow design sensibilities that privilege the content of posts over the identity of the poster, creating a much more ephemeral notion of identity in the way communication is carried out (Rheingold, 1993). By comparison, Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr are much more focused on establishing and exhibiting individual identity.

Not only does the Reddit community as a whole consist of practices that constitute a habitus and social field that is unique from any other social media platform, the various “subreddit” communities that constitute the site also possess unique practices that would constitute a multitude of social fields and habituses operating in tandem. The possibility that the conventions and uses that define the greater Reddit community, as well as its various subreddit communities, represent distinct cultures of practice that are prominently represented on the site makes the social field interpretation a valid tool for conceptualization (Bourdieu, 1985). To understand the way that Reddit’s structure affects the actions of its users and, by extension, the habituses that form as a result of these routines, it will be necessary to break down Reddit into its core aspects of functionality and explore it as a site of research.

2.3. The Architecture of Reddit

To further understand the implications of Reddit being interpreted as a source of journalism, it must be conceptualized as a public space that can foster unique social relationships, hierarchies and conflict. Many of these tendencies can be traced back to its design and functionality. Although it originally launched in 2005, Reddit has only recently become a burgeoning area of research. In August 2012, Reddit reported 3.4 billion page views over 42.9 million unique visitors, and is considered one of the largest English-language message boards on the internet (Weninger et al., 2013). Its prominence and popularity alone make it a fertile area of research, but also notable is that despite the perception of Reddit’s wide accessibility, recent demographic studies
have indicated that somewhere between 67-74% of Reddit users are men – the highest of any social networking site (Bennett, 2012; Allen, 2015; Barthel et al., 2016). It is likely not a coincidence that the website is frequently characterized as a male space and is colloquially linked to misogynistic attitudes and language (Dickens, 2012; Kleinman, 2013; Workman, 2014). Reddit’s tagline, “The Front Page of the Internet,” is a notable claim not only for its evocation of newspapers, but because it suggests that the community aspires to act as an electronic public space. The question of how broad an audience it intends to do this for, however, warrants scrutiny.

Functionally, Reddit is a series of interlinking, user-generated forums where users post text, images or links to other websites. The site is formed by a series of feeds and algorithms that users actively engage with to determine the worthiness of certain types of content over others. Every post has a comment page where users reply to the original poster (known as the “OP”) or to other comments, which are nestled into a series of threads. Posts themselves are written in text that resembles a headline, with a link to the comments in smaller text underneath. At first blush, this news-like appearance gives new or casual readers the impression that they are looking at an unbiased listing of information rather than something determined by community opinion. The site is broken down into specialized forums known as “subreddits” which follow the naming convention “/r/subject.” Examples include /r/movies, /r/gaming, /r/news, etc. Users must create accounts in order to contribute content, but most of the content on the site is viewable without an account. If you do not have an account, the front page will be populated by a selection of default subreddits which have been chosen by administrators of the site. These default subreddits are frequently changed, and constitute the core of the community that I described in the beginning of Chapter 1. After creating an account, users are able to customize their Reddit experience: one can remove subreddits from the feed that creates their home page and replace them with alternative user-created and moderated subreddits that are more specific to their interests. The subreddits that specific users subscribe to are listed at the top of the site and can either be viewed individually, or combined together with content from other subreddits to create a custom “feed” on the user’s home page. While boards can have minor aesthetic customization from their creators, they all follow the same basic rules: users create accounts that work across the site and post links to news stories or webpages, images, videos or text. For
the most part, subreddits operate independently, and very often foster unique communities of their own.

One of the key mechanics behind Reddit is that neither the main posts nor the comments are static; their positions are determined not by the time they are posted or a selective process of relevance, but by assessment and validation from the community which determines the visibility of these comments. The other key mechanic of Reddit is the ability for users to create lightweight accounts not attached to any fixed form of identification “within seconds,” as the registration area of the site boasts. While account approval on traditional message boards tend to be a bit more involved and require at least e-mail verification, Reddit requires only a user name and password that can be thought up on the spot. The ease of creating multiple accounts makes it very common for users to create “throwaway” accounts rather than sticking with just one. This is often done for the purposes of posting content that will not be linked to a user’s primary account (De Choudhury and De, 2014).

As mentioned in Chapter 1, registered users determine the placement of a post within a subreddit by “upvoting” or “downvoting” the content using easily clickable up and down arrow icons located at the front of the post, or the front of the comment. This generates a “score” for each post or comment based on the difference between the number of upvotes and downvotes a submission has received from community members. This number appears in-between the arrows for posts, and beside the poster’s user name for comments. Generally, the posts or comments that have the most points in relation to the time of submission are promoted to the top of the page, but users are able to customize the way the content is ordered by selecting different algorithms listed in a menu near the top which affect the ordering of posts by altering this balance. These options include: “hot” (the standard balance of score and time), “new” (counts only how recent the post is), “rising” (counts newer posts that are gaining traction), “controversial” (focuses on topics that have divided scores) and “top” (focuses only on all-time highest scoring posts). The other two links, “gilded” and “wiki”, are unrelated to these algorithm settings. While users may often change the algorithms in order to find newer content whose relevance still has yet to be determined amidst the onslaught of constant submissions, the “hot” tab is always the default setting and the standard I will stick with.
for the purposes of this research. A similar customization option exists for the order in which comments appear on the comment pages. While “hot,” “new,” “rising” and “top” are all given as options in this case, the default for comments is “best” which simply lists the comments in order according to their score, and again is the standard I stick with for this research (Mills, 2011, p.4). If comments receive a negative score below a certain threshold (the default being -3), they are no longer openly displayed and instead contracted under a “more comments” button which the user needs to click in order to view.

Creating an account allows one to take advantage of many customization options for subreddits and the categorization of information. Regardless of how the algorithms may be tweaked, the scoring system is essential for interpreting the apparent value of a post. What may be more important, though, is that Reddit accounts carry their own individual scores, known as “karma,” which is based on the total popularity or approval of content that users post. The number of upvotes a user’s individual posts and comments receive improves their karma score, and the number of downvotes decreases their karma score. The karma system is meant to create incentive for posters to submit relevant links and comments, but novice users who are more inclined to speak their mind may quickly find themselves in the unpleasant situation of being showered in downvotes by users who disagree with their positions or do not approve of the content they contribute, giving them a negative karma score. Users seeking to adapt to this system will quickly find that its function creates more incentive to contextualize the content they post to match the general opinions of Redditors, or the “hivemind” as it is often called (Mills, 2011). This is a key structural feature behind how the greater, or mainstream, community of Reddit operates.

Subreddits operate in ways that often deviate from the mainstream Reddit community, much of which comes down to their conduct and moderation. Many of them, like /r/AskScience and /r/Canada, are moderated in slightly different ways to discourage users from downvoting posts or comments simply because they disagree with them, and ask that such punishment be reserved for comments which do not add to discussion. From my own experience using the website, I have observed that the need for such a request stems from a trend in which users lean more towards the knee-jerk reaction of
downvoting a comment simply because they don’t like it rather than whether or not it adds to discussion. Even I have found myself naturally inclined to acting this way even if I am asked to do the contrary or just know better due to the incentive of karma, which can strongly influence conversations that take place on the site. The importance of Reddit’s scoring system suggests the community as a whole is driven by meritocratic, anti-authoritarian values not unlike those idealized in scientific and engineering circles where such systems are seen as having substantial political importance (Weber, 2004, p. 7). This type of laissez-faire approach to administering relevance encourages a form of conduct which is seen as highly democratic in the eyes of many Redditors, leading to a high level of defence and adherence to this form of aggregation. The movement of content on the site is driven by consensus and demands that users conform to popular ideas and opinions which are largely created through discussion and voting in the comment sections. This establishes a type of attention economy in which the incentive to produce content is driven by the need to make it conform to a specific community expectation. This reinforces the rules, practices and beliefs that inform the habitus of the greater Reddit community, and sustain its social field (Bourdieu, 1985).

If Reddit can be defined as a male-dominated space, as it often is in a colloquial sense, this may entail a sexist culture attached to the common use of the site. Even further, since Reddit can be broken down into a number of “subreddit” communities, it is also valid to interpret many of those groups to have unique cultures attached to common practices, entailing even more social fields within the Reddit ecosystem. To explore the possibility of these distinct cultures of practice, it will be necessary to look at the objectives of the community and the historical precedents that inform them, which is covered over the next three sections.

2.4. Legacy of the News Media and the Contradiction of Reddit’s Community

The idea of Reddit as a beacon of alternative citizen’s media is more than a casual observation, but an idea openly celebrated within the community, often in a self-congratulatory fashion (Mills, 2011). Yet, the fact that the website still situates itself as “The Front Page of the Internet” suggests ideas of perceived centrality that contradict
this notion. Furthermore, popular beliefs about Reddit’s misogyny have interesting implications about the site’s tagline, particularly if the culture of practices surrounding Reddit can be considered hegemonic in some sense. As a community whose appeal is centred largely on curating and critiquing stories from mainstream news sources, it follows that Reddit users tend to express an open disdain for traditional news media and the practices and routines surrounding it. With this sense of critical distance, Reddit ostensibly offers a solution to the democratic deficit in traditional media systems in the form of an idealized public sphere, a form of conceptual interaction theorized by Jürgen Habermas (2012) in which members of the public can critique society and influence politics free of influence from government and corporate interests. While Reddit arguably achieves this in some ways, it also falls into trappings of its own by openly vying for mass media-style centrality and prominence through its design.

Many existing mass media systems such as public broadcasters and diverse local newspapers have shown hints of enabling a public sphere, but their potential to be fully realized as such has long been faced with daunting restriction (Hackett and Caroll, 2006, p. 4). These limitations are often attributed to the ubiquitous presence of transnational multi-media conglomerates whose powers have been reinforced not so much by the technological form of any specific medium, but by “the few dominant and globalizing logics and institutions that comprise the commanding heights of the mediascape” (p. 19). The democratic deficit that has formed in mass media, specifically in journalism, can very likely be attributed to increasingly centralized systems of communication becoming compromised by encroaching neoliberal trends of deregulation, stifling and oppressive corporate practices, as well as an obfuscation of class criticism within the balance of media and power (p. 21). Media systems, and more specifically news media, have traditionally been expected to act on the sidelines of everyday practices and serve as autonomous watchdogs keeping corporate and government powers in check (p. 22). Changes in daily routines and an ongoing dampening of regulation have facilitated technology to develop in a manner where it no longer stays on the sidelines of everyday life, but becomes a centralized part of it. The consequence of this centralization is that mass media no longer hold established structures of power accountable, but instead emulate and reinforce them (p. 22). By extension, even publicly run or independent media systems compromise their potential
as public spheres through the need to compete with or justify their existence within a
greater neoliberal environment.

According to Couldry (2012), this modern centralization of mass media is the key obstacle preventing citizens from forming or partaking in an effective and accessible public sphere. Mass media accumulates power through ritual: audiences are promised privileged access to a naturalized social reality that they must pay attention to (p. 66). The mass media fights to position itself at the centre as the gatekeeper of this reality, but this scenario is not necessarily fixed. If we conceptualize mass media and journalism through Bourdieu’s (1985) theory of social fields as their own institutional fields, there is room for these relationships of power and control to be negotiated and reshaped, with the potential for new powers of control to emerge (p. 32). In its open disdain towards traditional media, Reddit’s community may very well have the potential to renegotiate these contradictions and relationships. However, the inability for traditional forms of media to achieve the status of a true public sphere should give us pause in considering how far Reddit has come, and is able to come, in doing so.

Given Reddit’s reputation among its community for being a democratic alternative to mainstream news, it is not entirely surprising that Noam Chomsky (1988), prominent scholar on the inherent futilities of the democratic function of news media, is extremely popular on Reddit. (Of note: the /r/Chomsky subreddit refers to him as “the most important intellectual of our time.”) In Manufacturing Consent, Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman (1988) argue that the structure of news organizations and the very necessity behind distilling information for mass consumption makes it impossible for news to operate as anything but a form of propaganda for hegemonic interests. A key aspect of Chomsky’s (1988) criticism of mass media is the aspiration toward objectivity, which has been a defining element of journalism through the twentieth century, and is seen as a value of high journalistic standards to the present day. Historically, the aim for neutrality has been less about an idealistic aspiration for integrity and more about the differentiation of prestige news sources against populist publications. An increase in the mass-production of newspapers brought about by the steam engine resulted in the emergence of the penny press in the United States in the 1830s (Kovarik, 2011, p. 48). The ability to print at a higher volume allowed the prices of papers to drop and circulation
to increase. This lead to papers such as *The Sun* and *The New York Herald*, which used simple language and human interest to appeal to the tastes of the public rather than elites (p. 50). Hoping to maintain a higher price on their papers, more upscale publications sought to distinguish themselves from the gossip and hoaxes which often appeared in the penny press, rather than compete at the same level. *The New York Times*, founded in 1851 by Henry Raymond, became the national “paper of record” for the United States by the turn of the century, as it was the leading newspaper in the nation’s largest city (p. 55). Maintaining this title involved upholding practices of neutrality which would later be known as “objectivity.” While such an adherence ostensibly suggests that the dissemination of information through journalism can be divorced from social and political conditions of existence, this can never be the case. Rather, it is confined by those ideas and was put in place for the sake of increasing circulation and audience share (Hackett and Carroll, 2006, p. 33). Most importantly, the continued maintenance of objectivity as a journalistic standard is intended to secure the centrality and importance of publications that adhere to these standards over others that are deemed less important, creating conditions for ideological influence to emerge.

In the case of Reddit, a major contradiction lies in how the site embodies many of the problematic values found in the regime of news objectivity. Reddit can be perceived as a liberating force for the dissemination of news and information, yet the information given highest profile on the site is ultimately dictated by the interests of the community through comment fields. A case can be made that biases within that community will ultimately influence the way news is presented and interpreted. While definitely an instance of hyperbole, Reddit’s tagline presents a clear aspiration of centrality and legitimacy similar to that held by traditional media. The entire notion of a “front page” is undeniably evocative of newspapers, and if Reddit does aspire to the same form of centrality as a “paper of record,” then it seems likely that hegemonic processes would be necessary “to sustain... and reproduce relations of domination through the ongoing process of producing and receiving symbolic forms” (Thompson, 1990, p. 58). If we interpret comment fields as the symbolic form in this case, it is worth asking whether the comments posted on Reddit result in a form of discourse that is exclusionary in ways that reinforce systematic asymmetry by vilifying identifiable groups, namely women, and if Reddit is truly able to function in a democratic fashion if this is the case (p. 59).
The ideals that are commonly believed to characterize Reddit may carry a definable link to older platforms for online communication. It is unlikely that Reddit is the product of a single linear history of online platforms, but particular similarities between Reddit and the communities of computing-centric, highly masculine cultures that surround sites like Usenet and 4chan have been linked to the history and emergence of Reddit (Olson, 2013; Workman, 2014). These characteristics tend to be at odds with the wider, less skill-based accessibility of social media platforms such as Twitter and Tumblr. While research remains to be done on linkages between Reddit and platforms like Usenet and 4chan, work by Olson (2013) and Workman (2014) suggest that these websites share a common culture of practice based on specific characteristics: in particular, all of these communities tend to be reflective of libertarian and meritocratic culture. The nature of meritocratic ethics has a tendency to privilege male-centric perspectives and interests while boasting a perceived superiority to traditional notions of democracy (Marwick, 2013). While the likelihood of misogyny in these spaces is not a given, their status as self-determined meritocracies suggests that misogyny may be an inevitable occurrence in spaces possessing a habitus built around these values. Over the next two sections, I offer a selective history of specific online cultures and communities that have influenced common perceptions of Reddit as a form of revolutionary journalism that can enrich public media. These online cultures and communities, as I suggest, have also underwritten the problematic history of gender that still inform common practices across Reddit.

2.5. The Early Culture of Practices Surrounding Usenet

While Reddit is one of the most visible cases of a major English-language online communication platform vying to be seen as a centralized public space, it holds similarities to other platforms in this respect. The communities behind websites such as Usenet, 4chan and Reddit appear to function under the pretence of being centralized public spaces for the internet, at least from a Western perspective. Reddit has it built into their tagline, while the 4chan community has traditionally conflated their views and sensibilities with the internet as a whole, such as the way they brand their own catchphrases and axioms as “rules of the internet” (Know Your Meme, n.d.).
In the case of the early newsgroup system Usenet, the perception of being the predominant form of online communication may carry actual weight, as it is the source from which many functional standards for modern online communities tend to be drawn from. While we know that Usenet was first born in 1979, the specifics of how it began are vague. It apparently grew from a project to create a feature-heavy informational bulletin board system at Duke University in North Carolina into an aggregator for various newsgroups in which hierarchical conversations on various topics would take place through e-mail (Hauben, 1997). These groups were largely used by local programmers to develop and support Unix operating systems in a professional manner. As the networks using this system spread to more campuses worldwide, eventually incorporating many other existing newsgroups from ARPANET, there was a growing interest to use this architecture to have casual conversations that would float from point-to-point on an international scale (Rheingold, 1993). Usenet eventually formed into an aggregator of over 9500 mailing lists covering a variety of interests, but its central culture stayed largely fixated around the discussion and advancement of programming and the development of computer systems (Rheingold, 1993; Hauben, 1997). As the nature of Usenet grew from a mere bulletin board into a full-on Unix community, one major conceit that lingered in the background of its growth was the desire to extend its functionality into that of a news system (Hauben, 1997). While this aspiration did not necessarily play out as expected, the politics of creating a public space factored heavily into the network’s development and the ethical conduct of those using it. Usenet’s very design as a decentralized, self-sustaining system can largely be linked to meritocratic sensibilities of the hacking culture that permeated the community. “Hackers” are skilled computer users who use advanced programming skills to test the limits of computing technologies, and do so for the sake of challenge or fun rather than any kind of underlying goal (Turner, 2006). While much of the discussion on Usenet was casual, the network was frequently championed as embodying core hacker values by functioning as “an anarchic, unkillable, censorship-resistant, aggressively non-commercial, voraciously growing conversation among millions of people in dozens of countries--[which] is largely a result of the way the system was designed” (Rheingold, 1993). This has allowed Usenet to persist for many years and outlive its initial practicality to the point that it still remains in operation today. It has also been a major influence on subsequent online communication platforms not only in terms of hierarchical format, but in perception of being a public space.
The Usenet community has had a tendency to privilege male-centred conversations and topics (Fredrick, 1999). Feminist newsgroups on Usenet tended to operate in a way that contrasted the general culture of the community as a whole, and would normally find themselves bombarded by male “trolls” if not properly moderated. This was a frequent problem which took place in newsgroups harbouring alternative views, often causing them to be segregated rather than fully embraced (Fredrick, 1999). As a platform designed to allow the free-flow of opinions, various approaches needed to be employed in order to establish boundaries of discourse for these alternative spaces. In the late 1990s, Christine Fredrick (1999) conducted a study of two feminist newsgroups on Usenet: one moderated, and one unmoderated. She describes the ethos of two feminist Usenet groups: alt.feminism.individualism which allowed users to send messages unmoderated, and soc.feminism which had all messages go through a process of active moderation. Overall, it was clear that the moderated forum had a more inclusive and relaxed sense of community due to active policing of sexist comments which would largely originate from the greater Usenet community (Fredrick, 1999). The practices of the unmoderated board were formed in a much different way, as users were forced to fight harder in order to maintain a space where feminist discourse could remain dominant. The result was a radicalization of opinion, with strong and aggressive claims and statements carrying more substance and legitimacy than reserved ones (p. 194). Likewise, even statements of mild disagreement or debate towards feminist discourse would be viewed as accusatory by default and typically addressed in a hostile manner. Essentially, the moderated forum acted as an artificial environment operating behind a barrier, whereas the unmoderated community had to actively police not just content but the performance and credentials of those contributing to the conversation.

Without active moderation and policing, it was impossible to conduct civil discussion based around topics like feminism which required an acknowledgement of identity and were not conducive with the dominant discourse of Usenet as a whole. While Fredrick’s (1999) analysis was on Usenet as a closed entity, the manner of conduct she presented is reflected in many forms of popular modern online communication. This study was conducted when Usenet’s popularity was on a decline, but the male-driven hacker mentality that constructed the platform from the ground up has been ubiquitous in its spread, and fundamental similarities can be seen in the way
that other alternative spaces have functioned like quarantined spaces on constant
defence from the outside. That is not to say that an environment of constant
encroachment and hostility defined every community women occupied in the 1990s.
Online Multi-User Dungeon (MUD) games, for instance, were known for being equally
popular among men and women (Turkle, 1995). For many people, being in an
environment that required barrier maintenance was preferable as it reinforced the
importance and legitimacy of the open performance of gender in a way that may not
have been possible had it not been made an essential element of certain online
communities. In communities where gender is the key component, it has often been the
only element of identity actively policed. All other identifiers are left just as much
disembodied as they are on the rest of the greater community and are considered to be
fair game (Bryson, 2007, p. 247).

While women are by no means absent from the Reddit community, there appears
to be a strong possibility that exclusionary tendencies that emerged on older platforms
such as Usenet have influenced Reddit’s construction as a public space in such a way
that male values are universalized while the marginalization of women is incorrectly
perceived as a non-issue. To further understand the influence hacking culture has had
on Reddit, it will be necessary to look at some of the fundamental ways that it has
changed over the past decade, specifically with the rise of purely anonymous
communication and how this has in turn shaped Reddit both as a platform and a
community.

2.6. The Culture of Hackers and Valorising Anonymous
Communication

It would be a mistake to characterize Reddit as a direct analogue of Usenet. Despite
some core similarities, many elements of online culture have changed drastically
in the intervening years. The hackers who had been largely associated with Usenet and
have spread influence through platforms of various ideological outlooks over the years
and have had a clear influence on the underlying ethics of Reddit is hacking culture. At
its core, hacker culture is based around openness guided by a techno-meritocracy
where the value of an individual is determined by their ability to contribute to the
advancement of the technology (Castells, 2001, p. 38). It also has a tendency to be fundamentally exclusionary by specifically celebrating only those with specialized skills in computing (Dovey and Kennedy, 2006). Hacking has traditionally attracted a specific demographic: men with libertarian ideals of unregulated personal liberty that could be fully legitimized within the sheer abundance and flexibility of virtual spaces (Castells, 2001; Weber, 2004, p. 7; Dovey and Kennedy, 2006; Olson, 2013, p. 10). Hacker culture trumpeted the unrestrained sharing of information as its mantra and this outlook grew from simply being a politicized ethical outlook to becoming the basis for what is largely considered a new type of informational economy, forming the basis of an environment that can perpetuate these ideals by design (Himanen, 2002, p. 423).

A variety of communication technologies with unique outlooks and infrastructures emerged throughout the late-1970s and 1980s on the pre-commercial internet, many of which had drastically differing philosophies behind community formation, but lacked the internal technical capacity to facilitate growth and expansion. As a result, many of these groups were united in their common technical reliance on hackers who toyed with technologies to allow casual communication to emerge on platforms that otherwise would not have allowed it (Feenberg, 1992; Rheingold, 1993; Castells, 2001; Weber, 2004). In some ways this would lead platforms to compromise the social field of what would otherwise be unique cultures of practice. Perhaps the most famous instance of this was The WELL (Whole Earth ‘Lectronic Link), a project brought about in 1985 by individuals carrying on the legacy of the American counterculture movement of the 1960s (Rheingold, 1993; Turner, 2006). Unlike the “New Left,” who sought change by pushing for progressive values within the existing political structure of the United States, this group known as the “New Communalists” sought to preserve the egalitarian ideals of communes, which were quickly fading away throughout the 1970s. Stewart Brand published a magazine known as the Whole Earth Catalog as a way of documenting the networks and connections between these groups, but hoped to broaden his efforts through the use of computing technology (p. 104). By reaching out to hacking communities who shared similar values, Brand’s vision was brought to the World Wide Web in the form of a fully-fledged community space where users could create their own topics for discussion rather than relying on an uploaded version of the existing Catalog (Turner, 2006, p. 141).
The WELL community focused on utilizing this online space for causes rather than developing the platform itself, and as such was heavily dependent on overlap with developers of the Unix operating system in order to fuel expansion (Rheingold, 1993). Culture clash frequently took place on the WELL between its regular users and the hackers who more frequently inhabited Usenet. While hackers valued the ability to “break in” or intrude in open systems in order to expose flaws, WELL users saw this idea of openness as being equivalent to “villages with unlocked doors” (Turner, 2006, p. 168). This ideological contrast regarding community suggested a range of diversity that would be fundamental to the formation of later online communication platforms, with prominent figures such as Howard Rheingold (1993) and Fred Turner (2006), continuing to champion The WELL as an exemplary of the potential of online networked communities as a form of counter-culture in place of the antiquated commune-style culture. While this may be true to an extent, the WELL ultimately depended on the skills of hackers to extend infrastructures in ways that would grant them adequate functionality, still showing a strong degree of overlap between the two approaches to community. The actual amount of diversity between these fundamental platforms was in many was inconsequential, as the communal culture that Stewart documented in the Whole Earth Catalog which became fundamental to the WELL was largely white, entrepreneurial and male-centred (p. 97). While roughly 40% of WELL users were female in the 1980s, it was ultimately grounded in male-centered ethics that were extremely similar to those of hackers (Turner, 2006, p. 152). A two-year debate took place in regards to Susan Herring’s (1996) landmark paper on gender differences in computer-mediated discourse. Herring (1996) argued that the discourse in online environments ultimately encouraged (or even required) women to take on submissive voices, and are only able to retain actual control in conversations if a specific environment is female-run or female dominated. Although substantive discussion on the topic of harassment came up, with users bringing up regular occurrences of it happening in the WELL itself, her argument was ultimately rejected as an accurate representation of online communication. While little research exists regarding gendered discourse on the WELL, the community’s decision is a curious contrast to further research that reinforces the argument that Herring (1996) made, specifically in regards to Usenet (Fredrick, 1999; Workman, 2014).
Despite involvement in different platforms with various ethical outlooks, hackers have maintained a relatively consistent culture over the years, but have also adapted some external traits which feed the various habituses tied to the platforms forming their culture. A significant change has been to the notion of anonymous communication online, with total anonymity now regarded as a trademark element of hacking culture (Olson, 2013). This is due in large part to the introduction of more extreme values related to anonymity found in Japanese online communities. Many of the current ethics that surround ephemeral identity on Reddit appear to be rooted in 2channel, the largest online message board in Japan and progenitor to the popular American image board 4chan (Olson, 2013). While we have seen groups such as “Anonymous” spring forth from the 4chan image board, the type of aggressive oppositional activity associated with that group has roots in 2channel. However, instead of acting in a manner that can be seen as revolutionary or even remotely socially progressive, many core users of the website tend to contribute decidedly right-wing or hypernationalist views to public opinion through obnoxious forms of slander against existing traditional media institutions (Kitada, 2013). In addition to being well known as one of the world’s largest online bulletin board systems and a popular area of discussion for popular culture fanatics, 2channel’s community is also famous for enabling overzealous political and sexist rhetoric amidst its users’ casual and snarky commentary which has a demonstrable influence on public opinion in Japan (Maslow, 2011; Kitada, 2013). The key to 2channel’s massive popularity lies in its ability to post in a completely anonymous fashion, without user names or accounts, making it something of a cultural refuge for people who feel constrained by cultural taboos regarding face-to-face communication in Japan (Kaigo and Watanabe, 2007).

As in the West, online communication in Japan has a strong history of enabling direct political and social action, and the significance behind 2channel’s quick growth towards being a highly influential and centralized aspect of modern Japanese culture since its creation in 1999 cannot be understated. While attracting users due to the liberating environment, 2channel is well-known to “reflect some of the worst examples of human communication behaviour” (Kaigo and Watanabe, 2007, p. 1249). In addition to enabling political activity, BBSs based around subculture interests became extremely popular in Japan in the 1990s, a time of extreme economic downturn for Japan when
notions of irony and nationalism among youth underwent radical changes (Maslow, 2011; Kitada, 2013, p. 72). Old forums such as Ayashii-world and Amezou largely attracted people with interests that diverged from the norm such as anime or video games, and harboured extremely critical perspectives of the traditional mainstream media. In this malaise, users who made no hesitation to express their harsh anti-Korean and anti-Chinese views intertwined with the sentiment that Japan’s television media was increasingly deserving of extreme ridicule. While the topics were not discussed in a manner that could be called “intelligent” by any stretch of the imagination, they ignited a grassroots-style passion which continues to overwhelm rational political discourse (Kitada, 2013, p. 80). These users, known as uyo-chu (a portmanteau of the terms of “right-winger” and “middle-school student”), were largely inherited by 2channel after the decline of Amezou, and have since put an enormous amount of effort into targeting television stations for traces of perceived support towards Chinese or Korea and attempting to sabotage their public events as a means of protest against a media system supposedly working against what they believe to be the national interests of Japan (Kitada, 2013). While uyo-chu are a fringe group within 2channel, their influence permeates many areas of casual discussion causing the site as a whole to become a “greenhouse” for digital nationalism in an environment often believed to have “more influence over Japanese public opinion than the prime minister, the emperor, and the traditional media combined” (Maslow, 2011). Due to its size and popularity, 2channel is emblematic of the key role that online communication plays in Japanese society, and the fact that a culture of practice that reflects a small subset of users is able to have such a huge influence on public opinion demonstrates the often uneven power dynamics that can be found in massive online forums.

In 2003, Christopher Poole (commonly known by his internet handle, “moot”) was highly intrigued by the lightning fast discussion based around Japanese anime which took place on 2channel (Olson, 2013, p. 26). In her book documenting the history of Anonymous, Parmy Olson (2013) discusses how Poole copied publicly available HTML from 2channel in order to create the image board 4chan. This is only partially correct; while he was inspired by the culture and discussion which took place on 2channel, the code was actually taken from “Futaba channel” (or “2chan”) which is a spinoff image board dominated by anime fans from the 2channel community (O’Brien, 2008). In stark
contrast to its Japanese counterparts, usernames were initially required to post on 4chan. While this seemed like a reasonable policy at the time, one 4chan user known as “shii” published an essay valorising the anonymity of boards like 2channel, declaring that logic needed to overrule vanity in order for a public space following this design to prosper (p. 28). Shortly after, Poole made “shii” a 4chan moderator, and forced anonymity became the standard across the website. The idea of mandatory anonymity, something practically unprecedented in western online communication, proved highly attractive to hackers who flocked to the website in droves, primarily occupying the now infamous “/b/ Random” board, where “anything goes” became the standard form of conduct (p. 28). Much like the uyō-chū on 2channel, the hackers who embraced the veil of anonymity became much maligned among more casual members of the community, accusing this group of forming a “hivemind” that reinforced thoughts and opinions through repetition. This accusation soon found realization in the form of the group known as “Anonymous” which took on a life of its own as Poole and most of the actual moderators of 4chan became less relevant aspects of the community, which consisted largely of 18-35 year old men from the English-speaking world (p. 28). The culture of the group Anonymous stayed very much grounded in the idea of logic prevailing over vanity, and organized themselves primarily in the interests of invading or raiding communities that did not align with this ideal, often using IRC channels as a way of more covertly arranging these attacks (p. 50). While they did not represent the majority of 4chan users, the sheer hostility of their ethical view shaped the conduct of the board as a public space. It was considered a taboo to identify one’s race, age, or sex on /b/, but the board all too often took pleasure in pressuring women who did reveal their gender to post images of sexual acts or nudity in order to gain acceptance (p. 55). “Tits or GTFO (Get The Fuck Out)” became a mantra of the culture of /b/.

As the activities of Anonymous became increasingly visible, Reddit soon became a refuge for 4chan users seeking more “intelligent” conversation (p. 159). While many of these users left behind the aggressive penchant for invading other communities, the ethic of creating a public space that valued logic over vanity appears to be something that still carried over. Reddit is not anonymous in the same sense that 4chan is due to the requirement of named accounts, but the “lightweight” nature of accounts that can be created in seconds still reflects many of the same basic principles of detaching identity.
from the content being posted. The fact that it is very easy for users to experience the site through so-called “throwaway” accounts has been cited as a positive function for many users, as it allows disclosure on issues such as mental health which may not have been possible otherwise (De Choudhury and De, 2014). It can also be argued that this has encouraged a lack of accountability for statements made that cannot be clearly attributed to an individual, encouraging the exact kind of “hivemind” mentality that had been so extensively criticized on 4chan.

2.7. The “Hivemind” and the Defence of Controversial Subreddits

While the perspective of Reddit as a misogynistic community that encourages users to conform to certain popular views has often been confined to blogs and some occasional news reports, academic literature focusing on these problems has begun to surface very recently. This suggests that there may be a shift in focus in the way Reddit is being discussed and perceived from an academic perspective, and this is increasingly closing in on traits that the site inherited from the 4chan community. Of particular interest is the idea of the “hivemind,” which has become an integral part of Reddit’s reward structure in which many users are likely to benefit from posting opinions which have proven popular within the community. However, its presence is both validated and challenged by users who point out this tendency in a critical or denigrating fashion (Mills, 2011).

The common criticism that the “hivemind” systematically prevents minority opinions from reaching high-visibility or even having a chance to create substantive dialogue is explored by Mills (2011) who argues that the phenomenon exists, but may not be particularly dangerous or unfair. Due to the reward mechanisms built into Reddit’s structure, this can be interpreted as a “rich get richer” model of sharing information, where prestige is gained through perpetuating opinions that are popular within the community (p. 3). Focusing on the community’s perspective surrounding the release of the United States diplomatic cables from Wikileaks as a case study, Mills (2011) conceptualizes the Reddit website as a form of “social news” in which users are considered journalists, even though they are merely linking to stories rather than writing
them (p. 1). Ultimately, he found that dissenting views about Wikileaks coverage were not deliberately excluded from prominent visibility, but there was overwhelming visible support for the release of the documents. Many users actively pointed out this bias and characterized it as a failing of the community that could be attributed to the so-called “hivemind,” which they argued to be a negative aspect of the community (p. 10). While the power of these positive feedback loops may see limitations when spread to the site as a whole, the focus is very broad and does not touch on the varying behaviours of specific subreddits, which was also absent from Weninger’s (2013) breakdown of the way information is processed on Reddit. Interestingly, Mills (2011) mentions the sexual assault charges that were levelled against Wikileaks founder Julian Assange during the time period of the case study, but does not explore the specific ways in which that particular issue factored into discussion (p. 6). Presenting the issue as a simple “support or oppose” binary erases much of the nuance that can arise from various communities around the site in regards to a specific issue such as sexual assault.

Despite the presence of self-deprecation, there does appear to be a tendency for the Reddit hivemind to defend the community as a whole, even in the case of potentially distasteful or dangerous content. Some boards that operated until recently include /r/Jailbait (provocative pictures of underaged girls), /r/Creepshots (pictures of women taken in public without consent), /r/ChokeABitch (focusing on a style of pornography in which women are choked by men) and /r/BeatingWomen. While those particular boards were created by a single prolific user known as “Violentacerz” and are often regarded as “troll” boards designed to exploit the freedom given to users to create their own boards, they did foster substantial communities and followings, and their closure was largely frowned upon by the greater Reddit community as a betrayal of the freedom that should be allowed for members of the site (Ferenstein, 2012). Many Redditors still argue for the right for these communities to exist and operate on principle of free speech and Reddit’s general policy of not censoring distasteful, albeit technically legal, content (BBC, 2012). It has been argued that expressing viewpoints that go against this type of ethic can be difficult due to decisions related to moderation. For instance, it is worth noting that /r/Feminism is widely believed to be run by men whose commitment to that viewpoint has been brought into question, with many bloggers speculating that it is in fact run by
anti-feminists (Dickens, 2012). However, there are many cases in which alternative spaces, even safe spaces, have been able to operate in spite of these dominant views.

2.8. The Accommodation of Safe Spaces on Reddit

Despite the hostile reproduction of values which appears to exist on Reddit in some capacity, there have been efforts to reclaim spaces on Reddit in a possible effort to reposition or influence greater discourse on the site. Specifically, "/r/TwoXChromosomes" (or "/r/TwoX" for short) is the most popular subreddit for women, and is considered to host dialogue which is frequently in contrast or opposition to the greater Reddit community (Workman, 2014). It is often interpreted as an alternative space within the ecosystem of Reddit. Focusing more on specific subreddits, Workman (2014) used a grounded theory approach and Actor-Network Theory to explore /r/TwoX as a safe space. In her paper, she characterizes Reddit primarily as a misogynistic environment, but demonstrates that /r/TwoX is able to operate as an isolated safe space due largely to the faith its users held in the rules and moderation to maintain stability (p. 28). Unlike Mills (2011) who ultimately characterized the “hivemind” of Reddit as something benign, Workman (2014) describes it as an active threat to /r/TwoX as a safe space, as it encourages male trolls to bring misogynistic sentiments from the larger community into conversations (p. 36). While these trolls are usually dealt with quickly, surveys and observation of /r/TwoX users gave the distinct impression that inequalities and marginalization are inherent in mixed-gender communities, and these instances of encroachment represent a reproduction of this trend.

Since Workman’s (2014) paper was published, a notable change has taken place with the /r/TwoXChromosomes subreddit: due to its high traffic, it has been made into a “default” subreddit, meaning that it now automatically appears on the Reddit front page for users who have not customized their feeds. While the board originally needed to be searched for, its exposure to the greater Reddit community has grown substantially, leading some to feel that the board’s status as a “safe space” has now been compromised (Hern, 2014). A common complaint is that comment threads are being increasingly hijacked by users importing misogynistic commentary into a space that tends to be sensitive to topics relating to sexual abuse (p. 47). As stated by Workman
(2014), many of these users tend to be from /r/MensRights and /r/TheRedPill, two subreddits known for fostering extremely anti-women views, often placing a heavy focus on stigmatizing false rape accusations. While there does appear to be a strong possibility that safe spaces can exist on Reddit, the following research will in part explore whether or not these safe spaces are able to function and grow outside of set moderated boundaries without being compromised by their greater environment.

The following research is built primarily off of Mills (2011) and Workman’s (2014) existing studies on Reddit, but will approach the subject matter through a different methodology. In Chapter 2, I will define the type of hegemonic masculinity in the context of neoliberalism that will form the basis of this study, and explain how that justifies the use of critical discourse analysis on comment pages in specific subreddits.
Chapter 3.

Methodology and Introduction to Case Studies

3.1. Introduction

With the theoretical grounding of this research established in Chapter 2, the chapter that follows is devoted to developing an approach that can properly address my three research questions. While Mills (2011) thoroughly explored the reach and limitations of the influential collective opinion of the Reddit community, known colloquially as the “hivemind,” he expressly did not explore the popular opinions that exist on specific subreddit communities, and the varying degrees to which they may influence the greater community as a whole. It is within this omission in existing literature that I situate my investigation into the nature of misogyny said to be present in specific subreddit communities, and the larger social impact that these trends could have within the context of a self-proclaimed public space. My research questions are addressed across two case studies, each focusing on the relationships that exist between the influential consensus of opinion within the culture of practice that surrounds Reddit as a whole, and the discourse found within specific subreddit communities: in particular, /r/TwoXChromosomes and /r/worldnews. To develop this analysis, I address practices within the communities in relation to hegemonic masculinity, a notion I ground in modern neoliberal power hierarchies. Because critical discourse analysis is ideal for pinpointing the rhetorical framework present in text-based media, I utilize that as my method to observe Reddit, with comment sections as a unit of measure observed in an archival context. In order to balance this with the use of Bourdieu’s (1985) theory of social fields, I establish a concrete definition of “misogynistic language” and characterize it as a form of symbolic violence within the comment sections of Reddit.
3.2. Operationalizing Hegemonic Masculinity Within the Context of Neoliberalism

There is a substantive history that links together the anxieties associated with masculinity and the reinforcement of dominant ideologies. Historically, dominant ideologies of masculinity have become tied to the way gender operates in mass media, especially in those contexts where such media has become highly centralized (Couldry, 2006). Reddit is not commonly understood as part of the centralization of contemporary media; nonetheless, Reddit is often cited as a space where a dominant masculine discourse predominates, and so, it is worth asking how its culture of practice might act as a social field sustained by enforced norms (Dickens, 2012; Kleinman, 2013; Workman, 2014). How do various forms of masculinity emerge as part of the practices evident in particular communities, and how is this evident in the discursive practice on the platform? When looking at the construction and influence of masculinity, it may seem obvious to work within sex role theory, which assumes that masculinity is a monolithic construct within a patriarchal society, whose variations follow certain key characteristics (Connell, 2005). But this essentialist view overlooks the structures of dominance and subordination that exist within masculine identities, including the intersections of race, sexuality and social class. All of these factors inevitably complicate how masculinity is lived out across everyday experience.

Rather than assume masculinity to be a stagnant and fixed identity, it is more useful to approach it as a social construction in a constant state of tension. In order to identify this process and more clearly identify the dominant masculine discourse that exists on Reddit, I draw on R.W. Connell’s (2005) notion of hegemonic masculinity. This conceptualization synthesizes various disciplines such as sex role theory, race theory, queer theory and psycho-analysis in order to illustrate the sustained and continually promoted social domination imposed by men. There are many different forms of hegemonic masculinity that form as a result of various dominant ideological circumstances, and these can be influenced by a variety of factors. When Connell (1977) first wrote on the subject, Gramscian hegemony was a more broadly accepted way of interpreting the stabilization of class relations than it is today and served as her model. However, this presented some problems, as this form of hegemony required historical
context in order to understand “the mobilization and demobilization of whole classes. Without a very clear focus on this issue of historical change, the idea of hegemony would be reduced to a simple model of cultural control” (Connell, 2005, p. 831). Nonetheless, the simplification and gradual critique of hegemonic masculinity from a variety of ethnographic perspectives has made the concept flexible enough to work in the context presented in my research. As it stands, the concept is compatible with Bourdieu’s (1985) later social field theory, especially as it suggests that sets of practices will typically rely on symbolic violence to produce forms of stabilization.

The defining trait of hegemonic masculinity is that it discards the idea that masculinity carries an inherent “role” of dominance, and more precisely argues that masculinity is a “pattern of practice that allows men’s dominance over women [and other gender groups] to continue” (Connell, 2005, p. 832). While the internalization of traits considered traditionally “masculine” within a dominant ideological context (which typically include violence, competition and stoicism) play a role in this particular form of masculinity, it is defined not by inherent traits, but by its lack of “subordinate” masculine traits. These include non-heterosexuality, non-whiteness and non-affluence. The existence of hegemonic masculinity suggests that there is always an active struggle for dominance within the broad range of masculinities, and that these many different groups position themselves in relation to it (p. 832). Few men can be said to exhibit pure hegemonic masculinity, but it is the standard against which these “subordinate” masculinities can be easily defined (p. 832). Paradoxically, men who are non-straight, non-white or financially dependent may contest hegemonic masculinity in the perception of their own identity, but benefit from its existence in doing so. This can place men in general at odds with women and other marginalized gendered identities, making those who identify with most forms of masculinity complicit with the ongoing dominance of hegemonic masculinity (p. 832). While the actual traits of hegemonic masculinity are hard to pin down, the idea that there is a dominance that needs to be maintained is the one key, consistent factor that can be linked to sustaining a social field in the context of Bourdieu’s (1985) research.

In the context of this study, the most relevant form of hegemonic masculinity is that which has been formed as a result of neoliberal economic policies that have been
broadly evident across Western societies. Neoliberalism refers to a series of economic changes that have taken place within a global context since the 1980s that have been driven by trends of deregulation, increased corporate autonomy and global free trade (Hackett and Caroll, 2006). Just as these policies have impacted systems of mass communication, as discussed in Chapter 2, they have had sweeping effects on labour in general. It is in these structures of labour that traditional notions of masculinity have been firmly entrenched and maintained for most of the existence of industrialized society. Over the past three decades, the role and status gained by masculinity in this context has been thrown into a state of crisis as the result of a number of dramatic social, cultural, economic and political changes across a diverse range of settings, which can all be tied to the ideological shift toward neoliberalism. This shift has disrupted expected patterns of practice, and resulted in a new unique form of hegemonic masculinity that works to reinstate masculine dominance (Connell, 2005, p. 832). This interpretation presents a backdrop for the forms of misogynistic actions and language that have emerged in an online context over the same time period.

This new form of hegemonic masculinity has been fuelled in large part by a shifting labour market that is becoming less compatible with traditional notions of masculinity. The emergence of networked life and the increased mobility of individuals in a globalized world has altered the way bodies have traditionally been bound to specific places and communities (Nayak and Kehily, 2008, p. 40). Labour practices have shifted away from the relatively stable “job for life” model associated with unionized work and a manufacturing-based economy towards temporary employment and less predictable information-based economies. Traditional manufacturing jobs have disappeared, and the need to jump between jobs and even homes has increased the importance of social interaction and networking, which is a change commonly linked to the displacement of men within relevant economic and cultural fields (p. 41). In a neoliberal economic world, individuation has now become a primary measure of success, placing value on personal expression and communication, traits which are often considered narcissistic, vain and unnecessary for traditional masculine labour. These changes in the workforce have been perceived in terms of the “feminization” of work, which has created the belief that women are the beneficiaries of recent economic developments within advanced capitalist nations, to the detriment of traditional male roles and opportunities. (p. 37).
Modern corporations have in many ways embraced these shifts. In efforts to “soften” their images and create an illusion of social progress, large companies are more likely to employ women in a highly visible manner, usually in the context of public relations (p. 40). This creates the pretence that women have benefitted substantially from recent social and economic developments, and that this has somehow been at the expense of male working class and middle-income earners. The sense of persecution and displacement nurtured by a lack of predictability in the labour market has played a significant role in a splintering of masculinity, but this is not limited to labour and the economic sphere. The shifts and increased mobility created as a result of neoliberal policies have also disrupted intimacy within families and older structures of dominance within the private sphere, causing men to be displaced within their own families through normative changes in marital relations and divorce or custody battles over children (p. 45). Despite labour and economic causes, these changes tend to be associated with the perceived persecution of traditional forms of masculinity, leading to a backlash against global feminist movements for contesting the hegemony of male subjectivity (Maddison, 1999). One consequence of a supposed ‘crisis of masculinity’ has been a sense of resentment against perceived threats to historic and normalized roles and forms of male privilege.

The aforementioned changes, along with notions of persecution against masculinity, have gradually become positioned front and centre within the rhetoric of men’s studies and movements in the United States. While these causes have carried a specific national character throughout the end of the twentieth century, they are emblematic of sentiments evident across Western societies and are amplified by modern social networks. Some of the earliest studies of the relatively obscure “Men’s Liberation Movement” in the mid-1970s were based around critical feminist literature on men and prominent media images, and established the male sex role as a negative oppressive force (Connell, 2005, p. 23). While this made the idea of a field of men’s studies complementary to women’s studies a curious development, attempts to create men’s studies departments emerged primarily as a reactionary response to women’s studies and tended to dwell on predictable social norms and expectations rather than investigating or criticising hegemonic forms of masculinity (p. 24). While some authors, such as Pleck (1977) and Snodgrass (1977) made mention of a hierarchy of power that
exists between men and its relation to the subordination of women, many writers were dismissive of feminism and overlooked how women’s oppression was connected with male privilege (Connell, 2005, p. 24). A pointedly anti-feminist stance became the basis of the modern men’s rights movement which, after significant stretches of growth in the 1980s and 1990s, has fought to contest feminist progress by arguing that men have become the oppressed sex in a world that has been unfairly “feminized” (Maddison, 1999). Unlike feminism, which is based in social politics and the structuring of identity, these theories suggest that men are suppressed through the denigration or stigmatization of a male sex role that needs to be asserted and defended. The sense of retaliation that has formed the foundation of the aforementioned studies and movements related to men’s issues have touted the idea that the changes to male subjectivity are a social misstep that needs to be corrected when viewed in the context of hegemonic masculinity. An emphasis on logical thinking and assumptions about the inherent rationality of men plays heavily into this movement. As stated by Connell (2012), it remains the case today that dominant forms of hegemonic masculinity tend to be framed around claims to rationality, wherein particular forms of rational performance are claimed as more common among men (p. 164). Cast in this manner, it is my belief that women become conceptualized as an obstacle to reasoned argument, and the role of masculinity is exalted as a suppressed influence across various spheres of modern culture.

I note this history of the US men’s movement and men’s studies because the men’s rights movement is frequently cited as a popular topic in many individual communities on Reddit, and it would seem to be influential across the wider social field (Dickens, 2012; Workman, 2014; Hern, 2014). While it is not immediately clear that the popularity of this subject makes the culture of practice that surrounds Reddit misogynistic, the recurring emphasis on discourse that is deemed “rational” within the community suggests a link to hegemonic masculinity. The idea that this could play out as a form of symbolic violence can be connected to Susan Herring’s (1996) prolific early study on gendered communication online. While her research suggested that both men and women are inclined to engage in information-oriented discussion online, male-dominated communities had a tendency to interpret interaction as fact-based competition. Women would have to adapt in these environments, but would find
themselves in an uphill battle since the trend, according to Herring (1996) was for women’s opinions to be seen as inherently less fact-based (p. 104). While her work is somewhat dated, Herring’s (1996) findings can be seen as a foundational reflection on how rationality has been tied to problems with male-driven discourse online, which are trends reflected more recently by Beyer (2012) and Workman (2014).

I suggest further that evidence of misogynistic language in key instances of Reddit communication could be interpreted as a form of symbolic violence that is used to maintain a sense of centrality or dominance over the culture of practice informing the social field of the greater Reddit community. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the movement of content on Reddit is driven by consensus, and demands that users conform to popular ideas and opinions that are largely created through conversations and voting in the comment sections. In this sense, the content of the individual comments is the most valuable area of observation on the site. Because of this, I have chosen to use critical discourse analysis of selected comment sections for this research project. In the next section, I address the meaning and value of critical discourse analysis and the tools it offers for assessing the rhetorical practices apparent in two sub-communities on Reddit.

3.3. Structures of Power and Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is ideal for studying the comment sections of various communities within Reddit for two major reasons: first, Reddit is intensely focused on text-based communication, which lends itself well to traditional forms of CDA; second, the form of hegemonic masculinity that appears to exist within Reddit communities is rooted in hierarchies of power, and CDA is specifically geared toward decoding the work of power, most notably when it is exercised in the context of neoliberalism. Critical discourse analysis is not just a method, but a larger theory rooted largely in the work of Norman Fairclough (1989; 2005; 2009) who describes it as an “analysis of the dialectical relationships between semiosis (including language) and other elements of social practices. Its particular concern is with the radical changes that are taking place in contemporary social life, with how semiosis figures within processes of change, and with shifts in the relationship between semiosis and other social elements within networks of practices” (2009, p. 123). As a method applied to research,
CDA uses the broad concept of language as a means of analysis for broader social process. Fairclough also uses Bourdieu’s (1985) notion of social fields to illustrate the way language restructures domains of social life within the context of globalization and the new global economy (Fairclough, 2009, p. 127). The ideological elements latent within language cause individuals “who differ in social class, in gender, in nationality, in ethnic or cultural membership, and in life experience, [to] produce different ‘performances’ of a particular position” (p. 124). It is the act of “positioning” within social fields that is most relevant for understanding the discursive processes examined in this research.

While regular discourse analysis assesses text and speech patterns as a form, critical discourse analysis is more reflexive and allows for substantive analysis of the workings of power behind textual communication. CDA treats language, whether spoken or written, as a constantly changing social practice rather than a literal representation of views or intent. According to Fairclough (1989; 2005), discourse analysis in itself is not sufficient for exploring the social dimensions of mass media because it does not take into account how power operates through systems of communication, and instead focuses on the text as it appears rather than the context within which it is created and interpreted. CDA makes clear from the start that power is always apparent through symbolic acts. Because I am looking at the way power operates on Reddit, CDA is an obvious and necessary fit for this research.

It has been argued that the exact procedures in Fairclough’s (1989; 2005) foundational writing are out-dated due to their lack of versatility both in terms of approaching different types of media as well as political perspectives. Poole (2010), in particular, highlighted that Fairclough’s stated socialist leanings are built so deeply into his approach that the ability to adapt it to more varied contexts is limited. On the contrary, it is exactly its fundamental criticism of neoliberal rhetoric that is buried under what is not being stated that makes CDA an ideal tool for researching a platform such as Reddit. As a research tool, it is designed around specific ideological functions that run much deeper than a particular media format or style. Even on a modern online communication platform, the prominence of hegemonic masculinity in the form of a
dominant masculine discourse rooted in neoliberal ideology means CDA is a valid and useful approach.

3.4. Using Critical Discourse Analysis to Study Online Communities

Using critical discourse analysis to examine Reddit communication presents various challenges. Much of the existing research that has used CDA to look at online communities has normally done so by looking at the aesthetics of website design or live flow of conversation (Jacobs, 2011; Gibson, 2015). My research is grounded in an archival approach to CDA, which deals more with the actual content of the comments as they exist a length of time after they were originally posted. It is similar to an approach used by Chiluwa (2012) to analyze how members of online Biafra campaign groups negotiated their identities in discussion forums, and how certain members appeared to guide these discussions ideologically. Even targeted at a Reddit archive, CDA is difficult to apply to Reddit conversations, but the rhetorical structure of Reddit conversations can be better captured when approached as a preserved archive after the fact, long after the discussion is no longer “live.” It is in this more stable state that Fairclough’s (1989; 2005; 2009) approach is useful for analysing the underlying rhetoric behind Reddit comments. Approaching Reddit in an archival fashion places special importance on the prominence of specific comments. The upvoting and downvoting process on Reddit embodies a type of community-based soft surveillance or communal judgment that influences the visibility of some opinions. Because of this, the most visible opinions are suggestive of the overall ideological frame of the users. This structural dimension of the site may influence any significant trends in language that emerge. Nonetheless, I contend the upvoting and downvoting process is representative of the social field behind the Reddit community, and that the visibility of the comments I have selected is a part of their textual construction. The actual content of the posts conveys the actions of symbolic violence in which certain users are able to control or constrain the opinions expressed by other users. Thus my selections demonstrate ideological intentions that are not directly stated on the surface which lend themselves well to critical discourse analysis, as it draws
attention to the way power imbalance can operate in particular social practices within a social field.

Fairclough (1989; 2002; 2009) argues that ideology is hidden and latent in everyday speech and action and that this “hidden content” reflects difference and power relations that are rooted in neoliberalism. Discourse surrounding these power relations is negotiated through the dialogue and texts that we engage with on a daily basis (p. 17). Fairclough (1989) suggests further that the need to question the presence of certain “interactional conventions” within a specific environment focuses attention on the naturalized practices of a particular communication platform, bringing attention to implicit links to power and control (p. 134). The negotiation of power can often be enacted as individuals participate in a turn-taking system of communication, for instance, through scenarios wherein one participant is able to control the contributions of others (p. 134). He contends that discursive power revolves around powerful participants controlling and constraining the contributions of participants who lack such authority in a particular environment (p. 46). It is possible that the culture of practice behind Reddit facilitates this type of control through the karma and upvoting/downvoting system, which may encourage certain popular views to be sustained through symbolic violence. While Mills (2011) highlighted that this trend is frequently pointed out by users on the site in a self-deprecating fashion, more casual users are still likely to overlook the problem and assume that information is being conveyed through the type of neutral platform that Reddit purports itself to be.

In many ways, Reddit operates under the pretence that it is a universal alternative to the mass media that is somehow immune to the same ideological influences. A problem that frequently arises in conventional conversation analysis is that the connections between the specific micro interaction and greater societal macro implication can be difficult to bridge, and it is often tempting to assume that conversation takes place in a vacuum (Fairclough, 1989, p. 12). While this can be characterized as a drawback for many communication platforms, especially when they are being observed on the fly, this is arguably a perfect characterization of an online community that views itself with a sense of centrality like Reddit. CDA is effective in this type of environment,
and can help make clear connections on how Reddit comments are informed by a larger social context.

Applying CDA within the framework of Bourdieu’s (1985) social field theory in order to find patterns of suppression will require looking for instances of symbolic violence that maintain the habituses that are dialectically linked to the social fields within Reddit. Because of the high likelihood that symbolic violence will occur in the form of misogynistic language or actions within the comment sections, it will be necessary to precisely define what this refers to. Within the context of neoliberalism, I understand hegemonic masculinity to embody a set of cultural practices which sustain forms of symbolic violence directed at women, even as established expectations and standards for men prove increasingly unsustainable. In order to observe this as a part of the culture of practices surrounding Reddit, I suggest that misogynistic language will emerge in some form as part of the symbolic violence sustaining the culture’s habitus (Bourdieu, 1985; Beyer, 2012). Characterizing “misogynistic language” as a form of symbolic violence on Reddit requires developing a definition of what the term refers to, but this can be difficult as “misogyny” is a socially contested term. It is commonly understood as a simple prejudice or hatred of women on an individual basis, but this assumption undermines the idea that the subordination of women can be defined as a broader social phenomenon. It is a misplaced viewpoint as it suggests that prejudice against women is an attitude enacted by people on a conscious, individual level. A form of prejudice such as misogyny does not develop inside of a bubble, however: it is rather part of a systemic structure in society that individuals participate in, contribute to and are formed by (Alat, 2006; Beyer, 2012). In turn, “misogynistic language” is understood to refer to language and expressions that reinforce ideas of oppression against women that are ingrained in a larger social context.

Applying a notion of hegemonic masculinity to an online communication platform requires interpreting it in terms of words and phrases. For the purposes of this project, I will define “misogynistic language” on Reddit as written text grounded in world views that characterize women in a generalized and negative light, or perpetuate organized efforts that work against them in a social or cultural fashion. Even with a concrete definition, discriminatory language that is drawn from a social context cannot be determined based
on a list of phrases or directly stated assumptions or stereotypes, but rather operates through trends and patterns that will be apparent in the texts I examine. This requires an inductive form of research to determine what types of Reddit comments would fit this definition. The following sections establish how CDA will be used to study Reddit.

3.5. Establishing Reddit Comments as a Unit of Measure

The comments left by individual users are the most important element for assessing the connections between Reddit and a larger culture of practice which overlaps into similar communities (ie: 4chan, Usenet, etc.). They are the most important window revealing the way that language on the site translates into community conduct, and the ways in which these activities can be intertwined with Reddit as an influential public space. While there are many forms of content on Reddit, the comments are key to understanding the community and nature of curation on the website, and how the community is influenced by the “hivemind” effect (Mills, 2011). As a method, critical discourse analysis has traditionally been applied to more stable forms of text, namely news reports, literature or even web material that has been published in a fixed manner. The same principles can apply to Reddit, even if the commentary process plays out as a kind of live conversation, where certain comments are moved up and down, depending on community engagement. In order to guarantee stability and avoid material that may be engaged with or changed by the community, my research revolves around archived material from specific subreddits that is at least one year old. This is more than an adequate amount of time to allow for Reddit comment pages to stabilize, making it easier to approach the comments using traditional forms of CDA. To allow greater flexibility with my analysis, all data is based off of full-page screenshots taken by exporting full images of each thread to PDF files through the “Print to PDF” feature on the Google Chrome browser. This allows for the replication of a more rigid, fixed type of CDA analysis. This also reflects on how trends of discourse on Reddit lead to the conversation looking the way it ultimately did when the screenshot was taken.

To properly analyze Reddit’s complex operations, I look for specific implications or trends in the text of comments within the context of archived comment pages. To do this, I have chosen the notion of prominence to select representative samples.
Comments that construct the largest and most immediately visible conversations are the ones that establish the content and character that a community applies to a particular subject when viewed as a space of public discourse. I have approached these using an inductive coding system, developed concurrently with assessment of the data. This is important, since pinpointing trends that reflect misogynistic practices requires evaluating complex behaviours and ideas that cannot be clearly pinned down. Such language and action is not predictable with easily identifiable phrases or epithets (LeCompte, 1999). If misogyny is operating at a root ideological level, it is unlikely that individuals in visible settings will openly condone or show much tolerance for extreme issues of misogyny such as violent rape or blatant dehumanizing language. Attitudes tend to emerge in a subtler rhetorical fashion. Comments that tended to stand on subreddits like /r/TwoXChromosomes and /r/worldnews included those that contained the following: dismissive scepticism or hostility toward socially constructed ideas of gender, shifts towards the victimization of men over women and mocking or discrediting use of social justice language. Also of interest were comments that have been deleted by either users or moderators. While many deleted comments do not have a discernible context, many have undeleted responses which indicate that the post was of a harassing or abusive nature.

The karma score and ranking of each comment is an important indication of how the community has engaged or reacted to it. This information is notable as an indicator of how the comment was ranked through Reddit’s algorithmic processes, but conclusions about the actual number of upvotes and downvotes can only be speculated, as Reddit has gone to notable lengths to keep that information unavailable. The precise number of times a post or comment has been upvoted or downvoted is deliberately hidden to the point that even workaround browser plug-ins such as “Reddit Reveal,” which could once uncover the number of upvotes and downvotes, have now been rendered unusable by recent upgrades to the website. Some alternatives do exist, but are only able to produce an approximation based on statistical information that is not necessarily reliable. This information is valuable, but clearly the inability to see it is meant to influence the actions of Redditors. Even if it were available, it would not be possible for CDA to properly assess the exact significance of how these comment scores are weighed, since the method is designed for relatively stationary text in a mass
media context. Nonetheless, the karma score of each comment can still provide a rough idea on the value placed upon specific textual expressions by the standards that the community follows, which is common between all of the specific subreddits being looked at in this study. It should be noted that since posting comments, many users have had their accounts deleted, either personally or by a moderator. In these cases, the user name simply shows up as “[deleted]” with the original content still intact. Such individuals will be identified as “user (who has since had their account deleted).”

The PDF files have been catalogued, first according to case study, and then according to which subreddit the comment page was drawn from. These files have been processed using the Atlas.TI software for qualitative research, with comments that appear to exhibit relevant traits marked upon initial review. These notes have formed the basis of my inductive coding structure, which reflects traits that can accurately be associated with rhetorical patterns on specific subreddit communities.

3.6. Introducing Case Studies

I have structured my case studies in slightly different ways. Case Study 1 (covered in Chapter 4) is slightly smaller and looks at the way different subreddit communities engaged with a specific news story to find possible overlap between fringe or niche groups and more popular boards. In his analysis of the influence of Reddit’s “hivemind,” Mills (2011) used the 2010 leak of government cables by Julian Assange and Wikileaks to assess the nature of consensus and promotion of certain viewpoints among the greater Reddit community. However, he specifically mentions that the variances in conduct between different subreddits were absent from his study, which instead focused on Reddit as one amorphous group. Also important is that Mills (2011) touches on the controversial sexual assault allegations levelled at Assange weeks after the cable leaks, but never actually explores how that particular topic was discussed on Reddit. Case Study 1 addresses this gap by focusing specifically on all news stories posted concerning the allegations against Julian Assange on two different subreddits: “/r/worldnews,” (a major board which carried a “default” status at the time, suggesting higher involvement from more casual users), and /r/TwoXChromosomes (Reddit’s most popular female-centric board). Data was also collected from /r/MensRights (a male-
centric board specifically focused on the men’s rights movement), but this was discounted for reasons discussed in Chapter 4.

The intention was to compare the arguments and focus that take place in the two specifically gendered spaces and compare them to the comments being posted in a default subreddit. To find relevant threads, I used Reddit’s “search” feature to do three searches, each limited to the threads posted in each subreddit. For /r/TwoXChromosomes and /r/MensRights, I simply typed “Julian Assange” to find all of the relevant threads that were accessible as of June 15, 2015. In both of those communities, every single thread posted about Julian Assange involved the sexual assault allegations, with a total of 13 on /r/TwoX. However, because /r/worldnews has a much broader focus, many different subjects involving Assange came up, making it necessary to narrow the search. Searching for “Julian Assange’ AND rape OR sexual OR assault” brought about 55 threads. While comments posted in response to this particular news story dated back four or five years at the time of this research, it helped establish trends that are systemic within Reddit’s community operations. It also allowed a look at some of the internal norms of /r/TwoXChromosomes, traditionally considered an outlier within Reddit as a whole, which helped form the basis of the second case study which looks specifically at that community.

Case Study 2 (covered in Chapter 5) addresses patterns of discourse on /r/TwoXChromosomes, in accordance with Workman’s (2014) assessment of the subreddit as a safe space for women functioning within a larger misogynistic community. In her thesis, Workman (2014) explained that /r/TwoXChromosomes is understood to be a safe space where women are able to communicate without threats or abuse from men. However, as of April 29, 2014, not long after this piece was published, /r/TwoXChromosomes was turned into a default subreddit, meaning its posts became viewable on the front page and accessible to a broader range of users. The incentive for this change, it seems, was to create more visibility for female members as active contributors to the Reddit website as a whole, possibly to address the criticism that Reddit usage statistics consistently suggest that the website is male-dominated. The number of subscribers on /r/TwoX has more than doubled since the change happened, but so have complaints about a major change in discourse. It is widely believed that the
transition to default status has jeopardized the board as a safe space by enabling abusive comments and actions to infiltrate from the greater Reddit community (Hern, 2014). To see if a link can be made between the culture of practice surrounding Reddit and the ability for a safe space to function, I analyze posts in /r/TwoX from one week before and one week after the switch to default to measure any changes that have occurred in community conduct.

Reddit does not have a feature allowing users to search all of the posts made between specific dates, but content that appears during a specific timeframe can be displayed by editing the URL that appears during a search with customized timestamps. Using the Epoch Converter (http://www.epochconverter.com), I was able to create timestamps for key dates for one week before the switch to default (April 29, 2014= 1398729600), the day the switch to default was officially announced (May 6, 2014= 1399432320), and one week after the switch (May 13, 2014= 1399939200). Using these timestamps, I was able to generate two searches: one that compiled all of the posts made one week before the switch was announced (a total of 620 threads, which were narrowed down to 100 representative samples), and one that compiled all of the posts made one week after the switch (a total of 944 threads, which were narrowed down to 150 representative samples). While this change happened in 2014, this comparison helps illustrates what kind of effect becoming an integral and central part of “The Front Page of the Internet” has had on a community valued for its isolation, and whether or not the need for a safe space on Reddit can be validated.

Both case studies showcase a selected dataset of comments which are analysed in relation to specific themes that relate to dominant masculine discourse. This is carried out under the conceptualization of Reddit’s various subreddit communities each being guided by individual social fields that operate in accordance with the greater social field of Reddit as a whole (Bourdieu, 1985). The scope, timeline, and basis of comparison are different in both case studies, but they hold strong thematic similarity to each other through a variety of ways, namely: how community views are positioned in the context of different social fields, how this relates to the way masculinity is interpreted in these spaces and the implications this holds for Reddit as an electronic public space. My observations on Reddit are focused specifically on the content of the user comments.
that are posted in response to external links put in place by the original poster of individual threads (or “OP”) and the possible reasons that these particular comments inspired consistent forms of conversation that relate to the positioning of hegemonic masculinity within these communities.

Approaching older Reddit comment pages in archived form, as opposed to following a live flow of interactions, has given me greater flexibility to track trends of rhetoric that are not necessarily obvious, and build off of previous research which was more restricted in that regard (Mills, 2011; Workman 2014). While approaching Reddit comment threads as screenshots of archived material provided stability, it is important to note that some of the conditions in which these interactions are preserved do not entirely reflect the nature of the original conversations. Conversations on Reddit can be influenced by how heavily the parent post of particular comment threads have been upvoted or downvoted, but it is always possible that downvoting or upvoting have taken place long after a particular exchange has finished. Comments that appear higher on the page were not necessarily the ones that drove the most conversation. It is also important to keep in mind that moderators do operate on these boards to varying degrees, and many individual comments do get deleted, especially on /r/TwoXChromosomes. However, even when this does happen, the rest of the thread still remains intact. Even with these limitations, the data provides great illumination on the operations of the Reddit community. The two case studies that follow demonstrate that while the social field surrounding Reddit does more or less fit the established assumptions about masculinity in the greater community, these elements of masculinity play out in more nuanced and interesting ways in individual subreddits.
Chapter 4.

Analysis and Observation for Case Study 1

4.1. Introduction

With the methodology and conceptual framework established in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 is the first of two case studies in which I describe the data I have collected and summarize my findings in relation to my three original research questions. The intent of Case Study 1 is to address a significant gap in Mills' (2011) piece in which the collective opinions of individual subreddit communities were not taken into account in regards to the greater community’s opinion on the issue of Julian Assange and the Wikileaks cable leaks in 2010. More specifically, the issue of the sexual assault charges that were laid against Assange around the same time was acknowledged, but not explored. Although it is a dated episode at the time of writing, it presents substantial controversies related to the definition of consent (one of the accusations is over sex without a condom), the perception that Sweden’s rape laws are “retroactive” and the potential connections to the Wikileaks cable leak scandal which had begun mere weeks before.

To observe differences of discourse on the topic of the Assange case between different communities, I initially chose to focus on /r/MensRights for comments that clearly and directly reflected dominant masculinity, /r/worldnews to assess comments from a popular subreddit with default status (automatically included in the main feed of every user unless it is customized) and /r/TwoXChromosomes for comments based in a space that I characterize as both female-driven and “alternative” compared to the mainstream of Reddit. In the process of coding and collecting data, all of which was taken from posts made related to the topic in the year 2010, I found that most substantial data for critical discourse analysis was in /r/TwoXChromosomes and /r/worldnews. Most
comments and interactions from the /r/MensRights subreddit were so hyperbolic and overblown that critical discourse analysis would not have revealed much about that particular community.

From the data I observed of conversations in /r/MensRights concerning the Assange case, for instance, discussion almost always veered towards a greater issue of false rape accusations, with users constantly fixating on the idea of feminism as a conspiracy that actively enables women to suppress masculinity by taking actions that confuse notions of consent. Frequently discussed ideas in relation to the Assange case suggest feminists act as a corrupt influence on political interests and action. Through consistently aggressive language, the community builds a consensus by constantly repeating a handful of positions (i.e., that feminism is a conspiracy) that imply unfair power now lies in the hands of irrational self-proclaimed victims. The following comment is representative of how the issue was widely interpreted within comment pages from this subreddit (See Appendix A for a screenshot of the comment in its original context):

He was deliberately targeted for character assassination. I have yet to see a rational WRA [Woman’s Rights Activist] defend what these radfems did.

Feminism has become the best form of state coercion ever devised. Think about it. Sex and sexuality are ubiquitous parts of daily life. By criminalizing them and giving the responsibility of the criminalization to the professional victim class of society they can have whatever man they please arrested without charges.

This is exactly like 1984.

I'm never having sex in Sweden or with a Swedish girl.

From the perspective of many members of the /r/MensRights community, feminists who are allegedly criticizing Assange are inherently irrational and have interests that coincide with the machinations of oppressive governments seeking to criminalize sexual activities that are suggested to be biologically natural. Arguments are built from loose threads that ultimately prop up the idea that rationality is a definitive gauge for assessing all matters, and that institutions seek to suppress rational ways of thinking.
While the /r/MensRights subreddit is certainly notable as an echochamber of extreme opinions, in many ways the extremely obvious misogynistic language is so evidently aggressive that it is actually of little importance to more casual or mainstream Reddit users. On the other hand, what we also find on Reddit is hegemonic masculinity in the form of a discourse of dominant masculinity that is more muted and subtle, but nonetheless implicates a similar aggressive sentiment seen on /r/MensRights. The subtlety and everydayness of these comments make the latter practices more politically and socially contentious, thus making them in need of attention. We see this play out in /r/TwoXChromosomes and /r/worldnews in a way that provided much more substantial data for the purposes of critical discourse analysis. Within these communities, patterns indicated a more nuanced positioning of masculinity that had a tendency to emerge in long-running comment pages related to the Julian Assange case. There were specific trends and differences that could be found within prominent comments in threads across all of the boards. The type of vitriolic language that was common on /r/MensRights appeared on all boards, but was generally downvoted or less prominent. There was, however, a consistent trend of subtler provocation that would occur in relation to the issues of false rape allegations (frequently characterized as a widespread social problem) and retroactive consent that would often push discussion in a specific direction. It is largely in the reactions to these posts that we see each community position their stance on certain topics, usually through a process of retaliation, debate or compromise. Challenges that could be related to the positioning of masculinity emerged within a number of themes, usually in relation to equality, rationality, the use of language or the control over news and media narratives. To narrow it down, I have chosen a handful of examples from the /r/TwoXChromosomes and /r/worldnews subreddits related to the two most prominent themes about masculinity that appeared in the data: equality and rationality.

To determine which discursive examples were most representative in a Reddit comment thread, I needed to define exactly what constituted conversations that were most "prominent." As discussed in Chapter 3, I chose the notion of prominence in selecting representative samples because when working from an archival perspective, the comments that construct the largest and most immediately visible conversations are the ones that establish the content and character that a community applies to a
particular subject when viewed as a space of public discourse. Direct comments to the original post that received the highest scores would appear at the top of the page, but would often not attract very many replies or would have many of their replies downvoted to the point that they would appear hidden to most users. Very often, the majority of comments would be posted in threads whose parent posts received a lower score, and would appear lower on the page. For the purposes of discourse analysis, it made more sense to focus on threads that attracted the most comments, but still appeared high enough on the comment page to be seen by most readers. To determine which posts best represented the character of discourse which took place on each subreddit, I have defined “prominent conversation” in comment pages as being one of the 5 highest-scoring direct comments to an original post, that itself has attracted a bare minimum of 8 comments with scores above the default threshold of visibility (-3). Within these parameters, I have selected 3-5 examples of comment threads from both /r/TwoXChromosomes and /r/worldnews that I feel best represented the positioning of equality and rationality in relation to the discourses of masculinity across the data as a whole. The examples are presented in text-form only. To view the comments in their original context, refer to the screenshots in Appendix A.

4.2. Positioning of Equality

Equality was the most prevalent theme emerging on both boards regarding the positioning of masculine discourse in response to the Assange case. In the context of this study, equality is understood as the balance between the treatment and recognition of men and women in a social and legal manner. This speaks significantly to the meaning and positioning of masculinity within the social field surrounding Reddit as a whole (Bourdieu, 1985). To illustrate this, I have selected examples that are representative of how equality operates in relation to the positioning of gender relations across all of the data I gathered from each individual subreddit. Two comment streams were taken from /r/TwoXChromosomes, and another two taken from /r/worldnews. Again, /r/TwoX is notable not only because it is a subreddit inhabited primarily by women, but because it is largely interpreted as an alternative space compared to the rest of Reddit.
4.2.1. /r/TwoXChromosomes – Example 1

Discussion about the Assange case on /r/TwoXChromosomes was an interesting mix of astute fact scrutiny along with empathy for the accusers as well as direct criticism of the attention the case had been receiving in relation to the cable leaks. The first example from this subreddit comes from discussion in response to a Daily Beast article written by a former child abuse and sex crimes prosecutor (See Appendix A for screenshots of all comments in their original context). The author of the article explains how the Julian Assange case actually hurts women by delegitimizing the issue of sexual abuse in order to achieve an underlying political motivation. The following comment was the second highest-scoring response, posted by a user (whose account has since been deleted):

Her argument makes no sense to me whatsoever. How difficult is it for some people to understand that if someone is suspected of rape they must be questioned, regardless of what else is going on in their lives at that particular time? The prosecutors and police are just doing what they are supposed to be doing. The only people who are exploiting the situation for unrelated political purposes is Assange and his lawyer by claiming that there is a conspiracy behind it, instead of just telling the truth.

As a former child abuse and sex crimes prosecutor I think she should also be aware that people don’t always interpret what happened to them as rape until they have had a chance to discuss it with someone which means that they hosted a party for him is quite irrelevant.

This selection is notable because of its focus on the definition of consent and because it specifically brings up the idea of women retroactively defining a sexual encounter as rape, but in an understanding and matter-of-fact fashion. While this user highlighted the article’s slight bias toward Assange and gives a fairly balanced critique from a broader perspective on the issue, user “Jesster113” posted a reply diverting the conversation directly toward the implied support of rape accusers, contrasting the previous message with a defensive and hostile tone:

Actually your last point is a little scary due to the fallibility of memory especially if the sex was under the influence. The full definition of rape is unfortunately murky and that probably won’t change. All we can do is further refine the legal system.
User “malchikhome” voiced similar concerns in a similarly hostile, slightly more aggressive manner in a subsequent reply:

[quote from previous post]

I don't understand this. How hard is it to determine if you have been raped? Did someone hold you down and rape you? Then you were raped. Did you say you wanted to have sex and do it willingly? Then it wasn't rape. People like you scare me. You make it seem legitimate to retroactively remove consent in order to exact revenge on someone.

Both comments represent a trend in which retroactive consent becomes the specific topic of concern, despite this only being a small part of the greater controversy in the Assange sexual assault case. The first response characterizes the investigation around the Assange case as a process that should be respected and followed as any rape case would, but “malchikhome” overlooks this point and proceeds to dominate the conversation stream with a more aggressive tone.

4.2.2. /r/TwoXChromosomes – Example 2

We also see a similar switch in tone take place in other threads. The second example from /r/TwoXChromosomes follows a linked interview from the website for the newspaper The Australian in which Julian Assange suggests that feminism is a negative force in society (See Appendix A). The thread title takes the (arguably out-of-context) Assange quote “Sweden is the Saudi Arabia of feminism. I fell into a hornets’ nest of revolutionary feminism.” The use of this quote in the original post is arguably a provocation in itself claiming that feminism is a root cause for problems of inequality in society. Feminism is thrust into the centre of the debate despite the fact that /r/TwoXChromosomes is not explicitly a feminist subreddit. From the highest-scoring response (which is where this exchange begins) we see a specific kind of rhetoric play out behind the defence of feminism, where a user (whose account has since been deleted) complains about the context of feminism in the Assange case.

I really, really wish that this whole Assange case would stop being used as some kind of attack on feminism. Right from the start it was "His accuser is a FEMINIST!" as if feminism is about falsely accusing men of rape.
User “missmymom” responded to this comment with respectful disagreement, suggesting that the inclusion of feminism in the conversation was legitimate:

I would disagree with that, I believe he's trying to show how the impact of a sexual crime can be used incorrectly to hurt someone.

Another user (whose account has since been deleted) replied to “missmymom,” expressing an interesting note of scepticism about the whole way feminism was being used by the Assange camp:

I think if that was all he [Assange] was trying to do, he wouldn't have even mentioned feminism.

The next user, however, creates a very sudden shift in the conversation, jumping from the more open-minded comments of the user “missmymom” to a perspective that is more explicitly anti-feminist:

The women do have a male feminist lawyer who agrees that what happened should be classified as rape and sexual coercion. I definitely think this has to do with feminism. My first evaluation of this case was that Assange went to Sweden and messed up because he didn't realize that Swedish women expect more respect from men than women in many other countries do. Assange expresses it differently, but it appears he now makes the same assessment. Well, a good lesson for the world to learn. Don't fuck Swedish women without a condom if they've asked for a condom.

In response, the user “Aerik” criticized this user for being reductive on the matter:

[quote from previous post]

Clearly, you heard that claim about the case and stopped giving enough of a shit about the truth of the case. Go back a week or two and start reading updates as real journalists got a hold of the police reports, and then the actual leak of the police reports.

[...]

The only way in which feminism is involved is that in which assange’s defenders think anti-feminism is the key to making him look innocent and his accusers guilty.
Although this particular post seems pro-feminist in intent, subsequent direct replies to “Aerik” react harshly to the accusation of anti-feminism. User “Taol99Maw” replied with the following:

[quote from previous response]

How the fuck would you know what he did? A couple of groupies accuse him of shit, and now he’s a rapist? Fuck you. You have no more insight with your feminist orthodox faith than anybody else, home slice.

It is worth noting that the above comment was downvoted to -3. The user “qarl” tries to emphasize the consensual aspects that appear to be known:

my understanding is that she alleges they had consensual sex without any issues, and then fell asleep together. he initiated sex while they were sleeping after already having sex once.

“sneaked up” isn’t exactly what i’d call... true.

In response, the user “hammockchair” attempted to debate the semantics behind consent:

If you woke up to someone having sex with you, “sneaky” is probably the low end of what you might think of the situation. I was saying ‘kind of’ as a courtesy to you. Wasted I suppose, maybe I should have just said you lied about her alleging there were no issues during the consensual sex. Because you said something that wasn’t true to minimize a rape accusation...

The user “Qarl” was rather dismissive of these concerns in response:

i’m sorry you’ve been oppressed by the man.

continuing the cycle of hate is not a solution.

This suggests that for a number of users whose posts were prominent in the thread, defending the arbitrary introduction of feminism as a negative influence into the conversation was more important than discussing credible facts.
4.2.3. /r/TwoXChromosomes - Analysis

Amidst conversation that normally approached the topic of the Assange case in a varied and nuanced manner, there was a tendency for some users on /r/TwoXChromosomes to post comments, as well as start new threads entirely, which appeared to work toward derailing discussion in a fashion similar to the observations made by Workman (2014). While it can still be said that /r/TwoX operates as a safe space in a broader context, these trends suggest that when news stories involving subjects like rape accusations become the focus of discussion, this safe space designation is compromised by a tendency of the greater Reddit community to editorialize the discussion of these specific topics. Furthermore, these examples represented a trend on /r/TwoX where specific themes relating to equality, including feminism and support for rape accusations, were addressed or antagonized by some prominent users over the course of discussion. Even if these themes were not a central factor in the topic at hand, there was a tendency for them to be propped up or inserted and made a central part of the general conversation on sexual assault or gender equality in law. Structurally, there was a pattern where certain themes of male anxiety abruptly emerged within the discussion that indicated a subtle form of masculine discourse in relation to equality. This is characterized by a type of agitation and fear that speaks to a concern for how men may be persistent victims of cultural and political establishments, and how /r/TwoXChromosomes factors into this perceived threat. Discussion of feminism, in particular, was brought up in a polarized manner with supporters and detractors both being categorized as extremists.

There’s no way to know if the users taking on these argumentative positions are the types of outsider trolls that frequent the community as outlined in Workman’s (2014) assessment of the community, but it seems very likely that they are responding to /r/TwoXChromosomes’ status as an alternative space when compared with other popular subreddits (p. 47). In this sense, this type of hostile interaction can be seen as a form of symbolic violence on the part of users attempting to challenge the beliefs and practices that constitute the habitus of /r/TwoX. Because the habitus is dialectically linked to the social field, this can be interpreted as a repositioning of /r/TwoX’s social field, bringing it closer to those of the greater Reddit community through the subject of
equality in relation to masculinity (Bourdieu, 1985). The fact that /r/TwoX operates as an alternative subreddit (specifically a female-oriented one) suggests that Reddit as a whole falls short of being the “paper of record” it is often purported to be, as discussed in Chapter 3. The debates and challenges to the community’s credibility issued to /r/TwoX by users who appear to represent the mainstream of Reddit may be provoked by hostility fueled by this shortfall. The way certain users attempt to direct the discourse on /r/TwoXChromosomes reflects a larger pattern of practice that may not be in the interest of women. We see this play out a bit more in the context of the greater Reddit community in the following examples taken from /r/worldnews, a popular default subreddit.

4.2.4. /r/worldnews – Example 1

Equality is positioned in a similar fashion in the most significant comment streams on /r/worldnews, although topics are less likely to be explicitly characterized through themes such as feminism. In /r/worldnews, it is common for discussion of major issues to be concentrated into posts with a small number of replies, and a handful of posts that attract a substantially larger number of replies. It is in these longer discussion threads where we see a particular pattern developing in the way subjects related to issues of equality when they were brought up. This offers rich and telling data for the rhetoric that was apparent in all of the data collected from the subreddit, and the following examples were selected as they best represented this overall trend. The original post for the first example is a link to a sensational report from The Daily Mail stating in the headline that this was a case not of rape but of “a woman scorned” (See Appendix A). Despite the fact that The Daily Mail is frequently chided as being an unreliable tabloid by the users of /r/worldnews, the headline nonetheless attracted a great deal of engagement with over 200 replies. Two of the top comments in this thread attracted particular attention and resulted in a conversation in which positioning on issues played out in varying ways. This was the second highest-scoring comment in the thread from a user (who has since had their account deleted):

While I can see how some might view his actions as unsavory, none of that seemed illegal
[quote from article]

I don't see how his sex life affects the validity of documents he posts online.

This post was notable in that while trying to place focus on the key issue of the cable leaks, the user casually dismissed the allegations by implying they are really about cultural mores rather than legal violations. While this parent post made a strong break between the topic of Assange’s sex life and his role with Wikileaks, the ensuing discussion continued to dwell on the idea that Assange’s actions were not illegal and should be seen as defensible. In particular, “hammockchair” quoted the article, bolding a line indicating that the details of the sex allegations were blacked out, and contributed to the scepticism:

This article doesn’t have any credible discussion of what was alleged to be illegal.

In response, a user (who has since had their account deleted) used a quote from the article to dispute the scepticism:

[quoting from the article] ‘When they got back they had sexual relations, but there was a problem with the condom - it had split. ‘She seemed to think that he had done this deliberately but he insisted that it was an accident.’

I think they mean that while the important details were included, there wasn’t a graphic description of the sex, which is probably unnecessary.

The user “crocodile7” replied making a fairly clear allusion to false rape accusations, by suggesting that a person could “benefit” from the situation:

Why would a man have the condom split deliberately? Women are the only ones to benefit from that. It’s like accusing a victim of loading the gun when the shooter claims he thought it was empty.

The user’s particular emphasis on the word “man” created a strong suggestion that men are at a disadvantage in regards to sexual encounters. In response to the above comment, the user “Ooboga” further reinforced the idea that the actions of public figures should be above scrutiny if they are technically legal and minimizes the circumstances:
Because he feels/thinks that having sex with a condom is like chewing gum with the wrap still on?

Within these discussions there was a common thread of users trying to defend Assange’s alleged actions using specific talking points related to legality and retroactive consent rather than dismissing them as irrelevant to the greater issue. This played out to a much greater extent in the second example.

4.2.5. /r/worldnews – Example 2

The second example from /r/worldnews is from a comment thread in response to an English translation of a Swedish legal document declaring that the charges against Julian Assange had been dropped, just before they were reinstated again (See Appendix A). The comments overall represent even further use of legal arguments being deployed in an unorthodox manner to minimize accusations of sexual assault. The highest-scoring reply was posted by a user (who has since had their account deleted):

It’s not over yet. He was charged with one count of rape and one count of molestation - only the rape charge has been dropped. The prosecutor did not comment on the charge of molestation.

As molestation does not qualify for an arrest warrant in Sweden the warrant has been dropped, he’s currently still in shit - just less of it.

Much like the highest-scoring reply in the previous example, the poster of this comment made an attempt to separate relevant and irrelevant facts and prevent misconceptions, but at the same time did not make an explicit expression of judgment about the assault charges. As the discussion continued, however, it increasingly becomes focused on consent. The highest-scoring reply to this first comment was deleted. However, what this user said was quoted in the highest-scoring follow-up response by the user “Horsepie” (in italics below) who wrote the following:

Also, she says that it started as consensual sex, that then turned into a rape/molestation.

How the fuck does that happen? She said yes but then changed her mind half way through?
Follow-up responses to “Horsepie”’s posts addressed the question in various ways. “WednesdayLaw” attempted to work through the issue in a reasonable manner in their answer. They wrote:

> Well, I don’t know what was going on here, but let me paint you some situations where people might change their mind halfway through. Say you consent to sex with someone, but halfway through you find out this person has herpes. Or halfway through the condom breaks and there are none left. Or halfway through, your partner decides it’s time to do some really dangerous S&M stuff you’re not into. At these points, you might want to stop, but if your partner keeps going, then it becomes rape.

The second highest-scoring comment from “Sarahsahara” offered a questionable attempt at humour. They wrote:

> By yelling ‘Surprise! Buttsecks!’ and following through

This comment did not incite any objection. Most interesting, however was, the conversation that developed from the third highest-scoring comment by user “Bananageddon,” which was the only one to inspire extensive debate:

> No means no regardless of timing.

In response to “Bananageddon”, the user “CuftRemover” posted the following:

> You don’t know how tragically right you are. The US Supreme Court has held that consent can be withdrawn AFTER the completion of the act. If Assange and this woman did in fact have sex, it seems likely that the “rape” happened after he had left the premises because she changed her mind.

It is notable that the quote refers to US law even though the issue at hand is dealing with Swedish law. User “TheElliminist” questioned some of the rationale within that argument:

> I’m trying to imagine 30 seconds of fucking someone after they’ve told you to stop and that seems to me like a damn long time. Not saying the wife/lover conspiracy isn’t horrible, but unless you want to claim you didn’t hear the person, 30 seconds after a clear “no, stop” is inappropriate. Debatable whether or not it’s full-rape-charges inappropriate or not, but still.
While this response presented a slightly more critical take on rape, other users continued to rally against this position. User “zugzi” replied by reducing the idea of consent to either a he said/she said scenario through a hypothetical situation:

Here, let me help your imagination... Picture man on top:

W: “... oh YES ... yes ... uhm ... no ... maybe we should stop…”

M: “What?!?!?”

W: “I said, I just don't think this is such a good idea…”

M: “What's not such a good idea?”

W: “Us having sex.”

M: “Are you kidding? Why not?”

W: “I'm afraid I might get pregnant or something”

M: “But you said you were on the pill?”

W: “Well, it's not always so reliable... Yeah, I think we should stop.”

M (frustrated): “ok…” (stops)

I'm not saying it happened that way, but I agree that how you happen to imagine it can make all the difference in a ‘ withdrawn consent’ rape case. If you imagine her screaming “STOP”, “GET OFF ME” and while he grunts and pumps away for another 30 seconds then yeah, it may seem more like rape.

User “b0dhi”’s comment even went as far as to bring in dehumanizing biological arguments:

I've seen my dog’s body continue to undulate on its own for a good 15 seconds after a bitch he was trying to mount ran off. Whether that 30 seconds was rape or not rests on what exactly was happening in that time.

While this post was unique in the way it brought a biological element into the argument, it represented a trend of argument suggesting that consent laws are dubious because, as some users claimed, they do not abide by supposed biological realities of sexuality.
4.2.6. /r/worldnews – Analysis

The most prominent comments posted on /r/worldnews generally showed some attempt at separating relevant facts from irrelevant facts, but at the same time there was an implicit condoning of things whose legal status was yet to be tested. As on /r/TwoXChromosomes, the issues of false rape accusations and retroactive consent were prominent topics specifically debated within the context of the Assange case. However, unlike on /r/TwoX, these subjects were more likely to emerge gradually as comment threads extended into extensive and multi-branching discussions. There was a notable trend of commenters subtly introducing arguments or talking points out of left field, such as mentioning US law in a case related to Swedish law, and giving way to more aggressive rants.

An underlying theme that resurfaced consistently was that consent is too subjective to be determined by law and that existing laws conform to a growing sensibility that place men at an overall disadvantage in society. Specific attention was given to the idea of women “retracting” consent. Even if some comments brought these potential problems up in a reasonable manner, there was a notable trend of certain users steering conversations that brought up these subjects toward discrediting the women rather than separating these circumstances to the issue of Wikileaks as a whole. While these more directly hostile posts are downvoted and less visible on /r/TwoXChromosomes compared to /r/worldnews, they were more likely to gain a prominent position on the latter board, exemplifying a practice wherein women were perceived as an obstacle to equality. Importantly, there was a distinct pattern in which these users reinforced the idea that existing notions of equality are stacked against men, when the subjects of false rape accusations and retroactive consent laws emerge, and these views were made prominent within longer discussions.

4.3. Positioning of Rationality

Rationality as a means of justification plays a vital role in the general discourse of Reddit, as might be expected in any space that aims to be the “paper of record.” The deployment of reason as the basis of discussion and debate is part of a long and
complex tradition; but in specific Reddit communities we see the deployment of rationality play out as a performative act in different discursive contexts. In particular, when members of these communities position themselves in relation to dominant masculine discourse, the particular performance of rationality that plays out bears a strong resemblance to the type of symbolic violence that takes place in social fields described by both Bourdieu (1985) and Beyer (2012). As in the above examples relating to equality, this pattern appears to reflect the beliefs and practices of the greater Reddit community’s habitus in the form of interactions that are often hostile. The particular performative interpretation of rationality in Case Study 1 has to do with communication that is factual in orientation. Sourcing claims is often important, but the tone that frequently emerges is often devoid of emotion and sometimes claims to be absent an explicit social agenda. As established in previous chapters, this performative conception of rationality has a history in programming culture that long precedes Reddit, but the focus of the following examples is not on whether these performances of rationality bear truth or not. Rather, there is a pattern in which the above-defined version of rationality is used in comment threads to contest views that do not align with the dominant tendencies that characterize the habitus of the greater Reddit community. This is demonstrated in the examples that follow.

4.3.1. /r/TwoXChromosomes – Example 1

In /r/TwoXChromosomes, rationality is an area of contention that plays out in a number of ways with the Assange case. The first example from this board is the comment page for a satirical blog article that Naomi Wolf wrote for The Huffington Post. In the article, Wolf emphasizes that Assange’s actions were legal, although with an update at the bottom stating that this might not actually be the case under Swedish law (See Appendix A). This example is notable because despite the stated comedic intention of the article, it still inspired comments that emphasized fact-checking and legal minutiae, apparently before the correction was posted on the original blog post. The highest-scoring comment was by user “mmorgies” who posted the following as something of a retort, inviting a level of doubt regarding the article:
From what I’ve read, the charge brought against Assange is due to the fact that when a condom broke during sex, he refused to stop fucking her even though she wanted to stop and get a new condom.

not exactly the same.

In response, user “praeter” tried to criticize the article’s initial error, by minimizing Assange’s actions:

From what was apparently her own statements she did not make it sound like he forced her to keep going. Only that she wished there was another condom. I mean, she said she cracked a joke about it afterwards. Sounds like a very traumatic experience... It was probably way worse finding out he was fucking someone else besides her.

The second highest-scoring response to “praeter” was from a user (who has since had their account deleted), bringing question to the dismissal of the accusations:

[quote from previous comment]

I seriously doubt that. This happened in Sweden. Swedes don’t take one night stands seriously in that way. By the way, this [text is linked to police document] is directly from the police interview with Assange

Police: Is it true that she rejected your sexual invitations?

Assange: Yes, but not in any significant way. Nothing that wouldn’t be normal

The women who reported him weren’t sure if what happened to them was classified as rape by law or not, they went to the police to find out if it was. And then the prosecutor decided to start an investigation.

I stand by the evaluation of this that I did right after it happened. Assange went to Sweden and had sex with women, unaware that Swedish women expect a lot more respect from men than women in many other countries do, and unaware that the Swedish laws regarding sex crime are stricter than many other countries.

User “missmymom” replied to the above comment:

[quote from previous comment]

Interesting analysis to say the least. I could also say that Swedes don’t take unprotected sex very serious either
The interesting part about this, they did not file a "formal" complaint, buy only seeking advice, bypassing the the [sic] statue about a false claim. ie if they are lying they won't be punished.

The user whose account had been deleted responded by challenging “missmymom”’s citation and reinforcing that there are consequences for false accusations:

[In response to first half of previous comment] Durex Global Sex survey? That's marketing research. Be that as it may, it is true that young people don't use enough protection. I don't know the age of the women involved though.

[In response to second half of previous comment] Falsely incriminating another person is punishable with up to 2 years in prison, regardless of who filed the charges.

The user whose account had been deleted and “missmymom” continued to debate the last point about whether or not a person can be punished for false incrimination in Swedish law for several posts. User “missmymom” replied with the following:

[...] 

[quote from previous post]

Not when you "seek advice" in this manner. The statements you use can not be used against you. I'm open to being wrong, but I'm fairly certain this is true.

An excerpt from the response of the user whose account had been deleted:

[...] 

Yes they can. In Sweden at least. I only know Swedish law on the matter.

The following quote is from “missmymom's” response:

[...]
[quote from previous post]

Citation? Every one that I've looked up disagrees with you. "neither Ardin nor Wilén complained to the police but rather 'sought advice', a technique in Sweden enabling citizens to avoid just punishment for making false complaints."

That's the kind of quote that I see, do you have any citation for that assertion?

The user whose account had been deleted ended this thread by directly posting excerpts of Swedish law:

Yeah, my citation is the law. The reason you are reading stuff like that is because it is biased propaganda. There is no "technique in Sweden" to avoid punishment for false complaints. Lying to the police is a crime, no matter under what circumstances you do it.

There are 2 crimes, "falsk angivelse" and "falsk tillvitelse". Falsk angivelse is when you falsely report someone for a crime. That would not be applicable in this case. Falsk tillvitelse is when you lie to the police about something relating to someone having committed a crime.

"7 § Whoever, otherwise than 6 § intends, among prosecutors, police or other authority falsely incriminates another person, claims something to be more severe than it is, or withholds information that would make a case less severe will if presented before court be sentenced for "falsk tillvitelse" to prison for max 2 years, or if the crime is less severe, to fines or prison up to 6 months."

[link to source]

Based on these comments, it appears that much of the prominent conversation was from users who took exception to the unsound claims regarding a hot button issue, despite the satirical intention behind the article. This ultimately culminated in a very specific argument about the nature of false incrimination in Sweden, although most of the comments did not appear to carry an aggressive or hostile tone.

4.3.2. /r/TwoXChromosomes – Example 2

The second example from /r/TwoX is a comment page in response to a Slate.com article discussing how misinformation about the rape charges spread due to
an early *Daily Mail* article characterizing Sweden as a feminist dystopia with overreaching sexual assault laws (See Appendix A). This example is especially notable because some of the most prominent comments highlighted a common tactic of fact-checking being used in a disruptive manner. The response from “reeksofhavoc” was the fourth highest-scoring, but inspired the most responses and occupied a prominent portion of the comment page as a whole:

I’m sorry I’m really not buying their story. Condom or not. It seems like they both found out about each other and then schemed a story to land the guy in jail.

Where are other women who have been raped by Assange?

Will they be in the news soon?

The tone was confrontational off the bat and invited argument. It also seemed to carry an assumption that arguments against Assange on /r/TwoX were going to be based on emotions rather than facts, and would definitely support Assange’s accusers. Certain users were willing to challenge this stance, which can be seen in this response posted by one user (whose account had since been deleted):

Nobody is asking you to buy their story, we are suggesting that you not dismiss it as you have. If it was a friend of yours saying that a guy raped her, you would have no way of knowing whether she was telling the truth based solely on her story, but I doubt you would say that you don’t buy it. The same goes for these women. They deserve the benefit of the doubt and so does he. This isn’t an issue that people should be taking sides on.

In response, “reeksofhavoc” posted the following:

We’ll put it this way.

Just because she’s a friend doesn’t mean I wouldn’t automatically believe her.

Just because their women [sic] doesn’t mean we have to give them the benefit of the doubt any more so that someone would to a man.

The user (whose account has since been deleted) seemed taken aback, replying with the following:
Woah, could you please tell me when or where I said that they should receive the benefit of the doubt because they are women, or that they deserve it more than a man?

The user “reeksofhavoc” is notably aggressive in their response, using a tone that suggests that they are being met with dismissive or generalizing remarks (which is not the case):

   All I said was that I am not buying their story.
   You show me where I said they shouldn’t be taken seriously.
   I just don’t believe them.

In an attempt to lay out a more balanced perspective, “Catmorphism” posted this in response:

   They don’t want to come forward because they don’t want to have their names dragged through the mud for questioning the perfect character of a liberal hero. And I assure you I have a basis for saying that.

User “reeksofhavoc” left a confrontational reply:

   Why should I believe you?

To which “Catmorphism” responded:

   Why would you even ask that question? Is there anything I could say that would make you believe it?

The conversation ended with “reeksofhavoc” continuing to aggressively challenging anything that can be construed as ambiguous or not grounded in rigorous citation:

   Because I need facts. Not your opinion

[quote from previous comment]

   Show me some facts.
4.3.3. /r/TwoXChromosomes – Analysis

While the aggressive posts in the second example originated from a single user, their prominence in that particular /r/TwoXChromosomes thread highlighted a tie between hegemonic masculinity and rationality that was actively at work within the board’s field of discourses. By aggressively and consistently presenting arguments under the pretense that they would not be met with rigorously cited sources, the posts from “reeksofhavoc” seemed to presuppose that other users would provide an irrational or overly-emotional (and therefore invalid) response. This harassment resembled symbolic violence in that it was more a confrontation with the community as a whole rather than individual users (Bourdieu, 1985; Beyer, 2012). Similar to the challenges that emerged in the examples related to equality, many users demanded “facts” under the distinct expectation that they would not get them. However, these types of comments were not a blatant disruption on /r/TwoX, because fact-based argument was commonly an accepted part of prominent conversation, as seen in the first example. Even in instances where an article was intended to be humorous, users placed great importance in ensuring that only comments grounded in validated sources took priority over assumptions or reactions within the prominent conversation. While this sentiment does not characterize all /r/TwoX discussion, these examples appeared at least somewhat consistent with many of the mainstream Reddit values of rational thinking and observation.

The purpose of the thread in the second example appeared to be provoking a certain kind reaction or opinion. While it did not actually work, many commenters used it as an opportunity to specifically discredit /r/TwoX and segregate the alternative elements that characterize the community from the greater Reddit community. This reliance on fact scrutiny as a belittling tactic strengthened the presence of the perceived masculine discourse that contributes to the habitus of the greater Reddit community. The continuing presence of this masculine discourse constantly threatens to intrude the social field surrounding the /r/TwoXChromosomes subreddit space. However, the theme of rationality played out somewhat differently in the examples from /r/worldnews that follow.
4.3.4.  /r/worldnews – Example 1

The data I collected suggested that rationality often operates as a form of showmanship on /r/worldnews and plays out in interesting ways in many of the larger comment pages in that community. This is demonstrated in the first example from that board: one of the largest early threads concerning the Assange rape allegations, with well over 500 comments linking to a CNN story about Sweden reopening the case shortly after it had been closed (See Appendix A). The highest-scoring post from user “Demonicplaydoh,” expressing concern that CNN is discrediting the organization as a whole rather than Assange as an individual, attracted a great deal of engagement:

Does anyone else find it odd that it's being referred to as “the wikileaks rape case” as opposed to the assange rape case?

In reply “DougBolivar” provided something of a conspiracy theory angle:

Yes, i noticed it. CNN is doing CIAs job

A follow-up response by user “AtOurGates” is particularly notable for criticizing the Reddit community for its own hypocrisies and contributions towards this conflation, while still drawing a firm line separating Reddit and the mass media.

To be fair Wikileaks supporters (like much of Reddit) seem to conflate the two as well, which I think is a mistake.

Assange is running a wonderful organization that I feel is doing wonderful things, but he's a human, and far from infallible... If the allegations are true, and the specter of Assange's actions hurts the credibility of Wikileaks as a whole, we're as much to blame as the media for conflating Assange and Wikileaks into an inseparable whole.

In the third highest-scoring response to the above post, user “otakucode” goes as far as to claim that Wikileaks is best viewed as a neutral system, and that it is illogical to apply political or cultural thinking to its operations:

I think what the intel boobs are failing to realize is that Assange could take 5 minutes to step back and relinquish his figurehead positions and... they'd have nothing. Wikileaks would still continue to run just fine. It’s a technical system, not a fucking political movement. Making the whole world think that Assange is worse than Hitler won't do a single thing to
stop Wikileaks, or make anyone look the other way when the CIA/DIA/FBI/DOHS/NSA/etc/etc/etc decide to.

This sentiment of the political as a ‘distraction’ also show up when discussing topics like rape explicitly, which we see play out further down in the fifth highest-scoring response to “AtOurGates’s” post by user “dby”:

In 99.99% of cases the logical possibility would prove to be true and the conspiracy theory to be wrong, but in this case its highly unlikely that the charges are true.

Consider that rape is a sort of crime that would not really be committed by a man of wealthy stature and celebrity status, its far more likely for him to just pick up whatever girl he wants. Rape is a kind of crime that desperate people would commit in a time of crisis or drug use.

[...]

In a direct response to “dby,” user “McNally” provided some gentle and bemused criticism:

[quote from previous post]

Your assumptions about rape are interesting, if not particularly well founded. Rich and powerful people commit rape, too, though they may not be punished for it as often as the poor and powerless.

This particular exchange about rape seemed to come out of left field, but in a way fits in with the theme of this conversation. This creates a distinct atmosphere where a specific kind logic is at work: political and social judgments are written off as irrelevant, and a sensibility that is defined as masculine and technical is allowed to operate unabated in their place.

4.3.5. /r/worldnews – Example 2

The idea of facts being oppressed by political “distraction” can also be seen in the final example for this case study, which is in response to an article from The Guardian concerning how one of the police investigators handling the Assange case was friends with one of the accusers (See Appendix A). The threads in response to this are
long, convoluted and have multiple instances of notable comments in prominent positions throughout. The most prominent activity took place in response to the fifth highest-scoring comment posted by user “Rasheeke,” which carried on the emphasis of criticizing the mainstream media, but shifted to the context of sex assault:

I love Wikileaks and what Assange is doing but this is not how we should be conducting investigations of sex assault. We discredit them in court first then we ridicule them for disgracing rape victims.

Julian is innocent until proven guilty so we shouldn't feel guilty in at least hearing them out because listening to them doesn't make him guilty.

This comment provoked some of the most active and prominent conversation, likely due to touching on a number of hot button issues such as the “proper” conduct of handling investigations of sex assault, an eagerness to ridicule the accusers at the sign of misconduct, objective perspectives in a news case and the fundamental legal practice of innocent until proven guilty. The user “dalittle” posted the following in response:

If this charge was politically motivated the goal is to smear Assange's reputation to try to discredit all his other work. That is what people in politics do when they don't like their dirty laundry aired or mass democracy movements threatening their fragile seats of power.

The second highest-scoring reply to “dalittle” from user “dom169” remained critical of those jumping to conclusions, but gave the accusers slightly more benefit of the doubt:

Discrediting a rape victim is also quite common. So we should be really careful who we accuse of what. We shouldn't let Assange be discredited, until his guilt is proven. But we shouldn't discredit the possible victim either.

Especially in a case like this. Assuming the accusations are true, it is only logical, that the victim would go to someone she knows, instead of some random police officer.

The third highest-scoring reply to “dalittle” was again from “Rasheeke,” who gave a surprisingly mathematical justification for holding off on making assumptions about the case, while still making their unfavourable opinion on the accusers quite clear:
You're [sic] comment is exactly right. But that doesn't change my point. Right now it's all speculative pre-trial bullshit.

Lessons of politically motivated smear campaigns are all learned in hindsight. A lessoned learned from hindsight may have some predictive ability but that doesn't make the prediction any less of a gamble.

Quantum mechanics can be used to predict that event $A=99\%B + 0.5\%C + 0.5\%D$, and you'll see after 1000 A's you're left with 990B's, 5 C's, and 5 D's. But if you only do 1 A, you really can't say at all what the outcome will be at all.

Just because smear campaigns sometimes turn out to be bullshit doesn't mean we can discredit these women's claim's. For now.

Of particular note is the fact that "for now" was bolded, suggesting an enforcement of the ongoing scepticism of the accusers. The above comment was met by a single reply from "neosniper":

Guilty or not the charge is NOT rape. So they are not rape victims

Debate in this thread is largely focused on how the courts work and uncovering the barest "facts" that are not deemed to be politically-motivated. There are defenders, but they go to great extent at times to place their justifications in the context of established legality, and even the most modest contributors are openly supportive of discrediting the alleged victims if certain facts are not verified.

4.3.6. /r/worldnews – Analysis

Within conversations that took place across the data collected from /r/worldnews, a distinction could consistently be seen between comments that are deemed productive and comments that are deemed not productive, with political or cultural values largely viewed as a distraction from pure factual interpretation. There was a well-rounded combination of people astutely scrutinizing facts and sources and some making conspiratorial assumptions, with some hostility arising between the two. Users who posted assumptions often provoked a backlash, but this same type of reaction also frequently discouraged political or cultural perspectives from influencing the subject matter being discussed. Rationality was performed in a manner that was somewhat boastful, with users positioning subjects and perspectives within the community's social
field by basing of the worth of individual users on how well they link to sources or substantiate facts. Despite these disputes, the habitus of /r/worldnews appeared to be largely composed of practices that involved policing the factual basis of all comments. The hostility present in these actions strongly resembled the same kind of symbolic violence seen in previous examples taking place within the community’s social field (Bourdieu, 1985; Beyer, 2012). It was common for users to maintain a distinction between pure information and possible social motivations or actions, with this manner of thinking often being projected onto the subjects within news coverage. For instance, comments in the first example that described and boasted Wikileaks as an apolitical technical system assumed neutrality of its functionality, and dismissed political ramifications as a triviality holding back a fundamental good. Notably, this is similar to the attitudes the Reddit community holds toward its own platform, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Similar patterns of argumentative structure emerged regarding the topic of rape accusation in the second example. /r/worldnews users more or less agreed that the Assange case was largely undiscussable due to the dominant presence of emotion and politics, as well as the lack of a strong factual basis that could be deemed logical. While instances of aggression and attacks towards Assange’s accusers were discouraged, it was specifically due to the fact that their claims did not yet line up with any established facts. Even though the Assange case was consistently posited as one that could not be properly discussed until facts could be extracted from a social context that was deemed irrelevant, some users made little effort to hide their clearly negative attitudes about the accusers. The boastful reliance on factual argument minimizes the social and political circumstances surrounding issues such as technology and sexual assault, and produces a distinct type of masculine discourse tied to the performance of rationality. The perceived credibility of users rested on what is relevant and what is not, and this was one of the key factors that positioned notions of masculinity within the social field of the /r/worldnews community (Bourdieu, 1985).
4.4. Case Study 1 Conclusion

The data collected from /r/TwoXChromosomes and /r/worldnews suggests that the character of a specific subreddit community has a distinct influence over the way that the positioning of masculine discourses takes place within its respective social field. When comment streams were analyzed with focus placed on specific topics or themes, patterns emerged that suggested more nuanced similarities and differences in the practices that constitute the habituses of these communities. When focus was placed on comments as they related to issues of equality and or various interpretations of rationality, similarities could be seen in the way masculine discourses were positioned. It is possible that the “hivemind” of the greater Reddit community, as discussed in previous studies, is tied to these trends (Mills, 2011; Workman, 2014). Topics that reflected an anxiety over the legal equality of men through issues like rape accusations and retroactive consent consistently became central themes in all of the communities analyzed, even in discussions where their relevance was marginal. Strict fact-checking and consistent resistance to unfound claims were natural parts of discourse in both /r/TwoX and /r/worldnews. Expressions deemed to be ‘rational’ were often used as a display of masculinity (or to demonstrate an absence of emotion deemed to be ‘feminine’) while the social mechanisms and biases influencing these sentiments were often overlooked.

While there was variation in the way these actions or established norms played out, symbolic violence consistently emerged in the form of a policing of values that could be associated with the mainstream of Reddit (Beyer, 2012). /r/TwoXChromosomes’s designation as an “alternative” community appeared to attract disruptions from users attempting to bring its habitus in line with the practices of the greater Reddit community. Conversely, /r/worldnews’s status as a default subreddit showed that dominant masculine attitudes emerged implicitly within the community as the practices of its users maintained the norms of its habitus. In particular, /r/worldnews’s status as a default subreddit appeared to have a great effect on its position to the Reddit mainstream. This plays an important role in Case Study 2, which explicitly analyzes the transition of /r/TwoXChromosomes into a default subreddit through the same lenses of equality and rationality.
Chapter 5.

Analysis and Observation for Case Study 2

5.1. Introduction

Chapter 5 covers Case Study 2 and is the second of two parts in which I describe the data I have collected and summarize my findings in relation to my three original research questions. While Case Study 1 analyzed the simmering form of dominant masculine discourse that took place over a common news story between multiple distinct subreddit communities, Case Study 2 looks at how the logics of misogyny on Reddit can affect the ability for an individual subreddit to function as an alternative public space. The intent is to build off of Workman’s (2014) description of /r/TwoXChromosomes as an alternative safe space within Reddit, and assess how this situation changed after it became a default subreddit in 2014. Interpreting /r/TwoX as having its own standalone social field highlights the intrusive and potentially undemocratic consequences of being introduced into the mainstream of Reddit over a set period of time in relation to the power structures of individual communities (Bourdieu, 1985). This also highlights the subreddit as a site of social struggle within Reddit, particularly in relation to the apparent “hivemind” of opinions and views that are repeated and reinforced within the website’s reward structure, many of which are strongly tied to the patterns of hegemonic masculinity and dominant masculine discourse discussed in Case Study 1 (Mills, 2011).

To measure the changes that took place during this time period, I have gathered archived samples from all /r/TwoXChromosomes comment pages from one week before the change the default happened, and one week after. While thematic breakdown still remains relevant to this portion of the study, the structure is slightly different since the focus is now on a single subreddit over a set duration of time. Findings in this chapter are divided between data collected before the change to default and after the change to
default. Both before and after the change, /r/TwoX can be characterized as a community whose users act with apparent intentionality to hold onto a counterculture within Reddit. As seen in Case Study 1, there is a constant sense of outside threat that motivates the patterns of discourse on /r/TwoX to minimize masculine discourse that seems intrusive.

The pattern that plays out in these comment pages is notably different from the more specific selections seen in Case Study 1. This social field positioning can still be interpreted in terms of equality and rationality, but understanding this in the case of an independent social field for the /r/TwoXChromosomes community requires a new form of classification. In the week before /r/TwoXChromosomes was changed to a default subreddit, its comment pages exhibited specific, clear patterns that allowed these conversations to be divided into one of two distinct categories: “discussion” and “support.” These two types of threads are characterized by the themes from the previous chapter. The “discussion threads” consistently involved the positioning of equality, and the “support” threads consistently involved the positioning of rationality. To draw parallels to Case Study 1, I have classified them under similar categories.

In the week after /r/TwoXChromosomes was changed to a default subreddit, there were notable changes in how both “discussion” and “support” threads played out. For one thing, the number of comments that could be sampled increased by nearly half, and most of these pages were significantly more active with many more subthreads of comments than before. Disruptive comments were usually deleted or downvoted, and thus were not visible in an archival context; but the overall reactions of many /r/TwoX users produced a strong illustration of how practices were carried out within that subreddit in contrast to the greater, or mainstream, Reddit community. New types of comment pages emerged that necessitated the creation of two new categories: “default discussion” threads that focused on discussions relating to the change to default (which I have classified as positioning of equality), and “TMI” (“Too Much Information”) threads, where /r/TwoX users discussed graphic health and body matters in a pointed way that stood out when compared to before the change to default (which I have classified as positioning of rationality).
Despite the various differences in conversation flow and style, these examples all follow the same criteria for “prominent conversation” used in Case Study 1: one of the 5 highest-scoring direct comments to an original post, that itself has attracted a bare minimum of 8 comments with scores above the default threshold of visibility (-3). I have selected four examples from before /r/TwoXChromosomes became a default subreddit, and nine examples of comment threads from after. As in Case Study 1, examples were selected based on patterns that were consistent throughout the collected data as a whole, and are presented in text-form only. To view the comments in their original context, refer to the screenshots in Appendix B.

5.2. Positioning of Equality Before the Change to Default

The positioning of equality on /r/TwoXChromosomes commonly took place in “discussion” comment threads that are similar to the examples from /r/TwoXChromosomes in Case Study 1. In these threads, news and external links would be posted by a user and attract comments from other users to form multi-branching conversations. In almost all cases, the richest examples of discussion could be related to the theme of equality. As in the previous chapter, equality is understood in this study as the balance in treatment and recognition of men and women in a social and legal manner regarding issues of rape accusations, feminism, men’s rights, etc. Conversations that address these and like issues have a bearing on the meaning of masculinity inscribed within the greater Reddit community’s habitus, and the way these issues are positioned within the social field that the habitus is linked to (Bourdieu, 1985).

The conversations that took place around these topics highlighted a number of trends in how hegemonic masculinity is positioned through the social field guiding the /r/TwoX community. I have categorized threads that exhibit the above characteristics as “discussion” threads. Unlike the previous examples, conversations rarely went on the same kinds of tangents or long-winded arguments, and were highly consistent and predictable in an archival context. However, the general flow of conversation demonstrated important characteristics of /r/TwoXChromosomes as a deliberate counterculture within Reddit.
5.2.1. Discussion Threads (Pre-Default) – Example 1

The first example of a “discussion” thread from the week before /r/TwoXChromosomes became a default is notable as it was one of the most active threads, and also dealt with issues of sexual assault somewhat similar to those in Case Study 1. It was in response to a link to a local news story from Florida describing an incident where a fifteen-year-old girl staying in a regional medical centre was allegedly molested by her boyfriend after he was mistakenly allowed to visit her by the nursing staff (See Appendix B for screenshots of all comments in their original context). The highest-scoring comment was from the user “random_user_name_13,” who claimed to be a registered nurse. It reads as follows:

I would like to comment as an RN and an ICU RN. What these nurses did was wrong. Period. If the patient is a minor and a parent says do not let certain people into the ICU, you don't let them in. Period. The ICU I work in is locked and we have to physically let you in by pushing a button to release the lock on the door. The hospital is certainly liable for this because those nurses work under the hospital licensing. Some nurses don't have any backbones and obviously these nurses don't. I am not nice when people don't do what they're told in my unit and I have no issue telling people the fucking truth. If somehow this kid got into my unit and this girl was my patient, I'd have absolutely no issue calling security and having him escorted out. I've had it done before and I'll have to do it again at some point. People are incredibly inconsiderate of the ill. It drives me crazy.

In the second highest-scoring reply to the above comment, user “indi50” tried to scale back scepticism of the nurses:

I keep feeling like there is more to the story. Where are the comments from the nurse(s) who let the guy in? This is the daughter of the chief nursing officer of the hospital...and against ICU rules they let in a non family member....a teen who was specifically banned from the room by the mother. To see a patient who was in the ICU for an infection. Who was caught in the bed with her (who would think any person would be up for sex while in the ICU?) and then still not removed from the room?

And why would the guy think he could get away with having sex in that situation? Was there a nurse that didn't like the mother (and/or daughter) and let the kid in? There are just so many levels of wrong here it's hard to imagine it was as simple as a mistake on the nurses' part.
In response to “indi50”, user “2Weird2Live2Rare2Die” tried to put emphasis back on the problems that exist within nursing as a profession by speaking from personal experience:

My ma’s a nurse. I hear stories all the time. You would not believe the stunning degree of apathy some people in the profession have. The other day one of my mum’s coworkers made the completely serious argument that she shouldn’t have to bother bringing a patient life-sustaining medication because ‘She’s 84 years old, so it’s not like it makes much difference.’ I stress that this was not some extraordinary life-saving measure like CPR, this was a human being arguing in earnest that another human being should be allowed to die just so that she wouldn’t have to get off her ass long enough to deliver a paper cup full of pills.

The third highest-scoring reply to the above was by user “chinchillazilla54” who shared more grievances over the nursing establishment:

My grandpa died last month in the hospital. Before he died, he became incontinent. A nurse yelled at him in front of my aunt for not using his bedpan. Like he wasn’t ashamed enough. Another nurse refused to wipe him frequently because “I can’t do it every three minutes”, and they all let him develop massive bedsores because “He doesn’t seem to like to turn over.”

I’d rather die than let nurses take care of me after the way he was treated. I’ve lost all trust in nurses.

In response, user “kerlykernnibal” drew from their own personal experience to defend the profession:

I’m sorry but my mother is a nurse and would be absolutely livid at the lack of care your grandfather received. She has had numerous letters and cards of thanks for her caring nature and she takes her job very seriously. Please don’t discredit all nurses because of some negligent bitchy ones. There are lots of them who want to help and heal, and there are a few who are complete scumbags.

It is worth noting that despite the element of sexual assault, most of the prominent conversation remained fixated on the subject of nursing. Also, rather than citing and debating facts or statistics, the basis of discussion leaned heavily towards users drawing from their own personal experiences and sharing anecdotes.
5.2.2. Discussion Threads (Pre-Default) – Example 2

Story sharing was less prominent in the second example, which I selected for being a smaller comment page with a similar focus on sexual assault. The comment page was in response to a linked petition demanding that Brown University reform its sexual assault policy. This was described by the OP (original poster) as being the result of an incident in which “a student who raped and strangled another student was invited back to campus after only a 1 year suspension” (See Appendix B). The structure of this particular comment thread was notable in that there was only one direct comment to the post, with all other comments being posted in response to that one comment. The lone direct comment, posted by user “concerned_studnt” (who was upfront about using a “throwaway” pseudonym) reads as follows:

Hey y'all, I've been around TwoX for a while, but I'm using a throwaway because I don't want this linked to my main account.

You might know that a Brown student recently held a press conference regarding the fact that another student who the university found responsible for strangling and raping her was invited back to campus after only a one-year suspension [trigger warning for sexual assault].

In response, Brown students have written 16 specific demands of the university for overhauling its sexual assault policy and education program. It's really important to put public pressure on this administration, which hasn't always been very receptive to students' suggestions. […]

As something of a contrarian measure “respresp” disputed “concerned_studnt's” concerns by taking specific quotes from the original post and making an argument largely informed by specific laws and policies:

Well, it appears she didn't even report him to the police. So innocent until found guilty?

*The case, heard before Brown’s disciplinary board on October 11, resulted in a guilty verdict for the accused*

Since when is it up to a University to judge these matters.

*Brown needs to do better. I mean – society, in general, needs to do better*

Perhaps, but she needed to have reported him to the police.
In response, “concerned_student” offered more clarity on the situation, and also edited their post after the fact to include more specific information, seeming to imply that “respresp” did not actually research the situation or petition:

Actually he was found culpable by the university for 4 violations of its Student Code of Conduct, which grants the university the right to enforce separation.

Edited to say that all universities have a disciplinary process much like Brown's, and all universities reserve the right to hand down punishments including suspension and expulsion. You should check out the petition for the actual demands the students are making, which all fall within the university's jurisdiction :)

The second highest-scoring response to the above comment from a user (who has since had their account deleted) elaborated on the issue in a less specific sense:

There are a fuckton of reasons why someone wouldn't go to the police for their sexual assault. A million very valid and understandable reasons. A rape case in trial oftentimes becomes more of an interrogation of the victim, not the rapist. Their sexual life becomes "evidence", their sexual history with someone becomes 'evidence', their gender becomes "evidence'.

User “respresp” responded to the above comment, not really adding anything to the discussion that had just taken place:

True. But you can't expect people to be treated as guilty when they've not been found guilty.

The user “respresp” appeared to bring in opinions that were contrary and likely meant to incite, but it is worth noting that none of them had been seriously downvoted, nor did most of the replies engage in the kinds of dominant masculine discourses seen in Case Study 1 when issues of rape and consent arose.

5.2.3. Discussion Threads (Pre-Default) – Analysis

The comment pages selected as examples demonstrated a trend from the data in which /r/TwoXChromosomes users intentionally tried to manage the boundaries of their community by preventing what I have described as dominant forms of masculinity
from casting a shadow over issues where it was not the central focus. While the comment page that the first example was taken from delved into many facets of the alleged sexual assault that took place in the hospital, the most prominent discussion focused on the role that institutional issues played into the incident. There is a focus on nursing, a traditionally female-dominated profession, in which users shared grievances reflecting a distrust in authority or establishment. While conversations on the subreddit often delved into the problems surrounding victim-blaming in relation to sexual assault, focus on the alleged victim and assaulter did not characterize the most prominent discussion. These topics do come up in less prominent comments, but in the highest-scoring comments, the focus is very much on the positives and negatives of the institutional power held by nurses. Unlike many other popular subreddits, the basis of much of this argument was not documentation or cited facts, but rather users sharing stories that draw from their own personal experiences as evidence to create a substantive discussion. This form of story-sharing is a prominent feature in all categories of comment threads on /r/TwoXChromosomes, and the fact that it is used here in a discussion that could easily be re-formed around masculinist notions of equality speaks greatly of how this subreddit functions.

Story-sharing was less prominent in the second example, which had a more direct focus on sexual assault and involved only a few users. This is likely the reason that the initial commenter explicitly pointed out that they were using a throwaway account so that their opinions could not be traced back to their main Reddit account. Within the examples from before the change to default, it was common for /r/TwoX users to explicitly point out that they were using a throwaway account to protect their identity, especially in discussion threads where notions of equality that frequently related to masculine discourse were unavoidable in a comment page. The frequency with which this happened suggests that many users treated this subject matter with sensitivity to avoid engagement with contrarian interventions. It did appear, to an extent, that the user “respresp” was attempting to incite contrarian debate, but these efforts were for the most part not acknowledged. In fact, users made very specific arguments based around university policies in order to disengage contrarian intervention. This goes against the story-sharing type of discourse that characterized the community’s habitus to a great extent, but at the same time demonstrated the preservative actions used to maintain the
boundaries of the social field of /r/TwoX. The fact that disruptive comments were consistently ignored suggests that they were a common occurrence that the board’s users had adapted to. If this is the case, then these disruptions played a role in the way the community’s practices were being positioned around issues of equality.

It is worth noting is that while the “discussion” category of threads were common the week before the subreddit was changed to a default, they only made up roughly a third of the total threads that were sampled from this period (29 out of 100). The majority of posts made in /r/TwoX fell into the other classification, “support,” which reflects the emphasis of story-sharing and openness much more than was seen in the “discussion” threads.

5.3. Positioning of Rationality Before the Change to Default

Rationality as a means of justification played a vital role in the general discourse seen in the data from /r/TwoXChromosomes, just as it appeared to in the greater mainstream Reddit culture. The performative deployment of rational communication that was focused on in Case Study 1 involved argumentative tactics emphasizing factual evidence and a divorce from emotion that is reflective of a greater culture of practices that operates in a hyperbolic and exclusionary manner on Reddit. In connection with the beliefs forming the habitus of the /r/TwoXChromosomes community, the deployment of reason influenced the positioning of certain issues within its social field in a much different way. Instead of implicitly gendered and confrontational interactions that are presented as rational but resemble symbolic violence, there was a different mode of performance that focused on openness and opportunity for engagement (Bourdieu, 1985; Beyer, 2012). This most commonly emerged in the form of users directly providing support to one another and sharing personal stories through original posts involving matters such as health, relationship problems or coping with abuse. In response, other users posted dozens of direct responses that were generally worded in an open-ended manner directed less at the individual and more at the community as a whole. I have categorized comment pages that represent the above characteristics as “support” pages, which make up a considerable majority of the activity on the board. More than half of the sampled pages taken from before the transition to default fit this criteria, and arguably
established a pattern that characterized the community. While it was rare for these comments to spark a substantial amount of multi-threaded discussion, /r/TwoX threads that focused on support and story-sharing appeared to represent a widely-embraced alternative form of positioning around rationality through open, rather than exclusionary, engagement.

5.3.1. Support Threads (Pre-Default) – Example 1

The first example of a “support” thread from before /r/TwoXChromosomes was made a default subreddit is in response to a long post written by a user describing a positive experience they had not wearing makeup in a professional setting (See Appendix B). Although the comment page consisted largely of direct replies to the OP, it still provided some of the richest conversation from the data within sub-replies, specifically in response to the highest-scoring response from a user (who has since had their account deleted):

That's awesome!

I, on the other end of the spectrum, never wear makeup on a daily basis. When I do I always get compliments like “Well, don’t you look like a lady for once” or “What’s the special occasion?”

User “doctorgirl29” directly replied to the above comment, more or less adding to the support:

I (24F) never wear make up either (exceptions for things like weddings). Just don't like to.

Just keep doing your own thing. It should never be a requirement that anyone wear or not wear makeup. It's a choice we all have the right to make

The second highest-scoring reply to “doctorgirl29” by user “g-rain” reinforced the general sentiment of the other comments concerning makeup:

It's crazy, I think whatever we do there will always be some comment! Makeup can really change a face though so I can see where they would come from.
The third highest-scoring reply to “doctorgirl29” by user “noveltfjord” agreed, but veered the conversation away from social issues slightly:

If you wear it more often, people will stop commenting. A lot of the time, people don't think about what they say in such great detail and analyze the words not to mention anticipating the reaction that it will have on the other. The people who comment are simply reacting to a change in their environment and they aren't realizing how much their words affect you, probably because they don't comprehend your feelings about makeup or your appearance that day. As far as they're concerned, it's a big change and they aren't used to seeing you in that way. They are just commenting to make conversation since they can't very well say ‘I see you are wearing makeup today’ and leave it at that. They feel like they have to say something. I get it too, I just say I want to do this, or I just felt like it. If you don't wear makeup ever and then do, what IS the occasion? :P Just try to think about it from their perspective and you'll realize it doesn't matter. Be you, and they will be them.

A direct response from “pixelated_penguin” challenged the above sentiment slightly by clarifying where much of the problem with this social obligation lay:

[quote from previous post]

Except for the part when HR tells your boss that you look ‘unprofessional’ because you don't wear makeup.

The user “noveltfjord” helped clarify their own stance in their direct response to the above comment:

That isn't what the comment I replied to was about. Do you work in a field where it's normal for all women to wear a full face of makeup?

I work in academia, so when I put more effort into my appearance it's noted since my peers don't dress up or wear much makeup on a daily basis. If they do it's because something professional is going on that day. If I notice someone's (guy or girl) put more effort into their appearance than usual, I will always compliment them. My compliment does draw attention to the makeup or clothes, that's true, but I think it's more positive than directly asking why. I've been asked directly why I dress this way or that way and it does hurt sometimes, but I've learned to brush it off as people get more used to my appearance, especially when it stands out from the norm. Going against the grain is difficult, no matter what the norm for your environment is.
Much of the conversation focused on norms and the expectations placed on one’s identity in gendered and professional contexts, and was conveyed largely through personal experience. Even when a hint of debate emerged, comments that veered in that direction were lightly dismissed rather than derailed into ongoing side arguments. For the most part, users focused on expression rather than communicating the most accurate “facts.”

5.3.2.  Support Threads (Pre-Default) – Example 2

The second example was selected as it was representative of something that comes up very frequently on /r/TwoXChromosomes: explicit comments concerning body and health issues. Following a similar theme of support and story-sharing, this example held some similarities to the first in terms of style and structure, but with a more jovial and liberating tone. This particular thread was in response to a humorous post by user “Iridiumarrow” giving a poetic, military-style tribute to articles of clothing that have been damaged or destroyed as a result of menstruation. (Or the “monthly Red War,” as the OP put it) (See Appendix B). In addition to sharing their own experiences, many users directly applauded the original post, such as in the second highest-scoring reply from the user “gallantlady:”

I laughed, I cried..

But for reals. Hydrogen peroxide and cold water get stains out without ruining the fabric!!!

No need for casualties!

As a reply to the above, user “FreckleException” added more personal advice:

I just invest in a stockpile of black underoos. I’ve spent too many minutes of my life scrubbing out stains

In reply, user “Chieri” continued the playful theme of the thread with their personal experience:

And in my case, black sheets were gotten as a christmas present. So many sheet casualties. :( Got to the point where I was afraid to sleep
while on, because sleeping meant somehow that red bastard would find a way to leak no matter what I did.

In response to the above comment, “Xani” contributed more advice:

cut the sides off of a nappy and wear it like a giant pad. Sounds bizarre but it was the only way I could save my sheets when I first got my period :p

The user “Chieri” also commiserated in their response:

You know those thick long overnight ones Always has? On the normal/heavy days I wear two of those suckers at the same time to get more coverage. It's beyond awful. Have considered trying out a cup ,but I'm wary about it because I can hardly tampon so I'm uncertain a cup would agree with me.

I swear it either finds a way to spill out way up front or I'll end up with this weird random leak up towards the top of my butt out of nowhere. I just can't win.

In response to the above, the user “Turtle_Blues” both commends “Chieri’s” use of humour, and adds their own experience:

Just wanted to say I love the phrase “I can hardly tampon”.

Also, I used to be in much the same boat as you (it's calmed down a bit in the last few years) and I also want to try a cup, but haven't done so yet. I hear they're a lot different to tampons, much more malleable and so forth, so maybe it would work out well. Not sure how great they are for those of us with heavier flows, or experience a Week of the Clots.

Represent. :( 

Despite being one of the largest comment pages taken from the "before" samples, the style and consistency of the comments remained the same throughout. Comments were positive and informative, and frequently addressed to a broad community rather than being pointed responses at individual users.
5.3.3. **Support Threads (Pre-Default) – Analysis**

As with “discussion” pages, /r/TwoXChromosomes users intentionally tried to manage the boundaries of their community by limiting the influence and visibility of masculine issues in “support” pages. In the context of “discussion” pages, this was often done in an open, inclusive and broadly expressive manner. These threads had varied tones, but tended to be highly consistent, sometimes even predictable, in terms of the structure of conversation. Comments tended to be crafted to a broader readership rather than being directed at the individual user being replied to, and as such, there was very little back-and-forth and unrelated tangents. In both examples, many of the comments appeared to exist not only for providing support and reassurance for other users, but also for the validation of the OP, or members of the community who may be reading but not posting. Personal narratives or experiences created the meat of conversation rather than being scrutinized or discarded. All of this trumped the meritocratic promotion of facts that are normally adhered to through the practices of the greater Reddit community. The topics seen in “support” threads specifically invited the personal views of women and routinely guided conversation away from contrarian and exclusionary comments. They allowed a safe form of interaction that did not need to be policed, as the inclusive and open nature of these comment pages discouraged engagement with any comments that could derail the conversation. Also notable is the confidence that users had in posting these details publicly, as it was less common for them to use throwaway accounts than in the “discussion” threads. This level of openness and the popularity of these types of conversations constituted a significant part of /r/TwoX’s habitus, which had a major impact on the way issues were positioned within the community’s social field in the context of rationality.

Taking a broader look at /r/TwoXChromosomes compared to the previous case study confirms much of what Workman (2014) stated in her research characterizing the community as a safe space. The discourse works in opposition to what is typically seen on Reddit, and much of this alternative nature can be attributed to safe, support-based conversations. Much like earlier online communities for women which were able to thrive through isolation, much of this success has been attributed to the fact that /r/TwoX was an isolated and moderated community. The next section explores how discourse in this
community was affected after it was changed into a default subreddit, increasing its visibility to the greater Reddit community.

5.4. Positioning of Equality After the Change to Default

The change of /r/TwoXChromosomes to default status was not taken lightly within the community by any stretch of the imagination. As early as a few hours after the change all the way until the end of the week, it was rare to find any “discussion” or even “support” thread where the change was not brought up. While explicit talk of the change to default bled into most comment pages, threads that explicitly discussed and criticized the change were so common that it made more sense to classify them as an entirely new category where the positioning of “equality” could be noticeably observed. As such, I have classified these threads as “default discussion” threads. The emergence of “default discussion” threads relates to subtle shifts that took place in regular “discussion” threads. The first of the examples that follow focus on “discussion” threads similar to those in the previous section before moving onto the new “default discussion” thread category.

5.4.1. Discussion Threads (Post-Default) – Example 1

The first example of a “discussion” thread after /r/TwoXChromosomes was changed to default provided some of the richest data related to trends within user conversations. It was in response to an article from The National Post describing new U.S. Army regulations banning numerous hairstyles that are popular with black women, such as cornrows and dreadlocks (See Appendix B). The highest-scoring comment was from the user “-molly-,” who outlined problems with double standards in military regulations:

The military does allow women to shave their heads as long as it is entirely shaved. “Trendy” part shaved/part unshaved styles like this are what is banned.

Cornrows, dreadlocks, and braids aren’t allowed for men either because they don’t allow headgear to fit properly. It has nothing to do with how professional or unprofessional it looks.
IMO, the male and female standard should be the same for everything in the military, including hair. The double standards just cause problems for both genders.

The highest-scoring reply to the above comment from user “TyrannyMcbane” brought a topic out of left field which is likely meant to resonate more with people familiar with issues of inclusivity or discrimination in a military context:

The “women aren't allowed to shave their head because it's considered a sign of mental illness” rumor really, really, really needs to die.

In response, “ClintHammer” offered further clarification:

Actually it's NEVER EVER enforced, but women aren't allowed to bic [shave] their heads.

They can use a clipper with no guard (called a 0 in the army because you use 0 guard) but they can't shave it with a blade.

I've literally never heard of that rule being enforced though.

The only time you even hear about it is when women put a shine on it, and men aren't supposed to do that either, because it's fadish and standoutish and against the concept of uniformity.

“TyrannyMcbane” continued the conversation:

Who has time to wax their head in between every other uniform maintenance? But no seriously that sounds like a weird fluke kinda law to get thrown in and then ignored.

What we they [sic] afraid of, us cutting our heads? This just in: women have softer scalp than men, cut like paper.

“ClintHammer” took the comment a bit seriously in their matter-of-fact response:

It all goes back to faddishness and uniformity. Most men who razor shave their head do so because they are balding, so that exception is allowed because it makes for a neater appearance.

You're looking at things from a point of view like you're back diddybopping on the block and not from the point of view of when you took the oath. The question isn't ever "why should this be banned", but "Why should this be allowed" and frankly while women do get thinning hair, I've never seen a woman bald all the way back to the ears.
In response, “TyrannyMcBane” pointed out the missed joke:

I was joking, completely. I didn't think they thought we'd cut our heads and I know how people shine their heads. I think you missed that.

“ClintHammer” concluded the exchange by criticizing some conversation that was happening in less prominent parts of the comment page:

It’s easy to miss sarcasm as there is a LOT of OMG WHATEVER CISHEt WHITE MALE SHITLOrd MADE THIS RULING HATES BLACK PEOPLE AND WOMEN!!!! going on in this thread from civilians who don’t get it

Meanwhile a black female was the head of the committee who made this very very minor change that you couldn't have cornrows over a certain width and twists are now prohibited.

And seriously I promise you the reason is so women don’t put a shine on it.

This example captures two users not only going off on a specific tangent, but also criticizing the rest of the thread. Some of the criticism also seemed to be directed at the /r/TwoX community as a whole, positing that users were too sensitive to issues surrounding race and oppression.

5.4.2. Discussion Threads (Post-Default) – Example 2

The second example of a “discussion” thread after /r/TwoXChromosomes was changed to default was chosen because it not only provided rich conversation, but also contained an open acknowledgement that the male presence in the community had increased, and explicitly invited them to participate. It was in response to an article by blogger Courtney Meaker about overweight women being harassed while walking (See Appendix B). The second highest-scoring reply by user “SequinRococo” specifically mentioned the default status as an opportunity for a broader perspective on harassment:

[quote from article]

I’m always curious what it would be like to leave my house and be able to just focus on myself and my walk. Not focusing on the potential danger following me in a car; cat-calling from the sidewalk; offensively gesturing
teenagers outside a high school. Those teenagers are frightening. What are they eating?!?! I don't recall teenagers being so big when I was in school.

What is the male equivalent? Since TwoX is now default, and there will be men viewing this, I want to know if you ever feel threatened or in danger when walking outside.

It was not very surprising that the new audience that /r/TwoX had been opened up to was assumed to be male. The highest-scoring response to “SequinRococo” was a very long and involving post by user “frocktopus” who identified themselves as male. (Note that the message has been shortened. Please see Appendix B for the full post.):

Yes. Absolutely.

I want to point out I don't think it's "the same thing" or even worth a side by side comparison.

But I think I, and I assume a lot of other men, have experienced something that, though not the same fear, is not entirely different and probably born of the same problem.

I'll say that in day to day life, I'm identified as a heterosexual man. And for the vast majority of interactions that's fine. I was able to marry the woman I love without governmental or religious interference. For all of the issues with gender and identity I DO have, I understood early on I was pretty happy with body I was born with. It's more complicated than that, I'm in my mid-30's and I'm finally getting comfortable saying it's more complicated than that, but I do understand I enjoy quite a bit of privilege and anonymity from those identities. But when I was younger, I'd say from when I was old enough to be aware of it to my mid-twenties, I was stopped, and harassed, and threatened regularly enough to be wary of it whenever I went outside. I too learned that best response was indifference, even when someone punches you hard across the jaw... If you just stare back, maybe they'll get bored after another punch. I had stopped being polite and friendly with people on the street after more than once someone who'd asked for directions, followed it up with "you're a faggot." In my late teens my hair was long, I'd gotten skinny, and also got called a (without any irony or sarcasm) "dyke" more than once. Sometimes, the harassers were women. I was cornered on the play ground by some girls a few years older and berated with an onslaught of sexual questions I didn't know the answer to (I've since wondered what harassment they endured to produce such behavior).

I know you can dismiss these things as people just trying to get a rise out of a young man. All I can say is, I've been teased, and I know the difference. It happened enough, and with enough convincing menace and
malice, that yes, I was afraid to walk alone, to even drive alone, to be alone.

[...] Misogyny, in my experience, is not only hostility toward women, but hostility toward anything "unmasculine." I know it's not the first thing anyone thinks of when they think about misogyny, or, in turn, feminism, when there are so many more real, dire problems that need to be address urgently... but part of gender equality is reassessing all those thing we view as "masculine" or "feminine" traits and not evaluating them as negative regardless of the gender they're applied to or expressed by.

Again, to disclaim this as much as possible, I'm not at all trying to say that this type of social fear is the same for men as it is for women. Only that I personally believe that a similar anxiety DOES exist for men, and is probably caused by many of the same problems.

I hope this makes sense, it's the first time I've really tried to express most of it.

In direct response, “SequinRococo” praised “frocktopus” for opening up:

Oh brother, have you hit the nail on the head! That's what feminism is about!!! Change how we perceive femininity and masculinity [sic] and create ways of referring to gender in neutral ways without automatically branding something good or bad. You have personally face the problem of maintaining a strict masculine and femine [sic] dichotomy. I am sorry. You have realized that no one wins when we play that old antiquated caveman game, but I imagine that it's hard to change the game when it's been played for so long, and so many have enjoyed the benefits of its rules.

The second highest-scoring response to “SequinRococo's” first post (the initial request for a male perspective) came from a user (who has since had their account deleted), offering yet another perspective:

I lived in one of the shittiest neighborhoods in one of the most violent cities in the developed world and I never really felt safe walking around. I always tried to avoid groups of people etc, and I've seen my fair share of violence. Even then I was usually safe from being harassed if I didn't look at someone the wrong way (or at all), it was probably way worse if you were a female. I totally sympathize with the female perspective.
The fourth highest-scoring response to “SequinRococo’s” initial post (the third highest-scoring response has since been deleted) by user “LiveMic” gave a very unusual, not to mention genitalia-focused, experience:

Not exactly threatened but very definitely harassed when I was younger. When I was 18 I’d walk home from high school which took about an hour.

People would honk and scream all kinds of nonsense at me as they drove by. "BALLS, BITCH!!! HAHAAHAHA" is one that stands out in my memory.

Once someone was hiding in some hedges and giggling at me. You can't make this shit up, I mean what the fuck.

I guess I was young and baby faced so I made a tempting target to try and annoy to death.

10 years later I'm bigger and I have a big beard which I'm told makes me somewhat scary looking. A male coworker was telling me what a great guy I was and he didn't know why one of our female coworkers wasn't all over me. Then he paused for a moment and told me the beard was a bit much, though. He said "you look like you could murder someone and then just go eat dinner."

Aside from people just not being aggressive towards me anymore I think I have noticed fear in an instance or two. I was restless a while ago so I decided to go for a walk at three in the morning. A car came to an intersection just as I walked up to it also and instead of stopping at the stop sign they blew right through it. Presumably they didn't want big-scary-beard-man near their car in the dead of night.

I think I prefer it this way. People like me a lot once they get to know me and having people steer clear in public is preferable to "BALLS, BITCH!!! HAHAAHAHA"

It's probably worth noting that I mostly stick to the suburbs and various other safe areas. I don't venture into urban centers all that often so maybe it would be different if I did.

While there was some crassness and cynicism in certain responses, most of the commenters made an earnest effort to open conversation by addressing how men encounter fear. Some even went out of their way to distinguish how these circumstances should not be compared to those of women.
5.4.3. Discussion Threads (Post-Default) – Analysis

When focusing on prominent conversation from an archival perspective, some subtle changes took place in “discussion” threads after the change to default. Contrarian and disruptive comments were present, but most of these were deleted or pushed to the bottom through downvoting. More notably, the behavior of many /r/TwoX users changed in ways that were interesting, but still in-line with the general practices that had been seen in the community before, including the way users talked about /r/TwoXChromosomes itself. Mocking the expected stereotypes of a safe space and dismissal of such types of conversations as being unproductive was slightly more prominent, as can be seen in the first example. However, discussion that was critical of the community was by no means rare before, and despite Workman’s (2014) assessment of the community as a functioning safe space, not all users formally accepted that to be the case either before or after the change to default. Discussions involving social issues were still likely to attract more heat, but members of the community did not always let this develop into something negative. In the second example, the new male-labeled presence within the community was acknowledged in a way that was clearly identified and segmented within the discussion, but still reflected the same practices of openness that were seen in the community before the change to default. This provoked some actions of increased caution from regular users, such as a higher use of throwaway accounts. Users who identified themselves as male contributed to the discussion in a productive and similarly open fashion. Some of the responses came off as slightly intimidating or in poor taste, but this was by no means unusual expression for /r/TwoX regulars.

While the patterns in “discussion” threads adjusted in small ways in the face of /r/TwoX becoming a default subreddit, these shifts in relation to the positioning of equality were much more noticeable in the “default discussion” threads that follow. Comment pages that could be placed in this new category quickly emerged after the change to default status, and the patterns they exhibited told a slightly broader story that help put these subtle changes into perspective.
5.4.4. Default Discussion Threads – Example 1

The way in which the normal patterns observed in /r/TwoXChromosomes evolved and adapted after it was changed to a default subreddit became immediately obvious in the comment pages that I have categorized as “default discussion.” The first example is in response to the official announcement of the change (See Appendix B). The general sentiment surrounding the decision is made prominent and clear from the outset, which was illustrated through popular comments, including the second highest-scoring comment from user “lenaro:"

This is a terrible idea. Why would you ever have done this? Do you care about subreddit quality at all? Have you seen what defaults look like?

In response, the user “smokebreak” did not mince words about their perceived intention of this change, and the way it reflected on the mainstream culture of Reddit:

No, look, see? Default reddit isn't a homophobic racist cesspool! We have a special subreddit just for lady-folk right there!

/r/TwoXChromosomes is now the equivalent of “I have a black friend.”

In the fourth highest-scoring response to “lenaro’s” comment, the user “wyvernx02” contributed their misgivings about the situation:

I agree. Most men don't want to read the stuff on this sub and likely the only thing adding this as a default will accomplish is getting lurkers to register so they don't have to see it on the front page.

In reply to “wyvernx02”, the user “ScrubTutor” tried to bring in a sympathetic male perspective:

I'm a man, and I want to see what's on this sub, which I guess is why I'm here.

I was able to say "I'm not subscribed to any defaults" until today, and I probably will again soon. Defaults are absolute shit and filled with unforgivable amounts of sexism, racism, and homophobia. I would be VERY surprised if this place wasn't overrun, and all involved forced to retreat somewhere more obscure.

Any suggestions?
In response, “wyvernx02” fixated on the first sentence of “ScrubTutor’s” reply:

I’m a man, and I want to see what’s on this sub, which I guess is why I’m here.

Yes. Which is why I said “Most men” and not “All men”.

The user “DrunkyBrewster” used the above comment as an example of the concerns that were being raised:

Welcome to the future of our sub, constantly having to clarify what we write to those who refuse comprehend it.

It’s notable that while these comments were largely speculative, they expressed and validated a genuine familiarity and fear associated with both the state of default subreddits, as well as the outside Reddit community. Users tried to bring immediacy to these concerns by making something of an example of a minor transgression by a user who identified as male.

5.4.5. Default Discussion Threads – Example 2

The second example is taken from another thread carrying on the backlash against the change to default, specifically requesting how the /r/TwoXChromosomes user based can get the status revoked (See Appendix B). After an impassioned plea in the original post, the highest-scoring comment from “LunarFalcon” pointed out some of the activity that had since been deleted by moderators:

Some idiot is also posting pictures of aborted fetuses and calling feminists and women scum.

The third highest-scoring reply to “LunarFalcon” by user “TheSilverTongue” mentioned more content that had since been deleted:

Yeah there were posts espousing Boko Harem kidnappings too.

Further down in the thread, a different type of internal criticism emerged concerning the community. The third highest-scoring comment to the original post by user “brilliantezza” placed blame directly on the /r/TwoXChromosomes moderators for selling out:
Yes. The mods care more about new users than their current and faithful users. It sucks. It's a hurdle we will get over or we'll flounder. Only time will tell.

There are women talking about period cramps with 46 down votes, another woman who had a creepshot taken of her called a ho and other names and down voted. The mods don't seem to get that DELETING the comments doesn't stop them from being harmful. They don't seem to get that excessive down voting discourages activity. It's fucked up.

In response, user “animousity692” antagonized the moderators further by suggesting that there had been ongoing problems with their priorities:

They're all removing posts that critique the sub. I saw a really thoughtful/concerning thread in which the user brought up their issue with racism going on in the online community, 2x in particular. It was removed by mods after it gained a ton of upvotes??

The second highest-scoring reply to “brilliantezza’s” comment by the user “shafonfa” made note of the moderation as well as the massive amount of upvoting and downvoting that had been happening over the past few hours:

I saw that post and was involved in that discussion. It was at +48 within a few minutes, which was impressive with the downvoting brigade happening right now. I was also very disappointed it was removed.

In reply to “shafonfa”, the user “drkgoddess” made note of how drastic the actions of the so-called “downvote brigade” appeared to be:

48+ votes within a few minutes, especially considering the downvote brigade, means that the post was being astroturfed by bots or a motivated group.

Criticism of the /r/TwoXChromosomes moderators became an intense topic in many threads throughout the week after the shift to default. From the perspective of many community members, the decision transformed the moderators into an established authority group complicit with the greater Reddit community for them to rally against.
5.4.6. Default Discussion Threads – Example 3

Another trend that emerged on /r/TwoXChromosomes after it became a default was the number of users posting comments mentioning that they had received harassing or threatening private messages from male Reddit users – something that was entirely absent in samples from before the change. This is documented best in the third example which was in response to a post specifically discussing this problem. In the post, the OP states that they would not be posting for a while after waking up to “a lovely PM asking me what colour my nipples were” (See Appendix B). The highest-scoring comment from “desmondlovespenne” reads as follows:

I just got a disgusting one, too! Three years of posting almost exclusively on TwoX, and my first creepy pm comes yesterday (Gist: "show yer boobies and don't be a red pill c*nt" - excuse me?). Is this what we have to look forward to from now on?

By the way - this is my newer alt account. I'm not comfortable posting with my main on TwoX anymore.

In response, a user (who has since had their account deleted) shares a similar experience:

OMG, I got a really, really similar one. They called me a "fat ugly feminist" who has probably never had a man show any interest in me. He kindly suggested I show him my breasts to make myself feel better.

Um... what?

In response, “Brachial” made an assessment of the situation:

Sounds like a 12 year old with braces.

The user “ephymeris” made a small dispute with the above claim:

Please don't insult 12 year olds or people with braces like that ;) I'd say they sound more like rotting meat slime!
5.4.7. Default Discussion Threads – Analysis

While the changes that happened on regular “discussion” comment pages in prominent comments were subtle, more obvious shifts within the community could be seen in the “default discussion” comment pages. The discussion unearthed a number of disruptive activities that had taken place in /r/TwoXChromosomes after it became default, many of which were not immediately obvious, especially from an archival perspective. This is underlined substantially by /r/TwoX users who explicitly pointed out that they had been receiving harassing and threatening direct messages from Reddit users they identified as outsiders, which had apparently never been a common occurrence before. The positioning here took place not through the voting process, but by how users documented the problem and kept it visible. It appears that many members of the community had been actively working to keep the major disruptions from becoming prominent, but at the same time did not want these problems to go off the record.

In discussing the subject, there was a notable increase in the blunt hostility that many /r/TwoX users expressed toward the greater Reddit community. In the first example, criticisms were largely speculative, while in the second and third examples there were recorded accounts of transgressions that had either been removed or are not publicly viewable. “Default discussion” comment pages stood out not only because of their topic, but because of the way interactions played out between users. In both cases, there was a strong element of users rallying against perceived authority and oppression, and conversation developing through the validation of that sentiment. Here, we see the emergence of a new kind of discourse that directly criticized this type of conduct by specifically targeting not only the greater Reddit community, but also the moderators of /r/TwoXChromosomes. The moderators of /r/TwoXChromosomes were the target of many attacks from the community itself, with many of their defences demonstrating similarities with the greater ethics of Reddit, namely that the best way to combat the bad stuff is to downvote and report, as per Reddit’s “democratic” system. This suggests a significant state of disarray, especially as faith in moderators was one of the key factors of /r/TwoX functioning as a sustainable safe space environment, as emphasized by Workman (2014, p. 28). The content and style of conversation in these comments were
decidedly different from usual “discussion” threads, and made it very clear that the community was adapting to a very real, very disruptive change. They were a direct and explicit expression in response to the symbolic violence occurring within the social field that guides the /r/TwoX community, and an attempt to offset not only intrusion, but any fundamental complicity with the policy change.

5.5. Positioning of Rationality After the Change to Default

As with “discussion” threads, “support” threads saw a substantial increase in the number of posts after the change to default, and there was a notable change in how dominant masculine discourse was positioned in these conversations in relation to rationality. Similar to the “discussion” pages, “support” page saw a greater degree of cautious openness, especially in terms of engaging with male perspectives. However, this resilient willingness to be open often intensified into a much grander, rawer way of conveying community norms. There was a sharp increase in the number of threads that talked about body and health issues, and the manner in which users participated in these exchanges was noticeably different from previous “support” threads. These conversations took place in a fashion that was often graphic and potentially off-putting, with many users repeatedly indicating that they were deliberately retaliating against hostile male newcomers. At the same time, other users embraced them and contributed in a manner that was honest, sincere and liberating. These threads resulted in a unique kind of rational positioning reaffirming open and inclusive communication that could not be overshadowed by dominant masculine discourse. I have classified these as “TMI” (or “Too Much Information”) threads. The emergence of “TMI” threads represented an interesting contrast to the much subtler changes that took place in “support” threads. The first of the examples that follow focus on “support” threads similar to those in the previous section before moving onto the new “TMI” thread category.

5.5.1. Support Threads (Post-Default) – Example 1

The first example of a support thread after the change to default not only offered some of the richest conversation from the data, but also directly involved the presence of male users who said they had discovered the community as a result of the status
change. The original post was from a father (user “craigasketch”) asking for advice on raising his daughter (See Appendix B). The response that generated the most prominent conversation was the fifth highest-scoring comment, posted by a user (who has since had their account deleted), which reads as follows:

I know that it's probably way too early to think about this, but the amount of negative messages girls get about their bodies is...unbelievable. Don't make fun of fat people in front of your daughter; don't be one of those dads who persistently shames their daughters about what they wear. Reading this, I doubt you would be, but there are two sides to the coin here: I have friends who stopped eating, and when I get stressed, I eat because my mom made food a four-letter word.

Stress to your daughters that men's reaction to their appearance is men's fault, not theirs. Talk to your daughters about consent and make sure that they know they can come to you and be believed. If you have a son, talk to them about consent as well.

Most of all, believe your kid if they say something happened to them. Even if you don't want to believe it happened.

The original poster, “craigasketch,” remained an active part of the conversation in a response to the above user:

Good point about being too early. I am just second guessing about a lot of things now that are black/white decisions like from example making fun of people. Like right now on the table baby baptism. I am not religious but I grew up religious. I personally don’t think its necessary and all but now that she's here my wife's faith has come out of the wood work and I'm sure i'll be going to church here now... just a lot of things like that.

I wonder if there's future decisions like baptism that are much the same but much more for women. Quinceañera's, Dances, etc.

A direct reply to the above comment from a user (who has since had their account deleted) took cautious contention with “craigasketch’s” mention of religious activities, which tend to be criticized on /r/TwoXChromosomes:

As someone who’s LGBT in the Bible Belt, religion has been....a drowning experience for me. Just make sure that every image your kid gets of a god isn't male and angry.
Dances and quinceaneras and all - coming-of-age rites are scary for every kid. That's not because they're a boy or a girl, but because they're a kid. They can handle it - kids are tougher than you'd think :)

The experience shared in the above post was enough to get a user who claimed to be new to the board, “releasethecrackwhore,” to chime in and thank them for granting some personal validation:

Okay, from coming in from the default fiasco, I have to say, I like this sub. You guys, for the most part and I really mean that-I've only seen a few non supportive posts, really give some insightful replies to people. I don't usually subscribe to the gender specific (I am honestly not trying to be insulting, I couldn't think of what else to call it) subs because I feel if I have something really personal to say, something I'm really struggling with I wouldn't want it to become someone else's drama, you know? I know I'm not explaining that right. But I'm sure you've experienced the whole 48 child argument of who has it right and who has a right to say it de-evolution. Anyway, your post struck a chord with me. I am also a female bible belter with a daughter. Your response was respectful and insightful. And I can totally relate.

While this example carried on the same spirit of support threads, the issue of the defaulting casted a noticeable cloud over prominent conversation. Whether or not a user had discovered the board due to this change, as well as whether or not they identify as male or female, had become important information to disclose in order to participate.

5.5.2. Support Threads (Post-Default) – Example 2

The second example provided further rich conversation, this time focusing on a gendered issue that has some resonance with Reddit as a whole. It was in response to a post in which a user asked the /r/TwoXChromosomes community whether or not they have experienced belittling (or being called “cute”) while doing something traditionally non-feminine (See Appendix B). The highest-scoring comment from user “njuicetea” went directly to the issue of women in tech industries:

you're studying computer science?!? that's really cute. good for you! the 'good for you' gets me every time.

In response, the user “sugarhoneybadger” focused less on the issue of so-called “cuting” and added more commiseration over in the issues in these particular fields:
I fucking hate it when I'm the only woman in the office and people come in and think I'm the receptionist. :( 

The user “cosmogrrl” built on this thread by adding a personal story that brought in an element of humiliation for the transgressor, but again did not quite fit what the OP was asking for:

I went to a SIGGRAPH convention (I was an engineer on our project) to talk about our new 3D engine. A guy asked me in casual conversation, “How's the marketing going?” I replied, “Hell if I know, I’m an engineer.” and I showed him my tag. He was quite embarrassed, I think if he could will the floor to open and swallow him up, he'd have been happier.

Two users replied to “cosmogrrl” with slightly more diverse comments. The male-identifying user “SnakeJG” shared an indirect experience with a tone of empathy:

I have a friend who has a PhD and was on the tenure track as a civil engineering professor at a university. There would be e-mails, even from people (not just the students) addressed

Dr A, Dr B and Ms C

It was so crazy to hear her stories, I (XY) just couldn't comprehend people doing that.

The next highest-scoring reply from a user (who has since had their account deleted) brought the conversation back to the “cuteing” phenomenon and added a bit of a contrarian angle suggesting a positive side to reactions that challenge notions of gender stereotypes:

I don't know, as another cs girl I could see myself saying the same thing because I'm genuinely happy for you and for the field. I get a lot of the ‘cute’ and other comments but I would easily call a guy friend cute for stressing over which shoes to wear on a date or something else typically considered girly. Compared to the “wow” and “that's awesome” reactions, the number of patronizing ones don't even make a dent.

Enjoy your ‘untraditional’ field :) 

It is notable that while the original poster requested a specific kind of experience, more general and common experiences in a particularly controversial field for women (computing science) wound up being prominent within the comments.
5.5.3. Support Threads (Post-Default) – Analysis

In these threads, it became common for users to disclose whether or not they were new to the board due to the defaulting. If the posters were male, those that disclosed their gender were often accepted in an open and understanding fashion. Newcomers legitimately interested in the community often treaded carefully, and found themselves accepted into the conversation. There was a hint of unease among some established /r/TwoXChromosomes users in these “support” threads, as could be seen in the second example where users were less focused on having conversations and sharing experiences specifically related to the request of the original poster and focused more on commiserating over broader issues. Notably, in the second example, users fixated on issues in tech industries, which was one of many similar conversations that paralleled /r/TwoX’s divisions from the larger Reddit culture. Accessibility of these “support” threads was an important underlying issue, and it was in these threads that members of the community adapted to an influx of newcomers in an open fashion that was consistent with the practices of rationality that characterized the board’s habitus. At the same time, anxieties still emerged among many existing members that the community changing to default would suppress their own ability to express themselves in an open and positive fashion. These concerns opened the door to a new unique type of outlet that was highly open and personal, but at the same time deliberately off-putting to individuals who were characterized as invaders representing the misogynistic tendencies of the greater Reddit community. The manner in which members of the existing user base positioned their approach to rationality took on a distinct form of expression in threads that focused on body issues. These took on enough of a distinct character to warrant an entirely new category.

5.5.4. “TMI” Threads – Example 1

Before the change to default, it was common for support threads to focus on health issues, which normally entailed graphic descriptions of body functions, medical procedures and the validation of perceived abnormalities. After the change to default, the /r/TwoXChromosomes community adapted to wider exposure in a number of accommodating ways, but an increased presence of downvoters and harassers created
potential problems for established norms of highly personal, rational expression. This led some members of the community to encourage an escalation of this type of conversation that was frequently characterized as retaliatory. `/r/TwoX users were encouraged in certain threads to share graphic stories about health and body functions that would be therapeutic and liberating for many members of the community, but off-putting for any misogynistic outside presence by giving them “Too Much Information” – hence the designation “TMI.” The first example is in response to a post asking users to share their most intense and graphic stories involving menstruation and what their personal reactions were (See Appendix B). This particular thread became particularly infamous in subsequent comment pages `/r/TwoXChromosomes, and was henceforth referred to by community members as the infamous ‘period shits thread.’ This designation was likely in recognition of the highest-scoring comment from the user “ebuu:”

Why the fuck was it brown?! I hadn't made the connection that oxidized blood = brown.

This observation was quickly validated by the user “ughiforgotmypassword” in direct response:

I cried as I told my brother “I'm shitting my pants and I can't even feel it”

The user “Eboobny” shared their experience in the third highest-scoring reply to “ebuu's” post:

Omg... For the first two periods this happened to me and I was convinced I had cancer. Why does no one mention this might happen?

In the fourth highest-scoring reply to “ebuu,” the user “zebra_duck” shared their own perplexed reaction:

I had no idea it was supposed to be red/brown at all; I was expecting something clear or white-ish. My mom had talked with my sister and me about it, but she failed to mention that it would be bloody.

The user “youngbridget” shared a similar story in the sixth highest-scoring response to “ebuu:”

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I was sure I was having some problem with poo coming out. I was staying at my grandmother's house and had no idea it was my period. The next day I rode my bike to summer camp and finally figured out it was my period half way through the morning when there was still more brown, plus some red. I had to ask an adult to help me out with supplies, and then go home and tell my grandmother I got my period. She said, “Oh” and then a few hours later said, “Um, was that your first one?”

That is the long way of saying OMG I wish someone told me it might be brown too!

In the eighth highest-scoring reply, the user “CapOnFoam” not only shared their own experience, but valorized /r/TwoXChromosomes as a place allowing its users to do so:

Yep, #1 surprise right here. I had 3 periods thinking I was crapping my pants before my mom (who did the laundry) told me she thought I got my period. Until then, I was putting toilet paper in my crotch/butt thinking I was having anal leakage a couple days a month. “Are You There God, It's Me Margaret” never said it would be brown. I read that book probably 10 times and not once did Judy Blume make it seem like it'd be anything but bright pinkish-red.

Nope, looks like you've got poopy racing stripes in your undies.

MAN I wish I'd had 2X in the 80s....

Structurally, there was very little direct interaction between the users. As in the “support” threads from before defaulting, users mainly communicate their own experiences to the community as a whole with occasional direct replies to one another.

5.5.5. “TMI” Threads – Example 2

In the second example, users were encouraged by the original poster to continue the “icky pace” of subject matter that was perceived to be suppressing misogynistic interventions on the board (See Appendix B). The post called for users to add to the trend by sharing their “most messy sex story.” The highest-scoring comment by user “snyggare” provided an anecdote that appeared to resonate strongly with many members of the community:

I was giving my guy a blowjob. I definitely threw up on his penis. I blame the alcohol.
In response “Cuddle_Apocalypse” shared a similar story:

I actually did the same thing not too long ago to my current fwb. He sort of accepted it as a consequence of his enjoyment of making me deepthroat/choke, but woooo buddy did it ever reek. And it was in his car.

AND he didn't have any napkins.

I didn't get any of it on me though. :)

In reply to “Cuddle_Apocalypse”, user “mupthepup” ranted about personal experiences:

Ugh my BF likes the deepthroat/choke too, and then will get all grossed out when I actually start to gag and throw up in my mouth a little bit and you know, take a break because I can't fucking breathe. Fuck certain kinds of mainstream porn for giving people unrealistic expectations of oral sex. It's an object. In your throat. It's gonna make you gag/throw up.

The second highest-scoring reply to “snyggare's” top comment was an experience form user “GiraffeSlut:”

I did this, but then quickly swallowed it (I know, gross right?) so he wouldn't notice, and carried on. I was young and self-conscious, and very embarrassed. Looking back, he probably noticed.

In response, “Cuddle_Apocalypse” provided some validation and support:

Oh gosh, I do that all the time. I don't think it's very gross, honestly. It's just getting summoned back from whence it came! :p

The user “GiraffeSlut” showed great appreciation in their reply:

As a fairly new subscriber, I think I just fell in love with this sub.

I AM NOT ALONE!

While most of the users in these threads used language and descriptions that were very much intended to be unapproachable by people unable to relate to them, there was also a strong connection being drawn between this trend, and the benefits of the /r/TwoXChromosomes community as a whole.
5.5.6. “TMI” Threads – Analysis

In these “TMI” threads, there was frequent, stated intention of being gleefully off-putting to a presence on the board that was perceived to be misogynistic. However, the actual positioning through rationality throughout these comments played out through an earnest validation through story-sharing that was largely consistent with what had been seen in /r/TwoXChromosomes prior to the change to default status. This intensification in subject matter represented an effort on the part of /r/TwoX users to clearly differentiate and firmly characterize their practices and values from those of the mainstream of Reddit. In the face of some anxieties that the community would be fundamentally compromised, the threads that focused on explicit body issues somewhat recaptured the structure seen before the defaulting, as they largely consisted of direct responses and civil conversation involving story-sharing, with almost no disruptions or active need to accommodate a new audience. The “TMI” threads represented an effort on the part of the /r/TwoX community to maintain the rational support and story-sharing in a manner that was unlikely to be interrupted – and for the most part it worked, because it is these threads that most strongly resemble the “support” threads as they were before the subreddit became a default. Conversely, the small changes in conduct seen in the regular “support” threads were not as prevalent, as the subject matter in these comment pages rendered them unnecessary.

It is notable in both examples that the highest-scoring comments fixated around issues that paralleled the perceived intrusion of an outside male presence as a result of the change to default status. Similar to the jabs directed at the misogynistic trends in programming culture seen in the regular “support” threads from after the change, many users fixated on comments that involved men being in a compromised situation during a mismanaged sexual encounter that left little to no identifiable consequence for the woman, most notably in the second example. While the prominent comments in the regular “support” threads made more of an effort to accommodate outside users within the social field of /r/TwoXChromosomes, the “TMI” threads told a slightly different narrative as users made a clear and undeniable point of reinforcing norms against perceived symbolic violence from outside the community precisely because it was not prominently visible and obvious. There is a notable difference between this and
Fredrick’s (1999) research on feminist Usenet communities: what we see is not a radicalization of opinion and expression meant to deflect outsiders so much as a re-enforcement of community norms and practices meant to enable participation and expression from those /r/TwoXChromosomes is intended to serve.

5.6. Case Study 2 Conclusion

The /r/TwoXChromosomes community was well-established on Reddit as a self-proclaimed safe-space that operated through a habitus that contrasted the mainstream Reddit community, and resulted in positioning to take place in a different fashion through its social field (Bourdieu, 1985). The community was largely characterized by support and the sharing of personal experiences, which was starkly different from the more fact-based debate found in most other subreddits. Transforming /r/TwoX into a default subreddit and making it more easily visible to all Reddit users resulted in a disruption and intrusion that was difficult to account for from an archival perspective. Members of the community indicated that there had been a huge increase in comments that were critical of feminism, blatantly misogynistic or actively attempting to push for fact-based debate over sharing personal experiences. It was difficult to account for much of this, as approaching these comment pages was very much like sifting through the charred remnants of a downvoting and deleting war of which there is no firm, reliable record. However, the comments that are visible and prominent arguably said much more about how the logics of misogyny operate on Reddit and the effect it has on public spaces. Pushing these comments to the bottom through downvoting and moderation is not enough – the community escalated and re-enforced established practices in order to firmly differentiate themselves from a perceived threat of hegemonic masculinity and dominant masculine discourse on Reddit. Approaching /r/TwoXChromosomes through field theory using critical discourse analysis demonstrated how a community that is fully cognizant and aware of the problems and threats that exist within the greater Reddit is capable of negotiating and adapting not only for the sake of preservation, but also to accommodate change that is potentially positive.
Chapter 6.

Conclusion

From its early stages, this research was based around a significant contradiction underlying the website Reddit. Despite the fact that it is presented as “The Front Page of the Internet” and considered a universal and neutral hub for news and information, there is a common perception among bloggers, various news sources and other observers that the dominant practices within its male dominated community is largely misogynistic and anti-women (Dickens, 2012; Smith, 2012; Zuckerman, 2012; Kleinman, 2013; Hern, 2014; Allen, 2015; Dewey, 2015; Workman, 2014). Analyzing the language that is used in the comment pages of various Reddit sub-communities and exploring how these practices are reflected in the website’s greater ecosystem has confirmed that many of these beliefs are, indeed, well-founded.

Mills (2011) highlighted an awareness among users of the contradictions and problems that exist within the collective opinion of the greater Reddit community, referred to as the “hivemind,” and concluded that they did not sideline minority opinions in a significant way. Even though many of Reddit’s problems are acknowledged by its user base, critically analyzing comments across different subreddits revealed that the habitus guiding the “hivemind” of the greater Reddit community is constituted by practices that enforce a form of hegemonic masculinity rooted in neoliberal power structures that persist regardless (Connell, 1977; 2005; 2012). The enormous skew that the website has toward male users leads to a universalization of male experiences and viewpoints that appears to normalize some fairly extreme opinions regarding a supposed social and cultural subordination of male subjectivity. While these views appear in a hyperbolic fashion in subreddits like /r/MensRights, they also subtly influence the practices that take place on more mainstream subreddits such as /r/worldnews and the social field of Reddit as a whole (Bourdieu, 1985). Conversely, these topics are also
engaged with in more varied ways within the individual social fields of subreddits. Taking a close look at how various Reddit sub-communities operate both through their individual social fields and in relation to the social field of the greater Reddit community reveals levels of complexity and nuance that are not immediately apparent in colloquial interpretations of the site (Bourdieu, 1985). While there are serious problems with Reddit’s status as a contributor to a democratic landscape of news media, there is a clear logic underlying how individuals behave within its architecture, and how the social fields of its communities operate and interact with one another.

Returning to the first research question: Reddit is very much connected to a greater culture of misogyny, as was initially expected based on its historical connections to platforms such as Usenet and 4chan in Chapter 2 (Fredrick, 1999; Olson, 2012). The sense of outside threat that informs the practices of the /r/TwoXChromosomes subreddit suggests that the greater Reddit community is actively hostile toward alternative spaces (Workman, 2014). This attitude is tied not only to Reddit’s meritocratic technology, but also the technical aspiration of democracy that is infused within its design. These technical values can be tied to patterns of hegemonic masculinity that, through the analysis of comment pages in this research, have demonstrably informed themes of discourse on Reddit at an ideological level. These patterns of conduct reflect the rules, practices and beliefs that constitute the habitus of the greater Reddit community. However, these patterns do not originate from the site, and can be traced to other platforms and movements that decry a perceived alienation of masculinity in Western society, as described in Chapter 3. The symbolic violence enacted by users of the greater Reddit community is far-reaching, and as a result there is an element of both negotiation and restraint within the practices that form the habituses of individual subreddit communities. How user comments reflect this greater culture of misogyny varies considerably depending on whether the subreddit normalizes practices that are more in-line with the greater Reddit community (such as /r/worldnews) or work against it in an alternative fashion (such as /r/TwoXChromosomes).

While individual subreddit communities are ultimately defined and positioned in relation to the persistent ideological practices of Reddit as a whole, there is considerable flexibility for the habituses of these communities to accommodate new practices within
these confines. The strong differentiation between communities, whether or not they are explicitly alternative, is one of the main ways in which the logics of misogyny on Reddit operate differently when compared to other platforms. Hegemonic masculinity does have a negative impact on the nature of certain subreddits, such as the misogynistic assumptions frequently underpinning debates in /r/worldnews discussed in Chapter 4. However, the ideological designs of openness that allow those attitudes to persist also enable the resilience of communities like /r/TwoXChromosomes. The second half of Chapter 5 demonstrated how despite the clear intrusion and state of compromise the subreddit was left in after being changed to a default, the users of /r/TwoX were able to maintain the norms and integrity of their community by continuing to practice established values and by placing clear emphasis on the subreddit’s differentiation from the greater Reddit community.

The endurance of the /r/TwoXChromosomes community has apparently continued, as it remains a default subreddit as of June 2016, and has grown to nearly 6 million subscribers. Not only that, but as far as my research can tell, no major blog or news sources appear to have written anything on the subject of its change to default since the initial few weeks of transition. The discussion of the problems behind default status on /r/TwoX in what I described in my research as “default discussion” threads has also been infrequent, with less than five currently visible from the past year. Within the threads that have come up, many users frequently state that they have left the community and only check in on occasion due to the changes that have happened since 2014. Many have apparently moved to a smaller alternate subreddit, /r/TrollXChromosomes, which is regarded as being “similar” to the pre-default community, but with a slightly more irreverent tone. The ultimate outcome has not been perfect, but it suggests that community practice can remain sustainable within a system that has constantly changing boundaries. Overall, these circumstances are different from what was observed in spaces such as feminist groups on Usenet by Fredrick (1999) and online games like World of Warcraft by Beyer (2012) where open retaliation appeared to be necessary for preservation. Misogynistic practices are incorporated into Reddit at an ideological level, but these open ethics still allow misogynistic tendencies to be disputed, called out and positioned against within the same ecosystem. In a small way, this validates an ideal of accommodating total free speech in a way that was not possible on
platforms like Usenet or 4chan. However, while voices like those represented by /r/TwoXChromosomes can grow and be maintained when warranted, certain core tendencies in the community are likely harder to overtake. It is traits that are inextricably tied to the greater community's habitus, specifically hegemonic masculinity, that still have the biggest bearing on public discourse.

Just as there have been few blog and news articles written on problems /r/TwoXChromosomes has seen since becoming default in recent months, there is similarly no indication that this change of status has done anything at all to address attitudes or perceptions of hegemonic masculinity within the greater Reddit community. The issue of deeply-rooted community traits being difficult to challenge through negotiation is what most severely implicates Reddit’s claim to being an electronic public space. Negotiating space for alternative or contrary voices is possible within individual communities, but much like the issues with the Japanese 2channel website discussed in Chapter 2, ideological biases within the system enable certain minority voices to dominate. In the case of Reddit, this can be seen in the influence of individuals and groups projecting perceived issues of male subjugation onto women. Safe spaces can be established, but are ultimately designed in response to the greater hegemonic masculine tendencies of Reddit. In that sense, it is entirely possible that a community like /r/TwoXChromosomes is only able to thrive because these problems exist in the first place, and that the need to establish such an alternative space on Reddit is the entire reason that this particular subreddit’s users have an outlet that suits their needs and interests at all. As speculated in Chapter 1, the ostensible universality of Reddit despite its male-centric nature, as well as the expectation of being “The Front Page of the Internet” for all people, unwittingly generates the assumption that male domination is to be expected in a public space.

The argument that a community like Reddit is a universal space suggests a normalization or condoning of its practices. This includes the types of symbolic violence used to maintain the habitus of the greater community. The action and acceptance of symbolic violence can transform into real-life violence, and this is exactly what has been happening within this broader culture of practices over the past few years. A perceived antagonism that is increasingly being referred to as a “culture war” has emerged
between the hegemonic masculine sensibilities of groups like Reddit, and other social media communities more in-line with inclusivity and social justice. This is a clear result of economic and social disruptions, and has interesting implications within the increasingly important context of social media. Platforms such as Twitter and Tumblr operate in a way that fulfils the social needs related to individual expression – the very traits dismissed as “vanity” by hackers and the anonymous community of 4chan (Olson, 2012, p. 28). In contrast, the male-dominated tech culture has a tendency to embody libertarian values, which in theory support egalitarianism and equality, but tend to be myopic towards inequality among disenfranchised groups and their social causes – views that characterize the other side of this supposed “war.”

It seems possible that the so-called vanity playing out on social media platforms such as Twitter and Tumblr in the form of individual presentation is interpreted as a threat to masculinity. This is currently playing out in the form of real life harassment and attacks, most notably those targeted at journalists and other individuals instigated by the GamerGate movement. GamerGate is a hashtag movement on Twitter well known for ordering SWAT hits on individuals they accuse of “corrupting” video game journalism with feminist or social justice critique (Hern, 2015). This movement is of particular note because many of its activities are organized on the subreddit /r/KotakuinAction, a community that remains protected and incubated within the fundamentals of Reddit’s greater culture. Conversely, discussion of GamerGate has been banned on 4chan, despite that platform often being interpreted as more openly malicious than Reddit (D’Orazio, 2015). Just as a positive community like /r/TwoXChromosomes can resiliently persist with the ecosystem of Reddit, so can something heinous in intent such as GamerGate. The broader process through which online environments and oppressive social media movements can foster politicized physical violence, as well as the construction of the “culture war” that is allegedly fuelling these actions, are areas that are incredibly ripe for future research. While it was not possible for me to explore this dichotomy directly, the research I have produced on Reddit should provide an adequate groundwork for exploring those matters in the future.

While it may not be truly universal or democratic on its own, Reddit does provide an alternative to mainstream news media that contributes to a broader democratization
of public discourse. Despite all of these problematic connections and implications, it is
also an incredibly useful platform and can be somewhat indispensable for those
accustomed to it. For a good portion of the time that I have been working on this thesis, I
have casually browsed Reddit, even while critically analyzing it in another window.
Despite an obvious utility and practical value that is difficult to drop, though, I’m not sure
if Reddit is something that even can be “fixed.” It houses a diversity of voices, including
those that work against its own contradictions, but social communication can only be so
revolutionary if spaces even need to be created to work against problematic ethics. It
seems the best solution for approaching Reddit for the time being is to spread
awareness of its problems and ensure that as many people as possible are capable of
approaching both the greater community, as well as its many sub-communities, in a
critical manner.
References


Appendix A.

Examples from Chapter 4

From Section 4.1 - Introduction

Figure A.1. Example from /r/MensRights
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/MensRights/comments/10z9yy/
From Section 4.2 - Positioning of Equality

Figure A.2a. /r/TwoXChromosomes – Example 1 (Page 1)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/elm6/
Actually your last point is a little scary due to the fallibility of memory especially if the sex was under the influence. The full definition of rape is unfortunately murky and that probably won't change. All we can do is further refine the legal system.

This wasn't a case of memory loss, this wasn't a case of a woman not being sure whether or not she consented due to alcohol consumption. This is a case of these women recanting consent after the fact.

Ah, sorry, I didn't make it clear I was speaking generally and not about this case in particular.

I don't understand this. How hard is it to determine if you have been raped? Did someone hold you down and rape you? Then you were raped. Did you say you wanted to have sex and do it willingly? Then it wasn't rape. People like you scare me. You make it seem legitimate to retroactively remove consent in order to exact revenge on someone.

It has nothing to do with retroactively removing consent. People don't like to think they have been raped, so they often try to find excuses or try to brush it off as something else. This is a scientific fact, backed up by several studies. If you ask people "has someone ever forced you to have sex against your will?" you'll get "yes" from a lot of people who would also answer "no" to the question if they have been raped.
Figure A.3a. /r/TwoXChromosomes – Example 2 (Page 1)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/erntz/
Is it possible that Sweden being either the most
feminist country on earth or among the most
feminist countries on earth is also, let's say,
generally more prone to false-rape allegations?
Again, it's at least possible. Sweden tops the
statistics for reported rapes in Europe, which can
be seen as a supporting fact. But it also could be
that Swedish society just treats actual rape-cases
more seriously and that rape victims are more
likely to come forward in Sweden than in any other
country.

Neither means that the most basic ideals of
feminism, equality in opportunity for the sexes, is
now proven to be bad.

5. **Images:** No direct links to images,
except on Image-Fest Friday (IFF). To
post an image during the week, do so
within a self-post and with some added
context. See here for guidelines.
Post all memes and rage comics to
/r/TrollXChromosomes.

6. **Fundraising:** No links to fundraising
pages. As a community, we're
not set up for screening each funding
request.

---

**Related subreddits**

/r/Woman  /r/TheGirlSurvivalGuide
/r/AskWomen  All Womanhood
/r/Fashion  /r/femalefashionadvice
/r/AltraThatFits  All Fashion
/r/MakeupAddiction  /r/RedditLaqueristas
/r/FancyFollies  All Beauty
/r/STEM<br>S<br>l<br>a<br>d<br>i<br>e<br>s  All Careers
/r/GirlGamers  /r/TrollXChromosomes
/r/EntWives  All hobbies & Fun
/r/BodyAcceptance  /r/xxfitness
/r/PCOS  All Health & Fitness
/r/TwoXSex  All Relationships
/r/feminism  All Activism
/r/actuallesbians  All LGBT
/r/birthcontrol  Abortion Support
/r/childfree  All Birth Control
/r/BabyBumps  /r/TryingForABaby
/r/Mommit  All Parenthood
/r/LadyBoners  /r/ladyladyboners

**All Related Subreddits & Resources**

Assault & DV Resources

#twoxchromosomes on Snoo.net

Thanks to /u/Jaxspider for the new logo!

created by Basically Maz Kanata
HiFructoseCornFaces  a community for 6 years

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**Figure A.3b.** /r/TwoXChromosomes – Example 2 (Page 2)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/erntz/
respectable number of sexists calling themselves fringe feminists, and you don't have to look hard to find them. It really makes it difficult to categorize the movement in any coherent way. Under the same name, you’ve got reasonable, sensible individuals who believe that there continue to be troubling social patterns related to women and you’ve got “womyn.” Both have just as much right to the title as the other.

As such, I have a certain level of skepticism when a thing is called feminist, and I don’t necessarily jump to support it until I know more, because the question in the forefront of my mind is “which feminist?”

I would disagree with that, I believe he’s trying to show how the impact of a sexual crime can be used incorrectly to hurt someone.

The women do have a male feminist lawyer who agrees that what happened should be classified as rape and sexual coercion. I definitely think this has to do with feminism. My first evaluation of this case was that Assange went to Sweden and messed up because he didn’t realize that Swedish women expect more respect from men than women in many other countries do. Assange expresses it differently, but it appears he now makes the same assessment.

Well, a good lesson for the world to learn. Don’t fuck Swedish women without a condom if they’ve asked for a condom.

Well, a good lesson for the world to learn. Don’t fuck Swedish women without a condom if they’ve asked for a condom. Clearly, you heard that claim about the case and stopped giving enough of a shit
about the truth of the case. Go back a week or two and start reading updates as
real journalists got a hold of the police reports, and then the actual leak of the
police reports.

It is not just about the lack of a condom. Hell, one of them has been outspoken
that she would be willing to forgive that if he just changed his shitty attitude. But
he did much more than just that.

The first woman was trying to consent to sex if and only if a condom was used for
the entirety. He penetrated without consent without a condom at first, then
eventually put one on. Then that one tore, and he refused to stop to put on
another. And while he was doing this, he was holding her down so she couldn’t get
him off/out. AND THEN he sneaked up on the other in he sleep and fucked her
while unconscious. The non-use of a condom is important there because she was
also outspoken prior to going to sleep that if she had sex, it would have to be safe
sex. So it gives the impression that he took pleasure in going against their wishes.

So yeah. There is no law in sweden that says that if you have sex without a
condom, then it’s rape. And there is no evidence that anybody involved in the
case, or on the planet Earth, actually believe that.

The only way in which feminism is involved is that in which assange’s defenders
think anti-feminism is the key to making him look innocent and his accusers guilty.

MW OHM 9 points 5 years ago

Meh, most of what you’re relating is simply the current media conglomeration
of what the summation of pundits / columnists / activists have currently
decided is what allegedly happened. The whole thing is a mess and, currently,
no one except the prosecutor in Sweden and Assange’s lawyer really know what
the whole scoop is.

You simply parroting the more updated popular story helps no one.

MW OHM 9 points 5 years ago

Allegedly...ALLEGEDLY...sheesh, just because someone says something doesn’t
mean it’s true. That’s what we have courts to decide.

MW OHM 9 points 5 years ago

"He did much more than that..."

How the fuck would you know what he did? A couple of groupies accuse him of
shit, and now he’s a rapist? Fuck you. You have no more insight with your
feminist orthodox faith than anybody else, home slice.

MW OHM 9 points 5 years ago

AND THEN he sneaked up on the other in he sleep and fucked her while
unconscious.

my understanding is that she alleges they had consensual sex without any
issues, and then fell asleep together. he initiated sex while they were sleeping
after already having sex once.

"sneaked up" isn’t exactly what i’d call... true.
Figure A.3e. /r/TwoXChromosomes – Example 2 (Page 5)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/erntz/
Want to know what actually happened between Julian Assange, the woman he was with, and the accusations of rape? Read this story that actually includes the police report from Sweden. Rape? No. A woman scorned? Absolutely. (dailymail.co.uk)

Submitted 5 years ago by wrco-wolf

202 comments share

372

This post was submitted on 03 Dec 2010

372 points (88% upvoted)

shortlink: https://redd.it/efci1

username password

remember me reset password

login

Top 200 comments show all 202

sorted by: best

[-] Ramone1234 57 points 5 years ago

They ate in an atmosphere that was tense, though... she tried to lighten the mood by joking about the possibility that she might be pregnant.

Great sense of humour there.

permalink embed

[-] fedja 12 points 5 years ago

She missed her chance at a great punchline, hinting how they now have to marry.

permalink embed parent

[-] HankPoley 14 points 5 years ago

This is dailymail, a UK tabloid..

permalink embed parent

[-] Merit 6 points 5 years ago

Ramone means on Woman B's part, not on the part of the author.

permalink embed parent

[-] [deleted] 2 points 5 years ago

And this is reddit, an American website...

permalink embed parent

[-] navinho 1 point 5 years ago

I think he means UK newspapers should be read with a pinch of salt. And in the case of the Daily Mail, maybe a few tablespoons.

permalink embed parent

[-] [deleted] 117 points 5 years ago

Welcome!

/r/worldnews is for major news from around the world except US-internal news / US politics
While I can see how some might view his actions as unsavory, none of that seemed illegal.

Whatever the outcome, one thing is certain – Assange’s attempts to portray himself as an online saint, exposing the secrets of the superpowers, has been dealt a damaging blow.

I don’t see how his sex life affects the validity of documents he posts online.

Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/worldnews/comments/efci1/

---

**Worldnews Rules**

**Disallowed submissions**
- US internal news/US politics
- Editorialized titles
- Misleading titles
- Editorials, opinion, analysis
- Feature stories
- Non-English articles
- Images, videos or audio clips
- Petitions, advocacy, surveys
- All caps words in titles
- Blogspam (if stolen content/direct copy)
- Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr
- Old news (≥1 week old) articles

*See the wiki* for details on each rule

**Disallowed comments**
- Bigotry / Other offensive content
- Personal attacks on other users
- Memes/GIFS
- Unlabeled NSFW images/videos
- URL shorteners

*See the wiki* for details on each rule

**Continued or outstandingly blatant violation** of the submission or commenting rules will result in you being temporarily banned from the subreddit without a warning.

**Please don’t ever feed the trolls.**
Downvote, report and move on.

- What moderators do and can’t do
- Message the moderators

---

**Sticky Posts**

- A list of all recent stickied posts.

---

*Figure A.4b. /r/worldnews – Example 1 (Page 2)*

*Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/worldnews/comments/efci1/"
Because he feels/thinks that having sex with a condom is like chewing gum with the wrap still on?

[-] crocodile7 2 points 5 years ago
So he’d chew gum with the half-opened wrap still on?

[-] stfudonny 1 point 5 years ago
This way some gum juice leaks out and you can taste it!

[-] kelm 15 points 5 years ago
It’s like saying that Emac is a bad text editor because RMS has poor hygiene. Sadly, many people are stupid enough to fall for that kind of nonsense.

[-] [deleted] 5 points 5 years ago
It’s like saying that Emac is a bad text editor because RMS has poor hygiene.

Actually, they’re related. Emac is horrendously complex, and RMS shows about as much interest in remedying that complexity as he does in taking showers.

[-] RabidRaccoon 2 points 5 years ago
Poor personal hygiene is a bad sign with programmers.

[-] crdcoconnor 4 points 5 years ago
It’s still a bad text editor. AND WHO KNOWS, maybe it is because of RMS’s questionable hygiene.

[-] easternuy 2 points 5 years ago
Exactly. How come nobody has denied this? Exactly.

[-] mthode 24 points 5 years ago
It’s like Clinton in the 90s. Good President, questionable personal life.

[-] nedja 20 points 5 years ago
With one stark difference. Clinton was an elected official, and his morals are an integral part of how Americans make their decisions. They felt like he was acting differently as president than as candidate. Assange, on the other hand, is just some guy who had sex with 2 people.

Figure A.4c. /r/worldnews – Example 1 (Page 3)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/worldnews/comments/efci1/
Figure A.5a. /r/worldnews – Example 2 (Page 1)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/worldnews/comments/d3tk1/
might want to stop, but if your partner keeps going, then it becomes rape.

Permalink embed parent

(Comment deleted or removed) [-] 5 years ago

[-] narwhalslut 1 point 5 years ago
I don't disagree, but this was a nationwide debate a couple years back after some big "cases" were in the news. I don't remember which magazine it was, but one of the big ones ran it as their main piece if I recall my DX research properly.

Permalink embed parent

[-] Sarahshahra 23 points 5 years ago
By yelling 'Surprise! Buttsecks!' and following through

Permalink embed parent

[-] randomb0y 2 points 5 years ago
But that's the best kind of buttsecks!

Permalink embed parent

[-] bkbreezy 3 points 5 years ago
And the best kind of surprise!

Permalink embed parent

[-] [deleted] 4 points 5 years ago
Mind if I come to your birthday party? I've got a birthday present for you.

Permalink embed parent

[-] bkbreezy 2 points 5 years ago
Me gusta.

Permalink embed parent

[-] LeadLicker 0 points 5 years ago
Ah, a variation on rodeo.

Permalink parent

[-] Bananageddon 35 points 5 years ago
No means no regardless of timing.

Permalink embed parent

[-] [deleted] 7 points 5 years ago
You don't know how tragically right you are. The US Supreme Court has held that consent can be withdrawn AFTER the completion of the act. If Assange and this woman did in fact have sex, it

---

**Worldnews Rules**

**Disallowed submissions**

- US internal news/US politics
- Editorialized titles
- Misleading titles
- Editorial, opinion, analysis
- Feature stories
- Non-English articles
- Images, videos or audio clips
- Petitions, advocacy, surveys
- All caps words in titles
- Blogspam (if stolen content/direct copy)
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---

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Figure A.5b. /r/worldnews – Example 2 (Page 2)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/worldnews/comments/d3tk1/
you’re having sex with someone and they tell you to stop, you fucking well have to stop, whatever they may have said 5 minutes before.

Figure A.5c. /r/worldnews – Example 2 (Page 3)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/worldnews/comments/d3tk1/
M: "Are you kidding? Why not?"
W: "I'm afraid I might get pregnant or something"
M: "But you said you were on the pill?"
W: "Well, it's not always so reliable... Yeah, I think we should stop."
M (frustrated): "ok..." (stops)

I'm not saying it happened that way, but I agree that how you happen to "imagine it" can make all the difference in a "withdrawn consent" rape case. If you imagine her screaming "STOP", "GET OFF ME" and while he grunts and pumps away for another 30 seconds then yeah, it may seem more like rape.

[-] TheEllnist 2 points 5 years ago
I'm not saying it happened that way, but I agree that how you happen to "imagine it" can make all the difference in a "withdrawn consent" rape case.

Definitely true, good point. I really want to imagine that if they threw the guy in jail, it was more definite than that, but counting on juries to be reasonable is often a losing proposition.

[-] prof_hobart 5 points 5 years ago
Really? When? (Not doubting you - genuinely interested).

[-] legatic 13 points 5 years ago
I don't know that the US Supreme Court has taken a look at this, but the California Supreme Court has.

In re John Z., 60 P. 3d 183 - Cal: Supreme Court 2003

EDIT #2: A woman can withdraw consent during the act and you have to stop as soon as you are physically able to. You can't have "a few extra seconds" to finish. I have never seen or heard anything that would indicate a woman can withdraw consent after the act is complete. That doesn't seem to make sense to me.

This seems to be withdrawal of consent during the act and the issue is if he continues anyway. It's still forward-looking (doing something after consent has been withdrawn), rather than backward-looking (prosecuting for an act done before consent was withdrawn).

Ah, you're correct. I went back and reread CruftRemover's post and I have to say that I disagree with that statement. I'm in law school and took criminal law last semester in which we covered consent,
From Section 4.2 - Positioning of Rationality

Figure A.6a. /r/TwoXChromosomes – Example 1 (Page 1)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/ehrws
You are right there are scarce details. But remember in this apparent rush to smear his accusers (which I really tried not to do. I don’t want to smear her at all) there is a definite large-scale rush to smear him too. And with the same lack of details and evidence. So, while it appears that some people are trying to defend him unfairly there is also a large establishment trying to attack him unfairly at the same time.

And, I think that Salon post is not well-written at all. It seems filled with way to much exaggeration and indignation. Just another opinion piece without facts, just outing an opposing opinion. Which is all fine and great, but doesn’t really have any more weight than any of the others.

I seriously doubt that. This happened in Sweden. Swedes don’t take one night stands seriously in that way. By the way, this is directly from the police interview with Assange:

Police: Is it true that she rejected your sexual invitations? Assange: Yes, but not in any significant way. Nothing that wouldn’t be normal.

The women who reported him weren’t sure if what happened to them was classified as rape by law or not, they went to the police to find out if it was. And then the prosecutor decided to start an investigation.

I stand by the evaluation of this that I did right after it happened. Assange went to Sweden and had sex with women, unaware that Swedish women expect a lot more respect from men than women in many other countries do, and unaware that the Swedish laws regarding sex crime are stricter than many other countries.

women, for women, or about women.

5. Images: No direct links to images, except on Image-Fest Friday (IFF). To post an image during the week, do so within a self-post and with some added context. See here for guidelines. Post all memes and rage comics to /r/TrollXChromosomes.

6. Fundraising: No links to fundraising pages, please. As a community, we’re not set up for screening each funding request.

Figure A.6b. /r/TwoXChromosomes – Example 1 (Page 2)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/ehrws
stands seriously in that way. By the way, this is directly from the police interview with Assange

Interesting analysis to say the least. I could also say that Swedes don’t take unprotected sex very serious either http://micpohling.wordpress.com/2007/11/07/durex-sex-survey-one-night-stand-and-unprotected-sex/

The women who reported him weren’t sure if what happened to them was classified as rape by law or not, they went to the police to find out if it was. And then the prosecutor decided to start an investigation.

The interesting part about this, they did not file a “formal” complaint, buy only seeking advice, bypassing the statue about a false claim. ie if they are lying they won’t be punished.

I stand by the evaluation of this that I did right after it happened. Assange went to Sweden and had sex with women, unaware that Swedish women expect a lot more respect from men than women in many other countries do, and unaware that the Swedish laws regarding sex crime are stricter than many other countries.

Interesting stand again.

Durex Global Sex survey? That’s marketing research. Be that as it may, it is true that young people don’t use enough protection. I don’t know the age of the women involved though.

The interesting part about this, they did not file a “formal” complaint, buy only seeking advice, bypassing the statue about a false claim. ie if they are lying they won’t be punished.

Falsely incriminating another person is punishable with up to 2 years in prison, regardless of who filed the charges.

Durex Global Sex survey? That’s marketing research. Be that as it may, it is true that young people don’t use enough protection. I don’t know the age of the women involved though.

Just curious why do you make the assumption that it’s only young people? I
didn't make the same assumption about one night stands.

Falsely incriminating another person is punishable with up to 2 years in prison, regardless of who filed the charges.

Not when you “seek advice” in this manner. The statements you use cannot be used against you. I’m open to being wrong, but I’m fairly certain this is true.

---

[-] [deleted] 1 point 5 years ago

Just curious why you make the assumption that it’s only young people?

Because I know of previous studies that have shown that young people don’t use enough protection. I’m sure it’s not only young people.

Not when you “seek advice” in this manner. The statements you use can not be used against you. I’m open to being wrong, but I’m fairly certain this is true.

Yes they can. In Sweden at least. I only know Swedish law on the matter.

It is called “false incrimination” and is defined as “to purposely give false information about another person (for example about criminal activity) to prosecutors, police or other government authority. Penalty: prison for max 2 years. Less severe: fines or prison up to 6 months.

In the US I think it would be called “obstruction of justice”.

---

[-] missymom 1 point 5 years ago

Because I know of previous studies that have shown that young people don’t use enough protection. I’m sure it’s not only young people.

While I’m not doubting you I think it was still an oversimplification and I’d also be curious to see if it was Swedish young people vs Swedish older people.

Yes they can. In Sweden at least. I only know Swedish law on the matter.

Citation? Everyone that I’ve looked up disagrees with you. “neither Årdin nor Wilén complained to the police but rather “sought advice”, a technique in Sweden enabling citizens to avoid just punishment for making false complaints “

That’s the kind of quote that I see, do you have any citation for that assertion?

---

[-] [deleted] 1 point 5 years ago

Yeah, my citation is the law. The reason you are reading stuff like that is because it is biased propaganda. There is no “technique in Sweden” to avoid punishment for false complaints. Lying the police is a crime, no matter under what circumstances you do it.

There are 2 crimes, “falsk angivelse” and “falsk tillvitelse”. Falsk angivelse is when you falsely report someone for a crime. That
would not be applicable in this case. False tillitelse is when you lie to the police about something relating to someone having committed a crime.

"7 § Whoever, otherwise than 6 § intends, among prosecutors, police or other authority falsely incriminates another person, claims something to be more severe than it is, or withholds information that would make a case less severe will if presented before court be sentenced for "false tillitelse" to prison for max 2 years, or if the crime is less severe, to fines or prison up to 6 months."

I think it's unfortunate that she is so quick to judge about a case she only has clearly biased, second hand information about. Even if every college student in th US keeps having sex with women after the condom broke and ignore women's requests for proper protection, that doesn't make it right. It may not be classified as rape, but there is other Swedish legislation that covers it. All sex acts that are forced upon another person but does not classify as rape are punishable as "sexual force" with up to 2 years in prison.

What I don't get is there are really 2 scenarios that can happen:

1. Condom breaks, and the woman says "hey can you put another one on?" Guy says, "No, I'd rather just keep going." And after a time and maybe and argument she says ok and he goes for it.

2. Condom breaks, and the woman says "hey can you put another one on?" Guy says, "No, I'd rather just keep going." She then replies, "Well then stop fucking me. We're done." She completely withdraws consent.

In case 1 I just can't really see where anything wrong happened. She would have preferred he wear a condom, but in the end she did actually give consent. Just asking for a condom and then not saying anything else when he doesn't put one on just isn't enough I think. That's relying on voodoo mind-reading. If after she asks for one and gets refused she can just withdraw consent completely in which case it's normal old already-covered-in-law rape.

Yeah the problem is that we don't know exactly what happened. What if he lied and said he hadn't had sex with anyone else and therefore she doesn't need to worry about disease? Then when the women talked to each other they found out he was lying? What if he systematically tries to lie and manipulate women to be able to have sex with them without protection? That would be the most complicated situation. And I'm not sure if it is punishable by law.

I doubt it. I mean, lying to get sex is not a crime. It can't be, because almost everyone would be guilty of it. Almost everyone edits in the beginning of a relationship even through sex. A woman might not tell a man she has a kid. A guy might tell a woman how many partners he's had before. All sorts of things that could have affected the
Figure A.7a. /r/TwoXChromosomes – Example 2 (Page 1)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/eqri8/
But there are so many people (e.g., bloggers) who think that believing either side is a duty and not believe one side is immoral. This backlash hit the same nail just from the other side: They say it is insulting to call the two women liars... but seem to forget that one could say the same thing about calling Assange a rapist.

**I'm sorry I'm really not buying their story. Condom or not.**

It seems like they both found out about each other and then schemed a story to land the guy in jail.

Where are other women who have been raped by Assange?

Will they be in the news soon?

---

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**I'm sorry I'm really not buying their story. Condom or not.**

It seems like they both found out about each other and then schemed a story to land the guy in jail.

Where are other women who have been raped by Assange?

Will they be in the news soon?
nobody following this case in the media has any way of knowing what happened and so they should reserve judgment on all parties.

[-] reeksohavoc 1 point 5 years ago
All I said was that I am not buying their story.
You show me where I said they shouldn’t be taken seriously.
I just don’t believe them.

[-] catamorphism [S] 2 points 5 years ago
Where are other women who have been raped by Assange?
They don’t want to come forward because they don’t want to have their names dragged through the mud for questioning the perfect character of a liberal hero. And I assure you I have a basis for saying that.

[-] reeksohavoc 2 points 5 years ago
And I assure you I have a basis for saying that.
Why should I believe you?

[-] catamorphism [S] 0 points 5 years ago
Why would you even ask that question? Is there anything I could say that would make you believe it?

[-] reeksohavoc 2 points 5 years ago
Because I need facts. Not your opinion.
Is there anything I could say that would make you believe it?
Show me some facts.

[-] poffin 8 points 5 years ago
What I don’t understand is why people feel the need to “take a side” before anything has been presented.
Even if someone is coerced into taking a side, I don’t understand why it’s better to believe the potential rapist and get it wrong (he’s proven guilty) instead of believing the potential rape survivor and get it wrong (the women made it up).

[-] [deleted] 9 points 5 years ago
Maybe it is because of the innocent until guilty system. Also there have been many

Figure A.7c. /r/TwoXChromosomes – Example 2 (Page 3)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/eqri8/
Sweden to reopen WikiLeaks rape case against Julian Assange: "There is reason to believe that a crime has been committed"

submitted 5 years ago by DougBoilvar
549 comments  share

does anyone else find it odd that it's being referred to as "the wikileaks rape case" as opposed to the assange rape case?

Yes, i noticed it. CNN is doing CIAs job again.
EDIT: CNN changed the title... But the damage is done, check how many other sites took their first title "Sweden to reopen WikiLeaks rape case"

To be fair - Wikileaks supporters (like much of Reddit) seem to conflate the two as well, which I think is a mistake.

Assange is running a wonderful organization that I feel is doing wonderful things, but he's a human, and far from infallible. If you can make it through the 11 pages, you should check out the article the New Yorker wrote on him a few months back. He's had an interesting and highly unconventional past.

If the allegations are true, and the specter of Assange's actions hurts the credibility of Wikileaks as a whole, we're as much to blame as the media for conflating Assange and Wikileaks into an inseparable whole.

Figure A.8a. /r/worldnews – Example 1 (Page 1)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/worldnews/comments/d84he/
Figure A.8b. /r/worldnews – Example 1 (Page 2)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/worldnews/comments/d84he/
I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Char, the sons of Aiur and the sons of queens unnamed will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood. I have a dream that they will rise up and defeat the Hybrids together.

[-] lolwutpear 7 points 5 years ago
So, you're against the mixing of the races?

[-] Delehal 4 points 5 years ago
Oh, shit. Can we just pretend I was being ironic on purpose?

[-] casual Observer 9 points 5 years ago
Yes, I noticed it. CNN is doing CIA's job again.

I think it's funny how everybody in this thread accuses the CIA without a shred of proof. I guess since it's the CIA no proof is necessary. Wake up sheeple!!!111

[-] wrtyr 6 points 5 years ago
Sometimes CIA is used as code for government snookery of any kind.

[-] CrazedWatchmaker 2 points 5 years ago
Clearly this is the work of the Ministry Of Silly Walks.

[-] otakucode 2 points 5 years ago
I think what the intel boobs are failing to realize is that Assange could take 5 minutes to step back and relinquish his figurehead positions and... they'd have nothing. Wikileaks would still continue to run just fine. It's a technical system, not a fucking political movement. Making the whole world think that Assange is worse than Hitler won't do a single thing to stop Wikileaks, or make anyone look the other way when the CIA/DIA/FBI/DOHS/NSA/etc/etc/etc decide to.

Figure A.8c. /r/worldnews – Example 1 (Page 3)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/worldnews/comments/d84he/
It’s not a technical warfare. It’s a war of the minds. Once wikileaks’ reputation has been tarnished, people will no longer look up to it as a reliable platform.
There have been many adversaries destroyed by US before and they are becoming exceedingly efficient at it.

I always wonder why people cite the report in the New Yorker as somehow containing troubling information about Assange. It portrays the actors as what they are -- humans. It may be because I have met some of the mentioned people in person, or because I know people who have a past similar to Assange’s concerning his activities as a hacker (as the media like to use the term), that I find none of it particularly surprising.

What counts however is that they are doing what they promise to their sources: Maximise the impact of the material and defend it against political and legal attacks. They have to do it; the whole model bases around their sources’ trust.

If you want to attack Assange’s past in connection with this case, I find some of the entries in his former blog (Ctrl-F “coffee addict”) a lot more peculiar, assuming that it is actually his and that they aren’t meant as a joke of some kind. But even that serves as anecdotal evidence at best.

Why not just wait and see how the whole thing turns out?

99.99% of cases the logical possibility would prove to be true and the conspiracy theory is wrong, but in this case its highly unlikely that the charges are true.

Consider that rape is a sort of crime that would not really be committed by a man of wealthy stature and celebrity status, its far more likely for him to just pick up whatever girl he wants. Rape is a kind of crime that desperate people would commit in a time of crisis or drug use.

It’s also factual that the US government, as well as the government of Sweden and Australia and more all have declared him an enemy and are trying their best to find something to arrest him for. Assange knows this and would not likely be careless enough to commit a crime with such a trail that leads directly to him. These governments are doing their best to find a reason to arrest this man, so they have to make a reason.

You are exactly right, liek any human he is absolutely capable of wrong doing, but in this case, its clear that that is not what is not what is happening here. And suppose Assange raped someone, why would this effect the credibility of the documents his website exposed?
"Consider that rape is a sort of crime that would not really be committed by a man of wealthy stature and celebrity status, its far more likely for him to just pick up whatever girl he wants. Rape is a kind of crime that desperate people would commit in a time of crisis or drug use."

Your assumptions about rape are interesting, if not particularly well founded. Rich and powerful people commit rape, too, though they may not be punished for it as often as the poor and powerless.

[-] dby 1 point 5 years ago

lol, I make minimum wage kid. Im just sayin people with money can buy sex, they dont have to force it.

[-] retrac 42 points 5 years ago

It’s just like the Mark Hurd case being referred to as the 'HP sex scandal'. Were the CIA involved in that?

[-] classactdynomo 20 points 5 years ago

It’s not that CNN or other news organizations are in collusion with the CIA. Rather, what you have pointed it is an indication of how lazy the media people really are and how much they are driven by profit generated by sensational headlines. It is not hard to smear someone in the media simply by creating false allegations and letting nature (the media) take its course.

[-] Undine 11 points 5 years ago

It also indicates how lazy the viewers/listeners are. Why stick around and find out who this Assange guy is? I’ve never heard of him so I’ll change the channel...

[-] nixonrichard 8 points 5 years ago

To be fair, thousands of rapes happen every day. They only make international news when there’s a very good reason. It is that reason, and not the rape itself, that makes the story worthy of international news.

[-] genericdave 2 points 5 years ago

I’m too lazy to read your comment so I’m just gonna read it as:

To be fair, Wikileaks rapes thousands every day.

What else is on?

load more comments (1 reply)

[-] SloanRanger 2 points 5 years ago

I agree with your sentiments. It’s far more likely that they’re pandering to the perceived ignorance of their viewers whom they assume will be more likely to have heard of Wikileaks than Julian Assange. Much as reddit loves to eat this stuff up, not everything the media does is part of some massive conspiracy.

Figure A.8e. /r/worldnews – Example 1 (Page 5)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/worldnews/comments/d84he/
This is an archived post. You won't be able to vote or comment.

Julian Assange police investigator
a friend of sex assault accuser (guardian.co.uk)
submitted 5 years ago by lookey
351 comments share

top 200 comments show all 351
sorted by: best

[-] [deleted] 72 points 5 years ago
This thing's like an onion: the more layers you peel away, the more it stinks.

permilink embed

[-] ddr 53 points 5 years ago
the more layers you peel away, the more it makes you want to cry.

IMO

permilink embed parent

[-] jones2000 22 points 5 years ago
It's like The Onion. The more layers you peel away, the less funny it gets.

permilink embed parent

[-] skotia 8 points 5 years ago
It's like The Onion. The more layers you peel away, the more reality sets in.

permilink embed parent

[-] vanostan 10 points 5 years ago
I'm not sure onions behave that way.

permilink embed parent

[-] test_alpha 1 point 5 years ago
I'm assuming "onion" is metaphorical for "A ball of turds formed in layers with worse smelling turds inside".

permilink embed parent

[-] c0pypastry 2 points 5 years ago
so like a turducken made only of shit?

permilink embed parent

[-] rubalyat1983 6 points 5 years ago

Figure A.9a. /r/worldnews – Example 2 (Page 1)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/worldnews/comments/g164g/
more nuance to it. As I have heard the story about the two women: Two women have sex with Julian Assange. Against their will they have unprotected sex. In one case because the condom broke. The two women, who know each other, discover that they have both had sex with Julian. As they realise that Julian is a guy who probably "sleeps around" all over the world (personally I think this is a well founded assumption), they want him to test for STDs particularly HIV. They can not take the tests themselves, because incubation period is long.

Julian refuses to take the test. And so the two women turn to the police to force him. The police realizes that having unprotected sex with someone against their will is a crime, and so the investigation begins...

Yes well incubation period of HIV usually lasts between two to four weeks. They can and should take the tests themselves if that’s the concern.

Yes, I’m sure they have done so by now. This did not turn out quite as they had expected I suppose. My point is, I find this story to be rather trustworthy. And I think we should stop giving these people such a hard time. I can see why the went to the police, they were scared.

This sounds like the most probable explanation so far.

I love Wikileaks and what Assange is doing but this is not how we should be conducting investigations of sex assault.

We discredit them in court first then we ridicule them for disgracing rape victims.

Julian is innocent until proven guilty so we shouldn’t feel guilty in at least hearing them out because listening to them doesn’t make him guilty.

If this charge was politically motivated the goal is to smear Assange’s reputation to try to discredit all his other work. That is what people in politics do when they don’t like their dirty laundry aired or mass democracy movements threatening their fragile seats of power.

Or to get him back to Sweden so the US can extradite him.

If the US didn’t extradite him when he was in custody in the UK what makes you think they’d do that when he was in Sweden? The US has a stronger extradition treaty with the former than the latter.
Well it would make sense that they know what they’re talking about but if they read Article 28, Subsection 4 of the European Arrest Warrant they would see they are wrong.

There’s a difference between stated law and how it is enforced. Sweden has proven to be the US’s bitch in past extradition instances.

Listen/watch to the interviews of the lawyers and Glenn Greenwald by Democracy Now, it’s information dense and can explain it better than I can ATM. And read Glenn Greenwald’s columns on salon.com.

It benefits Assange to make it look political even if it’s not because it draws into question the legitimacy of the rape claims. There’s nothing to suggest that Sweden will violate international law and extradite Assange to the US and people claiming otherwise are simply speculating.

There is strong support for Assange among the British public, who are an unruly lot and can make their government pretty uncomfortable if they do something this unpopular.

Sweden is a tiny country in terms of number of people, and will very likely do what the US wants. They have already taken the initiative in issuing a warrant over something that would not merit a court case in most other western countries.

You just blew some peoples’ minds.

I have the paper-version copy of non tabloid paper "DN" in hand right now; they followed up with their own investigation and got a statement from police officials who say that the officer in question was only in charge of the initial hearing of the woman he/she was NOT acquainted with, and has been disconnected for the case after that.

Discrediting a rape victim is also quite common. So we should be really careful who we accuse of what. We shouldn’t let Assange be discredited, until his guilt is proven. But we shouldn’t discredit the possible victim either.

Especially in a case like this. Assuming the accusations are true, it is only logical, that the victim would go to someone she knows, instead of some random police officer.

Figure A.9c. /r/worldnews – Example 2 (Page 8 – pages skipped for brevity)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/worldnews/comments/g164g/
Assuming the accusations are true, it is only logical, that the victim would go to someone she knows, instead of some random police officer.

Sure - but if that prosecutor is even vaguely professional they will be aware of the need to create a perception that justice is being served. For that prosecutor to then be commenting on the victim’s blog etc creates the wrong perception.

So the so-called friend here is potentially letting down the victim by creating conditions in which the perception of bias is now present.

You’re comment is exactly right. But that doesn’t change my point. Right now it’s all speculative pre-trial bullshit.

Lessons of politically motivated smear campaigns are all learned in hindsight. A lessoned learned from hindsight may have some predictive ability but that doesn’t doesn’t make the prediction any less of a gamble.

Quantum mechanics can be used to predict that event A=99%B + 0.5% C + 0.5% D, and you’ll see after 1000 A’s you’re left with 990B’s, 5 C’s, and 5 D’s. But if you only do 1 A, you really can’t say at all what the outcome will be at all.

Just because smear campaigns sometimes to turn out to be bullshit doesn’t mean we can discredit these women’s claim’s. For now.

Guilty or not the charge is NOT rape. So they are not rape victims.

"If" it was politically motivated? Has there ever been a clearer case of abuse of power?

I have no idea what your subject is. Who are we supposedly discrediting?
Appendix B.

Examples from Chapter 5

From Section 5.2 - Positioning of Equality Before the Change to Default

Figure B.1a. Discussion Threads (Pre-Default) – Example 1 (Page 1)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/24a0mh/
in. Take it up with your family member because my charge nurses will back me up 100% for refusing to let them come in. I've had people yell at me about shit like this. Bitch, gtf. IDGAF about you, I'm here to help these people heal.

[-] gogogadgetpants_ 10 points 2 years ago
I love you so much.

[-] [deleted] 16 points 2 years ago
Haha well, I take my patients request seriously! It fucking sucks being stuck in a hospital, let alone ICU so I try to make it less of a crappy experience. And family dynamics are huge when someone is in ICU! Still, if you're not on my list, you're not getting in. I'm a bitch and an ex jail nurse, I know how to be mean. Haha

[-] indi50 210 points 2 years ago
I keep feeling like there is more to the story. Where are the comments from the nurse(s) who let the guy in? This is the daughter of the chief nursing officer of the hospital...and against ICU rules they let in a non family member....a teen who was specifically banned from the room by the mother. To see a patient who was in the ICU for an infection. Who was caught in the bed with her (who would think anyone would be up for sex while in the ICU?) and then still not removed from the room?

And why would the guy think he could get away with having sex in that situation?

Was there a nurse that didn't like the mother (and/or daughter) and let the kid in? There are just so many levels of wrong here it's hard to imagine it was as simple as a mistake on the nurses' part.

[-] 2Weird2Live2Rare2Die 108 points 2 years ago
My ma's a nurse. I hear stories all the time. You would not believe the stunning degree of apathy some people in the profession have. The other day one of my mum's coworkers made the completely serious argument that she women, for women, or about women.

5. Images: No direct links to images, except on Image-Fest Friday (IFF). To post an image during the week, do so within a self-post and with some added context. See here for guidelines. Post all memes and rage comics to /r/TrollXChromosomes.

6. Fundraising: No links to fundraising pages, please. As a community, we're not set up for screening each funding request.

Figure B.1b. Discussion Threads (Pre-Default) – Example 1 (Page 2)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/24a0mh/
shouldn't have to bother bringing a patient life-sustaining medication because "She's 84 years old, so it's not like it makes much difference." I stress that this was not some extraordinary life-saving measure like CPR, this was a human being arguing in earnest that another human being should be allowed to die just so that she wouldn't have to get off her ass long enough to deliver a paper cup full of pills.

Good nurses are amazing people. Bad nurses are scary as shit. I'm sad to say I encounter more bad ones on a daily basis, because I never have to speak to the good ones.

This actually made me think of Scrubs. Carla would have their ass out of here in no time.

My grandpa died last month in the hospital. Before he died, he became incontinent. A nurse yelled at him in front of my aunt for not using his bedpan. Like he wasn't ashamed enough. Another nurse refused to wipe him frequently because "I can't do it every three minutes", and they all let him develop massive bedsores because "He doesn't seem to like to turn over."

I'd rather die than let nurses take care of me after the way he was treated. I've lost all trust in nurses.

I'm sorry but my mother is a nurse and would be absolutely livid at the lack of care your grandfather received. She has had numerous letters and cards of thanks for her caring nature and she takes her job very seriously. Please don't discredit all nurses because of some negligent bitchy ones. There are lots of them who want to help and heal, and there are a few who are complete scumbags.
Figure B.2a. Discussion Threads (Pre-Default) – Example 2 (Page 1)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/24ezgt
Brown needs to do better. I mean – society, in general, needs to do better.

Perhaps, but she needed to have reported him to the police.

[-] concerned_student [S] 3 points 2 years ago
Actually he was found culpable by the university for 4 violations of its Student Code of Conduct, which grants the university the right to enforce separation.

Edited to say that all universities have a disciplinary process much like Brown’s, and all universities reserve the right to hand down punishments including suspension and expulsion. You should check out the petition for the actual demands the students are making, which all fall within the university’s jurisdiction ;)

[-] not_just_amwac 6 points 2 years ago
Actually he was found culpable by the university for 4 violations of its Student Code of Conduct, which grants the university the right to enforce separation.

And he was for a year.

If she wanted more, she should have gone to the police.

[-] concerned_student [S] 3 points 2 years ago
Hmmm… if strangling and raping another student doesn’t justify expulsion, what do you think?

[-] respsps 9 points 2 years ago
I’m not sure what’s so hard to understand here.

Raping is grounds for expulsion. But the university cannot do anything to him on the grounds of rape because he has not been found guilty of rape.

[-] concerned_student [S] 2 points 2 years ago
lol ok.

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...and there's my proof that I've been too long out of school. You're absolutely right, expulsion would be far more appropriate.

Since when does an university has any jurisdiction to judge rape cases. His record is clean of any crimes. They can of course declare him guilty of breaking some code of conduct, but not guilty of any criminal matter. This is why they're wise not to prescribe any stronger punishment. They'd be opening themselves to a pretty big law suit. They can't base a decision on a supposed rape unless they can prove it.

There are a fuckton of reasons why someone wouldn't go to the police for their sexual assault. A million very valid and understandable reasons. A rape case in trial oftentimes becomes more of an interrogation of the victim, not the rapist. Their sexual life becomes "evidence", their sexual history with someone becomes "evidence", their gender becomes "evidence".

True. But you can't expect people to be treated as guilty when they've not been found guilty.

Those are totally valid reasons, but, in society, you can't expect the general public or large institutions and organizations that are not specialized in criminal investigations to make judgments of criminal guilt and hand down punishments appropriate for those crimes.

I agree it'd be good for the university to hand down harsher punishments for people they know are guilty of serious crimes, but if they're just kinda, pretty sure, they kind of have to balance their certainty of guilt of certain crimes against the seriousness of the crimes.

If you're only 60% sure someone committed blah, blah violation, you're more likely to punish them less harshly than if you were 99% sure.

That was not the point of my comment. The point of my comment is why people do not report their rapes. The point of my comment was the problem is how people who accuse others of rape are treated.

Figure B.2c. Discussion Threads (Pre-Default) – Example 2 (Page 5 – pages skipped for brevity)

Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/24ezgt
From Section 5.3 - Positioning of Rationality Before the Change to Default

So I wore barely any makeup to work for once... A positive rant. - TwoXChromosomes

This is unusual for me, usually I wear a full face (I'm a trained makeup artist so no cakey-ness here) as I'm very self-conscious about my deep set (see: sunken) eyes and my still healing acne. Anyway, today was just one of those don't-give-a-fuck days, so I decided to just fill my brows and wear a little mascara, and I rocked up to work despite feeling completely fresh. But the exciting part of the story is that my major work crush comes in, and the first thing he says is not 'are you okay? You look really sick' (which is the usual no makeup comment), but 'hey, you look good without makeup on.' Such a little thing to say and it completely made my week, I went from feeling ugly and unkempt to beautiful. As well as this, I usually tend to romantically associate with men who make me feel so down about myself, and even if it is just someone that I have a thing for, to hear it from him was so refreshing and such a new experience. I'm still smiling like an idiot.

Figure B.3a. Support Threads (Pre-Default) – Example 1 (Page 1)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/24czym/
I (24F) never wear make up either (exceptions for things like weddings). Just don’t like to.
Just keep doing your own thing. It should never be a requirement that anyone wear or not wear makeup. It’s a choice we all have the right to make.

Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/24czym/

5. **Images:** No direct links to images, except on Image-Fest Friday (IFF). To post an image during the week, do so within a self-post and with some added context. See [here for guidelines.](https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes)

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**Related subreddits**

- /r/Women
- /r/TheGirlSurvivalGuide
- /r/AskWomen
- /r/AllWomanhood
- /r/Fashion
- /r/femalefashionadvice
- /r/ABraThatFits
- /r/AllFashion
- /r/MakeupAddiction
- /r/RedditLacqueristas
- /r/FancyFollicles
- /r/AllBeauty
- STEM Ladies
- /r/AllCareers
- /r/GirlGamers
- /r/TrollXChromosomes
- /r/EntWives
- /r/Allhobbies&Fun
- /r/BodyAcceptance
- /r/xfitness
- /r/PCOS
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- All Relationships
- /r/feminism
- All Activism
- /r/actuallesbians
- All LGBT
- /r/birthcontrol
- Abortion Support
- /r/childfree
- All Birth Control
- /r/BabyBumps
- /r/TryingForABaby
- /r/Mommit
- All Parenthood
- /r/LadyBoners
- /r/ladyladyboners

**All Related Subreddits & Resources**

- Assault & DV Resources
- #twoxchromosomes on Snooonet

Thanks to /u/jaxspider for the new logo!

created by Basically Maz Kanata
That isn’t what the comment I replied to was about. Do you work in a field where it’s normal for all women to wear a full face of makeup?

I work in academia, so when I put more effort into my appearance it’s noted since my peers don’t dress up or wear much makeup on a daily basis. If they do it’s because something professional is going on that day. If I notice someone’s (guy or girl) put more effort into their appearance than usual, I will always compliment them.

My compliment does draw attention to the makeup or clothes, that’s true, but I think it’s more positive than directly asking why. I’ve been asked directly why I dress this way or that way and it does hurt sometimes, but I’ve learned to brush it off as people get more used to my appearance, especially when it stands out from the norm. Going against the grain is difficult, no matter what the norm for your environment is.

Do you work in a field where it’s normal for all women to wear a full face of makeup?

I live in a world where it’s normal. I work in the non-profit field, not the cosmetics or fashion industry.

I see. In academia, it’s the complete opposite. Daily full face makeup is extremely rare.

Weird… when I was in grad school, most women wore cosmetics daily. Not sure what you mean by “full-face;” when I do wear makeup, it’s just some eyeliner and shadow and some lipstick. I had the HR director recommend against hiring me because even though I was in a suit, hose, and pumps, with my hair tidy, I wasn’t wearing any makeup, and that by itself was unprofessional.

So yeah, we live in a world where wearing makeup is normalized, and not wearing any makeup is weird. And I’m acutely aware of that because I almost never wear makeup. And when people comment like “Oh, look at

Figure B.3c. Support Threads (Pre-Default) – Example 1 (Page 3)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/24czym/
Ladies, today we put to rest two brave souls lost to the Red War. To lose one is hard enough, but two in one day is simply tragic.

We put to rest the blue and green Paisley Hanes, a younger lass who always was there to not throw a party line when the Thong Unit had been exhausted. The enemy came upon us swiftly and in the middle of a final. There was nothing she could do. She fought bravely.

We also honor Watermelon Pink Hanes, with her colorful blue and green band. Getting on in her years and a little loose in the elastic, she should have been retired months ago. But alas, yet another surprise attack from the enemy brought her down. We had underestimated the heaviness of the onslaught, our battlements did not hold. She held off several waves, sacrificing herself in her ever-devoted mission to keep safe The Pants.

Ladies, a moment of silence for our fallen soldiers.

**Figure B.4a. Support Threads (Pre-Default) – Example 2 (Page 1)**

Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/24c4z4/
Support Threads (Pre-Default) – Example 2

Figure B.4b. Support Threads (Pre-Default) – Example 2 (Page 5 – pages skipped for brevity)

Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/24c4z4/
out stains.

[-] Chieri 96 points 2 years ago
And in my case, black sheets were gotten as a christmas present. So many sheet casualties. :O Got to the point where I was afraid to sleep while on, because sleeping meant somehow that red bastard would find a way to leak no matter what I did.

[-] Xani 27 points 2 years ago
Cut the sides off of a nappy and wear it like a giant pad. Sounds bizarre but it was the only way I could save my sheets when I first got my period :p

[-] Chieri 63 points 2 years ago
You know those thick long overnight ones Always has? On the normal/heavy days I wear two of those suckers at the same time to get more coverage. It's beyond awful. Have considered trying out a cup ,but I'm wary about it because I can hardly tampon so I'm uncertain a cup would agree with me.

I swear it either finds a way to spill out way up front or I'll end up with this weird random leak up towards the top of my butt out of nowhere. I just can't win.

[-] Turtle_Blues 69 points 2 years ago
Just wanted to say I love the phrase "I can hardly tampon".

Also, I used to be in much the same boat as you (it's calmed down a bit in the last few years) and I also want to try a cup, but haven't done so yet. I hear they're a lot different to tampons, much more malleable and so forth, so maybe it would work out well. Not sure how great they are for those of us with heavier flows, or experience a Week of the Clots.

Represent. :(

[-] Chieri 30 points 2 years ago
Seriously, I'm 2 years shy of 30 and I still do this weird squimy thing when I walk with a tampon in. I just can't. I just don't have it in me...that wasn't intentional I swear.

I'm not comfortable throwing out the money for a cup just to find I can't hack it. What would I do with it then?? At least with tampons I have a mom and two sisters to hand the box to, but with a cup??

Preach. :(

[-] bananasantos 12 points 2 years ago
Hey - don't give up - I just got on board with tampons in the last year or so and I'm 29. No longer do I get pain on the inside creases of my thighs from terrible pad wings sticking to me!

I always did the wiggle thing too. I soon learned that for me I need to put 1 leg WAY up in order to get my needed angle and try to push it in really deep. You need to give it some time for the blood to begin to get soaked up by the tampon - dear, please do not pull out freshly inserted

Figure B.4c. Support Threads (Pre-Default) – Example 2 (Page 6)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/24c4z4/
From Section 5.4 - Positioning of Equality After the Change to Default

Discussion Threads (Post-Default) – Example 1

Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/250e5k/
enforced though. The only time you even hear about it is when women put a shine on it, and men aren’t supposed to do that either, because it’s faddish and standoutish and against the concept of uniformity.

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Discussion Threads

- **Example 1**

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Figure B.5b. Discussion Threads (Post-Default) – Example 1 (Page 2)

Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/250e5k/
their heads. I think you missed that.

permalink embed parent

[-] ClintHammer 3 points 2 years ago
It’s easy to miss sarcasm as there is a LOT of OMG WHATEVER CISHE WHITE MALE SHITLORD MADE THIS RULING HATES BLACK PEOPLE AND WOMEN!!!! going on in this thread from civilians who don’t get it.

Meanwhile a black female was the head of the committee who made this very very minor change that you couldn’t have cornrows over a certain width and twists are now prohibited. And seriously I promise you the reason is so women don’t put a shine on it.

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[-] TyrannyMcBane 3 points 2 years ago
No, I got you. Military family here. Preparing to be told to shave or at least seriously cut and color my own hair. You are representing the uniform, not the other way around.

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[-] wyvern02 7 points 2 years ago
This is all silly. Dreadlocks have always been banned, they just updated it. Braids and cornrows are still allowed. The only thing new that is banned are twists.


Page 18 for those who want to look for themselves.

permalink embed

[-] TheRealAethwynn 1 point 2 years ago
I read that last night (whole thing looking for JUST the bit about hairstyles) but I still had a question about it. The last time any of it was updated was March of this year. Has it been changed since then, or is this the changes that people are (just now) voicing an opinion about? I can’t find an answer anywhere.

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[-] wyvern02 1 point 2 years ago
People are complaining about the changes made in March. No changes have been made.
Figure B.6a. Discussion Threads (Post-Default) – Example 2 (Page 1)

Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/25bqy3/
What is the male equivalent? Since TwoX is now default, and there will be men viewing this, I want to know if you ever feel threatened or in danger when walking outside.

[-] frocktopuss 66 points 2 years ago*

Yes. Absolutely.

I want to point out I don't think it's "the same thing" or even worth a side by side comparison. But I think I, and I assume a lot of other men, have experienced something, though not the same fear, is not entirely different and probably born of the same problem.

I'll say that in day to day life, I'm identified as a heterosexual man. And for the vast majority of interactions that's fine. I was able to marry the woman I love without governmental or religious interference. For all of the issues with gender and identity I DO have, I understood early on I was pretty happy with body I was born with. It's more complicated than that, I'm in my mid-30's and I'm finally getting comfortable saying it's more complicated than that, but I do understand I enjoy quite a bit of privilege and anonymity from those identities.

But when I was younger, I'd say from when I was old enough to be aware of it to my mid-twenties, I was stopped, and harassed, and threatened regularly enough to be wary of it whenever I went outside. I too learned that best response was indifference, even when someone punches you hard across the jaw... If you just stare back, maybe they'll get bored after another punch. I had stopped being polite and friendly with people on the street after more than once someone who'd asked for directions, followed it up with "you're a faggot." In my late teens my hair was long, I'd gotten skinny, and also got called a (without any irony or sarcasm) "dyke" more than once. Sometimes, the harassers were women. I was cornered on the play ground by some girls a few years older and berated with an onslaught of sexual questions I didn't know the answer to (I've since wondered what harassment they endured to produce such behavior).

I know you can dismiss these things as people just trying to get a rise out of a young man. All I can

women, for women, or about women. [more]

5. Images: No direct links to images, except on Image-Fest Friday (IFF). To post an image during the week, do so within a self-post and with some added context. See here for guidelines. Post all memes and rage comics to r/TrollXChromosomes.

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Figure B.6b. Discussion Threads (Post-Default) – Example 2 (Page 2)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/25bqy3/
say is, I've been teased, and I know the difference. It happened enough, and with enough convincing menace and malice, that yes, I was afraid to walk alone, to even drive alone, to be alone.

And, this is the part the I'm still ashamed to admit, yeah, I was also afraid of rape. I'd managed to talk (or not-talk) my way out of most of my encounters. I've never really been beat up, the few times it escalated to physical attacks I just stared back and they gave up. I come for a "safe" town, a loving home, and I've never been abused. But after all the random harassment, not only did anything seem possible... everything seemed possible.

Slow cars made my heart race. There's the (racist) joke about crossing the street to avoid certain types of people... I'd go out of my way to avoid walking past ANYONE I didn't recognize or perceived as any sort of threat (consoling myself that prejudging EVERYONE was better somehow than prejudging anyone).

As I got older, taller, and bulkier, I got a little more confident. I'd gotten big (fat) enough that being invisible didn't work anymore, so I tried to look as angry and don't-fuck-with-me-fed-up enough that people wouldn't gamble on whether or not they should have fun at my expense.

Is it as bad as it use to be? No. I got on anti-anxiety medicine, which helped a lot. I got older and more comfortable with who I was. I can go out in public reasonably comfortably. But I don't go walking alone. It's still ingrained somewhere that I'm not allowed to do that.

There's still a lot of shame involved. I'm married, and when I register a threat there's this sinking feeling of "well, I sure hope nothing happens, because now we're both screwed." Would I do everything in my power to keep my partner safe, just like I know she'd do everything in her power to keep me safe? Of course. But the sum of our strength is "not very much" and I still mostly rely on being tallish, bigish, and surlyish enough to at least evoke the idea that maybe I could do something (but I know I can't).

And I resent it. I resent the HELL out of it. I resent the hell out of the beard I keep because underneath my face is flabby and fleshy and childish. I resent it because the "obvious" answer is

**Figure B.6c. Discussion Threads (Post-Default) – Example 2 (Page 3)**
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/25bqy3/
to get in shape and learn to defend myself but I’ve never been interested in physical strength or hurting people. I resent ever being made to feel inadequate because I use to be thin (sexy), and because I use to have long, nice (beautiful, shameful) hair. I resent being bullied for being emotional and empathetic, and still seeing the echoes of those prejudices in my adult life.

For me, a lot of this is tied up in also growing up a nerd. But they’re inseparable from my point of view. I’ve tried (poorly) to express in this in the past and been told my experiences are “statistically insignificant” compared to the harassment of women. Again, I don’t equate the two at all, but I think that’s completely false.

Misogyny, in my experience, is not only hostility toward women, but hostility toward anything “unmasculine.” I know it’s not the first thing anyone thinks of when they think about misogyny, or, in turn, feminism, when there are so many more real, dire problems that need to be address urgently... but part of gender equality is reassessing all those thing we view as “masculine” or “feminine” traits and not evaluating them as negative regardless of the gender they’re applied to or expressed by.

Again, to disclaim this as much as possible, I’m not at all trying to say that this type of social fear is the same for men as it is for women. Only that I personally believe that a similar anxiety DOES exist for men, and is probably caused by many of the same problems.

I hope this makes sense, it’s the first time I’ve really tried to express most of it.

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[deleted] 39 points 2 years ago

Misogyny, in my experience, is not only hostility toward women, but hostility toward anything “unmasculine.” I know it’s not the first thing anyone thinks of when they think about misogyny, or, in turn, feminism, when there are so many more real, dire problems that need to be address urgently... but part of gender equality is reassessing all those thing we view as “masculine” or “feminine” traits and not evaluating them as negative regardless of the gender they’re applied to or expressed by.

Oh brother, have you hit the nail on the head! That’s what feminism is about!!! Change how we perceive femininity and masculinity and create ways of referring to gender in neutral ways without automatically branding something good or bad.

You have personally face the problem of maintaining a strict masculine and feminine dichotomy. I am sorry. You have realized that no one wins when we play that old

Figure B.6d. Discussion Threads (Post-Default) – Example 2 (Page 4)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/25bqy3/
antiquated caveman game, but I imagine that it's hard to change the game when it's been played for so long, and so many have enjoyed the benefits of its rules.

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[-] Basically Leslie Knope sistersunbeam 55 points 2 years ago
Thank you so much for sharing. It sounds to me like the reasons you were harassed on the street as a kid are definitely related to the reasons many women are harassed on the street -- masculinity is "good" and (perceived) femininity is "bad."

Misogyny, in my experience, is not only hostility toward women, but hostility toward anything "unmasculine." I know it's not the first thing anyone thinks of when they think about misogyny, or, in turn, feminism, when there are so many more real, dire problems that need to be addressed urgently... but part of gender equality is reassessing all those things we view as "masculine" or "feminine" traits and not evaluating them as negative regardless of the gender they're applied to or expressed by.

This is exactly what I tell my guy friends/acquaintances when they scoff at the idea of the patriarchy -- it makes life shittier for everyone.

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load more comments (1 reply)

[-] [deleted] 9 points 2 years ago

What is the male equivalent? Since TwoX is now default, and there will be men viewing this, I want to know if you ever feel threatened or in danger when walking outside.

I lived in one of the shittiest neighborhoods in one of the most violent cities in the developed world and I never really felt safe walking around. I always tried to avoid groups of people etc, and I've seen my fair share of violence. Even then I was usually safe from being harassed if I didn't look at someone the wrong way (or at all), it was probably way worse if you were a female. I totally sympathize with the female perspective.

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[*] [deleted] 2 years ago (3 children)

[-] LiveMic 20 points 2 years ago

I want to know if you ever feel threatened or in danger when walking outside.

Not exactly threatened but very definitely harassed when I was younger. When I was 18 I'd walk home from high school which took about an hour.

People would honk and scream all kinds of nonsense at me as they drove by. "BALLS, BITCH!!! HAHAHAHA" is one that stands out in my memory.

Once someone was hiding in some hedges and giggling at me. You can't make this shit up, I mean what the fuck.

I guess I was young and baby faced so I made a tempting target to try and annoy to death. 10 years later I'm bigger and I have a big beard which I'm told makes me somewhat scary looking. A male coworker was telling me what a great guy I was and he didn't know why one of our female coworkers wasn't all over me. Then he paused for a moment and told me the beard was a bit much, though. He said "you look like you could murder someone and then just go eat dinner."

Aside from people just not being aggressive towards me anymore I think I have noticed fear in an instance or two. I was restless a while ago so I decided to go for a walk at three in the morning. A car came to an intersection just as I walked up to it also and instead of stopping at

Figure B.6e  Discussion Threads (Post-Default) – Example 2 (Page 5)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/25bqy3/
the stop sign they blew right through it. Presumably they didn’t want big-scary-beard-man near their car in the dead of night.
I think I prefer it this way. People like me a lot once they get to know me and having people steer clear in public is preferable to "BALLS, BITCH!!! HAHAAHAHA"
It’s probably worth noting that I mostly stick to the suburbs and various other safe areas. I don’t venture into urban centers at all that often so maybe it would be different if I did.

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[-] ed1b 5 points 2 years ago*

What is the male equivalent? Since TwoX is now default, and there will be men viewing this, I want to know if you ever feel threatened or in danger when walking outside.

Yes, but I’m sure nowhere near as much.

I’m 6’ and 148 lbs. Growing up let’s just say I was a toothpick. As a genX-er, I was definitely outside the mainstream as far as style goes, so growing up I would often (from my perspective, I think this happened far less for me than for the average female) have dudes in cars yell “fag!” or “Hey faggot!” at me while walking down the street...and yep, you do feel threatened. I know how quickly a pack mentality can take over, and you have to ask yourself when that’s happening if the pickup truck full of dudes are content just yelling as they drive past, or are they gonna pull around and go one step further?

I’ve also spent plenty of time in Detroit at night, and have been rolled there by a couple of dudes, possibly at gunpoint (kept my eyes down). I know several people who’ve had guns pulled on them there, both male and female. This kind of fear had nothing do do with gender. I’ve felt fear many times walking in that city at night.

Finally, my real gendered creeper story shares quite a few traits with a lot of the worst experiences I’ve heard from female friends of mine. It’s kind of long but I’ll throw it down.

I used to live just outside of Boston in Cambridge MA, between Harvard and MIT. This was the nineties, and basically after high school, myself and my 6 best friends decided to all head to the East Coast and rent a house together. Time of our lives, and tons of great stories from those 2-3 years.

Anyway, one day I was for the bus, and this dude smiles and says hi. Well dressed African American looking man with what sounds to be a tiny bit of an accent from somewhere. I say Hi back and he goes on to tell me that he’s here meeting a friend. He doesn’t actually know the guy that well because he’s new to this area, but he’s trying to meet people. “Oh that’s cool, welcome blah blah blah” I respond, being a generally nice and inquisitive guy. So this guy tells me his name (Jon), and keeps chatting. Let me pause right now to tell you that Jon was fucking charismatic. Dude had the gift of the gab, and before I left he asks for my number and maybe we can meet up in a group for dinner with some of his new friends. I’m amiable but not stupid, and sensing zero creepiness, I still give him fake digits and move on.

Sorry Jon, but if I’m giving your number out on the street, it’s gonna be to that cute girl at the art supply shop a block down.

So I go home and while hanging out with my roommates, I mention this dude. Roomate_1 stops me and says “Dude. Hold on. Was he black, in nice pants and button down shirt, and his name was Jon?” I confirm and he proceeds to tell me about how Jon used the exact same lines on him. At the same time, one of my other roomates in the room says “Holy shit, I ran into the same guy!”.

Turns out that after living here only a few months, Jon had attempted to get the numbers of 5 of my 7 roommates using the same pickup lines.

Figure B.6f. Discussion Threads (Post-Default) – Example 2 (Page 6)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/25bqy3/
Figure B.7a  Default Discussion Threads – Example 1 (Page 1)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/24yrt0/
I hate to call it this early in the game, but it's a lost cause. There will be droves of women who still subscribe and post content here. The first twenty-four hours will be a nightmare. There will be a bunch of morons parading around causing mayhem and generally being dicks.

In the first week things will even out a bit. It will feel a lot different here but you won’t quite be able to put it into words. Where before it was a community of kind and like-minded people (as much as anonymous internet communities can be), voting will start to reflect different ideals.

Mods will become overwhelmed with reported comments. A few will start slipping through the cracks here and there. A red piller suggesting the woman was “asking for it”. A redditor telling you to calm down and questioning if you’re on your period when you write about something passionately.

It’ll piss you off, but you feel like maybe it’s only been one week and if you just wait a bit longer it’ll go back to even keel.

What you don’t realize is that one by one, slowly but surely, the quality people that had originally subbed to TwoX are being driven away. Those little comments that slip through the cracks will start to pile up. It will all snowball from there.

Soon it’ll be wave after wave of quality posters leaving for elsewhere and for every one that leaves the ranks will swell with dozens of trolls to take their place.

Maybe the mods will catch on and undefault the sub, but I have no doubt that it will be too late. By that point tons of people will have left for whatever alternatives are out there and the things that once made this sub a safe and supporting place will have long been dead and buried.

RIP, TwoX.

Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/24yrt0/
Figure B.7c  Default Discussion Threads – Example 1 (Page 5)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/24yrt0/
Figure B.7d  Default Discussion Threads – Example 1 (Page 7 – page skipped for brevity)

Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/24yrt0/
Anyone notice the amount of downvotes we're now getting? (self.TwoXChromosomes)

submitted 2 years ago by just_passing_hours

I just looked over at new to see how the default status was changing posts, and I saw almost everything had gotten dozens, sometimes hundreds of downvotes even within minutes of being submitted. Even posts just a few minutes old had at least 20 downvotes.

My guess is that it's a protest by non-2XC users who are trying to keep posts from here reaching the front page. Has anyone else noticed this or wants to weigh in?

60 points (51% upvoted)

Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/2509zq/

Figure B.8a  Default Discussion Threads – Example 2 (Page 1)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/2509zq/
comments too. Welcome to being a default sub. This was a really bad decision IMO.

permilnk embed

[-] brillantezza 199 points 2 years ago
Yes. The mods care more about new users than their current and faithful users. It sucks. It's a hurdle we will get over or we'll flounder. Only time will tell.

There are women talking about period cramps with 46 down votes, another woman who had a creepshot taken of her called a ho and other names and down voted. The mods don't seem to get that DELETING the comments doesn't stop them from being harmful. They don't seem to get that excessive down voting discourages activity. It's fucked up.

permilnk embed parent

[-] animosity692 77 points 2 years ago
They're all removing posts that critique the sub. I saw a really thoughtful/concerning thread in which the user brought up their issue with racism going on in the online community, 2X in particular. It was removed by mods after it gained a ton of upvotes??

permilnk embed parent

[-] All Hall Notorious RBG zaurefirem 17 points 2 years ago
One just got removed for saying that they felt 2X was no longer a safe space.

permilnk embed parent

[-] [deleted] 3 points 2 years ago
Wtf :/

permilnk embed parent

[-] DivineAna 1 point 2 years ago
And THIS is why people will leave...

permilnk embed parent

[-] shafonfa 39 points 2 years ago
I saw that post and was involved in that discussion. It was at +48 within a few minutes, which was impressive with the downvoting brigade happening right now. I was also very disappointed it was removed.

permilnk embed parent

[-] Wrecksomething 12 points 2 years ago
That's a pity, I thought that was an excellent discussion. Polite, insightful, important. And gone.

permilnk embed parent

woman, for women, or about women.

[more]

5. Images: No direct links to images, except on Image-Fest Friday (IFF). To post an image during the week, do so within a self-post and with some added context. See here for guidelines. Post all memes and rage comics to r/TrollIXChromosomes.

6. Fundraising: No links to fundraising pages, please. As a community, we're not set up for screening each funding request.

Figure B.8b  Default Discussion Threads – Example 2 (Page 2)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/2509zq/
Figure B.8c  Default Discussion Threads – Example 2 (Page 3)

Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/2509zq/
Figure B.9a  Default Discussion Threads – Example 3 (Page 1)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/2542pr/
look forward to from now on?
By the way - this is my newer alt account. I'm not
comfortable posting with my main on TwoX anymore.

OMG, I got a really, really similar one. They called
me a "fat ugly feminist" who has probably never
had a man show any interest in me. He kindly
suggested I show him my breasts to make myself
feel better.

Um... what?

Sounds like a 12 year old with braces.

Please don’t insult 12 year olds or people
with braces like that ;) I’d say they sound
more like rotting meat slime!

Start posting this shit to /r/creepyPMs. Seriously.
Start shaming them publicly.

And we’ll love to have more fodder to mock
over there.

Too bad that rule where you have to block out
usuarios is there. Or else they could actually
be shamed.

I’ve found that living by the philosophy that
"people suck" tends to work well, as I’m prepared
when it’s true, and pleasantly surprised by the few
times that I’m wrong.

Reddit tends to do great at reinforcing that
philosophy, too.

I’m in love with your alt username. Desmond, oh

women, for women, or about women.

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Figure B.9b  Default Discussion Threads – Example 3 (Page 2)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/2542pr/
Figure 5.10a  Support Threads (Post-Default) – Example 1 (Page 1)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/24zhyn/
human. Gender expectations are so fucked up. Expose your child to everything possible and let them choose what they like, gender be damned. A lot of adults look back on their childhoods in a not so fond way because they were forced into one thing or another. Raise a hard working, thoughtful, well rounded person who knows they are loved and you will have done well.

Figure 510b  Support Threads (Post-Default) – Example 1 (Page 4 – pages skipped for brevity)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/24zhyn/
because they’re a boy or a girl, but because they’re a kid. They can handle it - kids are tougher than you’d think :)

[Figure 510c] Support Threads (Post-Default) – Example 1 (Page 5)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/24zhyn/

Okay, from coming in from the default fiasco, I have to say, I like this sub. You guys, for the most part and I really mean that-I’ve only seen a few non supportive posts, really give some insightful replies to people. I don’t usually subscribe to the gender specific (I am honestly not trying to be insulting, I couldn’t think of what else to call it) subs because I feel if I have something really personal to say, something I’m really struggling with I wouldn’t want it to become someone else’s drama, you know? I know I’m not explaining that right. But I’m sure you’ve experienced the whole 48 child argument of who has it right and who has a right to say it de-evolution. Anyway, your post struck a chord with me. I am also a female bible belter with a daughter. Your response was respectful and insightful. And I can totally relate.

Well, but... baptism is ultimately irrelevant. The odds of your daughter remembering it are infantismal. And what does it change, really? If it makes your wife happy, why not? So far as going to church... that’s a tough one. Glad I don’t have to deal with that one. But, if you’re a man of Science, make a point of explaining how the world [actually] works too. In the end, the choice is her’s.

Lightsonnoir I just wanted to mention your reply gave me pause and made me feel better about the whole thing. It is important to my wife and really it’s just a non issue. Plus you’re right it’s not like she’s going to remember. So thank you :)

Baptised agnostic atheist here, I also went to a Uniting Church co-ed private school for the first 8 years of my schooling. Ultimately raise her with options, make sure you tell her it’s okay to be who she wants to be, whether she believes in god or not. I think my early exposure to religion was fine, I know a bit about the bible and it’s given me a peek behind the fence if you will.

My dad was amazing and I’ll never stop missing him. He taught me to fish when I was really little - I mean it when I say almost every childhood & baby picture of me involves fish, a rod, or a boat. He taught me what was important to him, how to do the things he loved, and to be accepting of others even though he wasn’t good at it. He always, always told me "it takes all kinds" and I didn’t really understand that until I was in my mid-20’s. He never went out of his way to scare my friends/boyfriends, and he let me make my own mistakes... but he was there for me when I realized I’d fucked up and needed help. He was a smartass and made the most awful, hilarious puns you could ever imagine. He taught me to love trivia and nerdy things, to fish, to do minor
"You're so cute doing that!" Anyone else get "cuted" when doing non-traditionally feminine things?  

I'm not sure if I'm expressing this correctly, but it can sometimes be extremely patronizing. I wasn't really aware of how frequently it occurred until I was washing my car a couple days ago and my boyfriend goes, "you're so cute washing that car!" my original thought was, "no... I'm just washing a car..." Then I started realizing how frequently people will tell me that. For example, the lab coats are all too big "haha that's cute", try to argue a political point "it's cute how you get defensive". When my boyfriend does it it's fine because he does think I'm cute, but when other men do it; it really seems inappropriate.

Not sure what I'm looking for; maybe stories or validation? I understand that it's not meant in a malevolent manner, but it does make me feel disrespected when it happens. Any thoughts on this or a proper response? It's great people think I'm cute, but I'd rather not be cute and just be a co-worker or fellow student. (and yes, I realize I can be a cute co-worker at the same time. It just seems that the "it's cute" response points out that I am doing something I shouldn't be, or that women typically aren't seen doing, and it makes me feel awkward.)

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Figure 511a  Support Threads (Post-Default) – Example 2 (Page 1)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/257ym2/
I fucking hate it when I’m the only woman in the office and people come in and think I’m the receptionist. :( 

Figure 511b  Support Threads (Post-Default) – Example 2 (Page 2)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/257ym2/
"cute" and other comments but I would easily call a
guy friend cute for stressing over which shoes to
wear on a date or something else typically
considered girly. Compared to the "wow" and
"that's awesome" reactions, the number of
patronizing ones don't even make a dent. Enjoy
your "untraditional" field :)
Figure 512a  TMI Threads – Example 1 (Page 1)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/252ep3/
bloody.

Neither had I! If I ever have a daughter, I will explain that to her because seriously, wtf.

I was sure I was having some problem with poo coming out. I was staying at my grandmother’s house and had no idea it was my period. The next day I rode my bike to summer camp and finally figured out it was my period half way through the morning when there was still more brown, plus some red. I had to ask an adult to help me out with supplies, and then go home and tell my grandmother I got my period. She said, "Oh" and then a few hours later said, "Um, was that your first one?"

That is the long way of saying OMG I wish someone told me it might be brown too!

My mom actually found my underwear and yelled at me for pooping my pants ("didn't I teach you to wipe properly????") and I started crying and it was just really really awkward.

She felt bad when she realized, but it was still hella traumatic.

Yep, #1 surprise right here. I had 3 periods thinking I was crapping my pants before my mom (who did the laundry) told me she thought I got my period. Until then, I was putting toilet paper in my crotch/butt thinking I was having anal leakage a couple days a month. "Are You There God, It's Me Margaret" never said it would be brown. I read that book probably 10 times and not once did Judy Blume make it seem like it’d be anything but bright pinkish-red.

Nope, looks like you’ve got poopy racing stripes in your undies.

MAN I wish I’d had 2X in the 80s....

Women, for women, or about women.

5. Images: No direct links to images, except on Image-Fest Friday (IFF). To post an image during the week, do so within a self-post and with some added context. See here for guidelines. Post all memes and rage comics to /r/TrollXChromosomes.

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Figure 512b  TMI Threads – Example 1 (Page 2)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/252ep3/
Continuing at our icky pace, what's your most messy sex story? (all) TwoXChromosomes

submitted 2 years ago by Cuddle_Apocalypse

all 40 comments

I was giving my guy a blowjob. I definitely threw up on his penis. I blame the alcohol.

Ugh my BF likes the deepthroat/choke too, and then will get all grossed out when I actually start to gag and throw up in my mouth a little bit and you know, take a break because I can't fucking breathe. Fuck certain kinds of mainstream porn for giving people unrealistic expectations of oral sex. It's an object. In your throat. It's gonna make you gag/throw up.

Oddly enough, my BF seems to like the thought of me puking. He definitely likes the deepthroating and choking. But I don't particularly mind it at all because my gag reflex isn't easily activated. He's just extremely dominant and into...
humiliation and stuff, which I'm cool with. I 
guess I'm just a bit of a kinky person. 
I'm a little insulted for you that your bf acts 
like that though. I hope he realizes that 
shit will make you puke and doesn't make 
you feel bad for it. :/

[-] mupthewpup 5 points 2 years ago

Ohh okay! To me it's one of those 
things that is actually dehumanizing. I 
was falling down drunk at a party and a 
guy friend led me up to his room and 
and had me suck his dick and video taped 
it. I had to fight not to get recorded. I 
don't remember saying yes to sucking 
his dick at all (I was also 
blacking/passing in and out). So it's a 
really touchy subject for me.

He’ll never say anything, but the look 
on his face says it all. I can’t blame him 
for being disgusted because it is puke, 
but the dickish part is like you said; it's 
his dick causing it!

[-] Cuddle_Apocalypse [5] 2 points 2 years 

ago

I can definitely understand having 
an aversion to it after that 
experience. I'd flip my drunk shit if 
someone tried to record without 
my permission, but then I'm 
naturally an angry drunk anyway. :p

I am sorry that happened to you, 
honestly. I’ve definitely had my 
share of horror stories with people 
seriously overstepping their bounds 
when alcohol was involved.

It seems like you do feel bad with 
the whole boyfriend thing though. I 
don’t blame you. If my partner had a 
look of disgust on his face at any 
point while I was trying to please 
him like that, I’d feel the same way.

[-] snyggare 3 points 2 years ago

Yeah. My guy took it fairly well too. We just 
took the sheets off his bed and moved to the 

women, for women, or about women. 

[more]

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Thanks to /u/jaxspider for the new logo!

created by Basically Maz Karanata

Figure 513b  TMI Threads – Example 2 (Page 2)
Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/TwoXChromosomes/comments/253xpv/
shower. I offered to wash them for him in the morning, but he said not to worry about it.

That is an awesome skill. Almost a superpower.

I did this, but then quickly swallowed it (I know, gross right?) so he wouldn’t notice, and carried on. I was young and self-conscious, and very embarrassed. Looking back, he probably noticed.

Oh gosh, I do that all the time. I don’t think it’s very gross. Honestly. It’s just getting summoned back from whence it came! :p

I got my period during sex and I didn’t realize it. After intercourse I gave him a blowjob and something tasted...off, but I didn’t put two and two together. Then after sex the guy turned on the lights...blood was everywhere. Blood all over the counter, blood on the floor, blood all over his crotch, blood on the walls, and blood IN AND AROUND MY MOUTH. It was disgusting.

That sounds like the worst kind of horror film.

Okay, so last weekend my fiancé and I had a quickie. I have an IUD, so he didn’t use a condom, but we do use lube for ease of entry. Also I was already wet so things were slippery.

Anyway, we finish and I go to the bathroom to pee and clean up. I was pretty sure I had gotten everything, so I finish my business and walk back to my fiancé’s room in the nude. I barely get halfway across the room when I feel wetness between my legs and running down my thighs! I look down and there’s giant globs of semen and lube EVERYWHERE. Wtf.