

“Did you suspect the post would be removed?”: Understanding User Reactions to Content Removals on Reddit

Shagun Jhaver, Darren Scott Appling, Eric Gilbert and Amy Bruckman

Goal

Understand content moderation
from the perspective of
moderated end-users

Why Study Moderated Users?

- End-users are the central actors
- Crucial to have users who are invested
- Understanding concerns may open opportunities for nurturing valuable contributors

Factors That May Shape User Reactions

- Elements of submission
 - e.g., Are there community rules?
- Elements of removal
 - e.g., Removal explanations

Research Questions

- How do users perceive post removals?
- How do factors like community rules and removal explanations affect:
 - Perceptions of fairness of post removals
 - Attitudes about posting again in the future

Main Contributions

From the perspective of end-users, fairness is associated with:

- Clear set of rules
- Getting informed when post removals occur
- Receiving explanations for post removals



reddit

Why Reddit?

- 1000's of sub-communities
- Variety of approaches to content moderation
- Provides a rich site to study how these differences affect attitudes

Survey

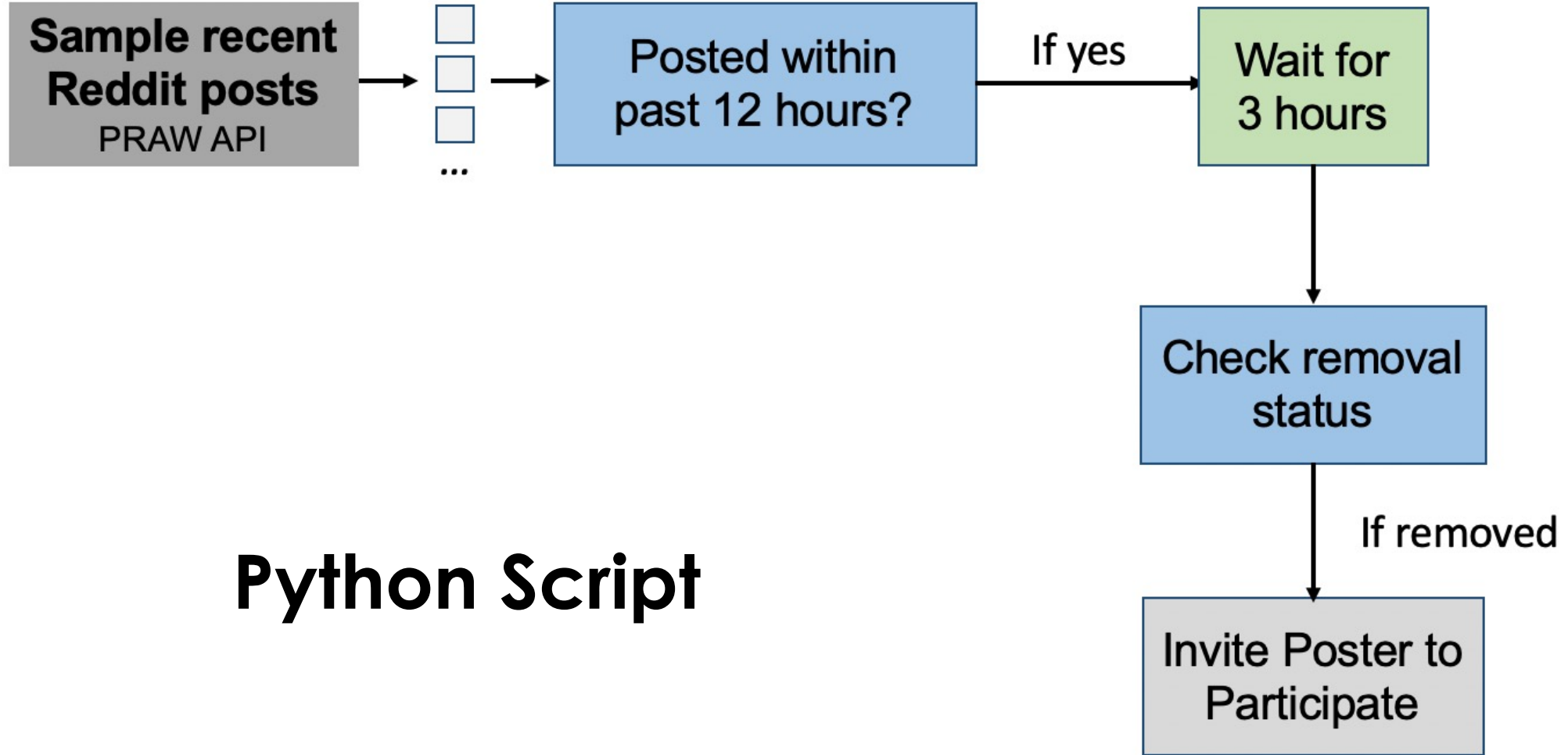
907 Reddit users who experienced
content removals

Data Collection Goals

- Submission should be recent
- Enough time should have passed for moderators to review post



Survey request sent 3-10 hours
after post submission



Python Script

Survey Questions

- Multiple Choice Questions
 - Quantitative analyses
- Open-ended Questions:
 - e.g., “Please explain how you feel about the post removal”
 - Qualitative analyses

Quantitative Analysis

**How are different contextual factors
associated with:**

- (1) Perceptions of fairness of post removals, &**
- (2) Attitudes about posting again in the future**

Linear Regression Models

Dependent Variables

○ Fairness

Q - I think that the removal was fair:

a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly Disagree

○ Post Again?

Q - How likely are you to post again on this subreddit after this experience?

a) Very likely b) Likely c) Neutral d) Not likely e) Very unlikely

Independent Variables: Groups

- Posting Context
- Community Guidelines
- Removal Explanations

Selection of Independent Variables

- Open to direct interpretation
- Based on Intuitions developed through serving as moderators
- Our analytic approach is primarily exploratory

Control Variables

- Demographics (collected through survey)
 - Age
 - Education
 - Gender
- Prior History (collected using Reddit API)
 - Reddit karma
 - Time on Reddit (in days)
 - Number of submissions posted on Reddit
- Not controlled for other relevant factors

Insights

Posting Context

Q – Before you started this survey, did you notice that this submission was removed?:

a) Yes b) No

Fairness	Post Again?
$\beta = 0.265^{***}$	Not significant

Community Rules

Q – Does the subreddit you posted to contain rules?:

a) Yes b) No

Fairness	Post Again?
$\beta = 0.068^*$	Not significant

Community Rules

Q – Did you read the rules of the subreddit before posting?:

a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly Disagree

Fairness	Post Again?
$\beta = -0.314^{***}$	Not significant

Community Rules

Q – Are the rules of the subreddit clear?

a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly Disagree

Fairness	Post Again?
$\beta = 0.170^{***}$	$\beta = 0.223^{***}$

Removal Explanations

Q - Did you receive an explanation for why your post was removed?:

a) Yes b) No

Good news for mods who provide explanations!

Fairness	Post Again?
$\beta = 0.384^{***}$	$\beta = 0.088^*$

Qualitative Findings

Frustration about the Post Removals

“I am autistic and it takes significant effort for me to write up things to communicate effectively and in a way that will be received well. I feel sad that my effort in making that post was for nothing and that no one will see it and no one will reply with any help or advice.” - Poster on r/disability sub

Perception of moderation as unjust

- Folk theories about content moderation
 - Folk theories are intuitive, informal theories that individuals develop to explain the outcomes of technological systems (Devito et al.)
- Suspicions of political bias

Acceptance of Removal as Appropriate

- *“I felt bad that I had not read the rules and posted inappropriately.”*

Difficulties Complying with the Rules

- Difficult to follow rules that are:
 - imprecise,
 - subjective, or
 - require a lot of effort to comply with
- Reasoning behind rule creation unclear.

Takeaways

Community Rules

- We add evidence to the value of establishing community rules
- Attributes of rules that are important to end-users:
 - Clarity
 - Reason why each rule is created
 - Effort needed to comply with the rules

Accounting for users' folk theories

- Users often develop folk theories about moderation
- Folk theories influence user behavior
- More examination is needed for how users create folk theories
- Best practices should account for folk theories

Transparency of Moderation

- Transparency is a key concern
- Explanations ~ Better attitudes
- Explanation can be an educational experience

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Questions?



@shagunjhaver



jhaver.shagun@gatech.edu

