



THE UNIVERSITY
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

MultiModalTopicExplorer: A Visual Text Analytics System for Exploring a Collection of Multi-modal Online Conversations



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Content Warning

*Our results contain textual and graphic elements that are **anti-semitic, anti-muslim, racist, sexist, homophobic, and offensive in many other ways.***

Topic modeling and InfoVis

- ▶ It is needed to **summarize** and **understand** textual data
- ▶ Promising solution: Topic modeling
 - ▷ Statistical approach for extracting **topics** from large text corpora.
 - ▷ Topic models do not provide meanings and interpretation directly
 - ▷ **humans must be involved [1]**
- ▶ Humans who directly interact with and interpret the output of topic modeling **may rely on visualization tools to better interpret the results [2]**

[1] Dou, W., Wang, X., Chang, R., & Ribarsky, W. (2011, October). Paralleltopics: A probabilistic approach to exploring document collections. In *2011 IEEE conference on visual analytics science and technology (VAST)* (pp. 231-240). IEEE.

[2] Chang, J., Gerrish, S., Wang, C., Boyd-Graber, J. L., & Blei, D. M. (2009). Reading tea leaves: How humans interpret topic models. In *Advances in neural information processing systems* (pp. 288-296).



Name this search as _____ and Save It

Item	Remove
topic 92 (union, workers, labor) => 2%	X
topic 81 (police, officer, officer) => 3%	X
Location => NEW YORK CITY	X

Search builds on previous searches. It does not meet each time.

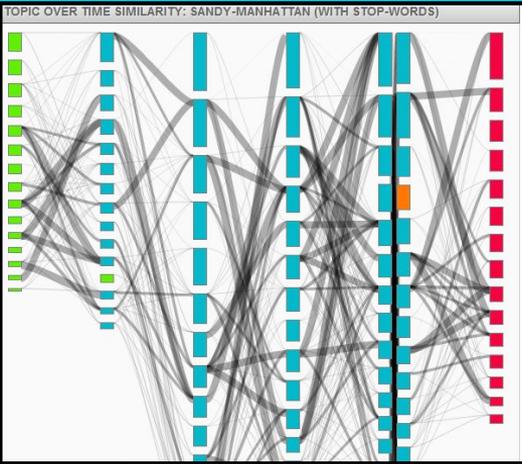
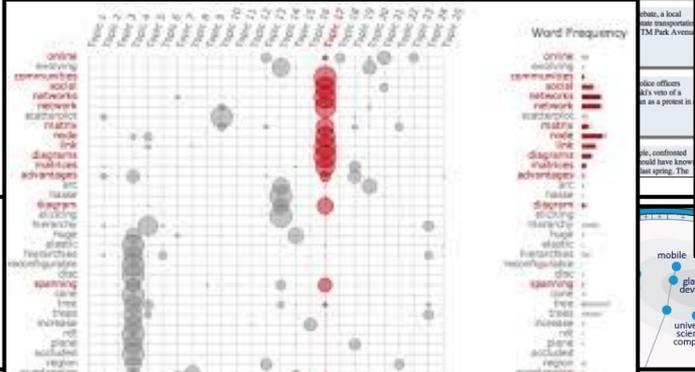
Topic: _____ at least: _____ % of document

No documents have been tagged

Aggregate Statistics (16 documents) Show

Document 106: Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani threatened yesterday to dismiss any officer who staged a work slowdown in protest of Gov. George E. Pataki's veto of a police abolition bill that would probably have led to higher pay. Police officials said there was no sign of any major labor action, but that 100 officers may have written fewer parking tickets over the weekend. The action was seen by precinct commanders as individual acts encouraged by a few police union delegates if the Police Commissioner catches ...
 Tag: Add Tag Edit

Document 634: An off-duty police officer died last night after shooting himself in the head, the police said. It was not clear whether the shooting was an accident or a suicide, said Robert Samuel, a police spokesman. The officer, whose name was not released, was 24 and had been on the force since 1993. The shooting occurred just after 8 P.M. in an apartment at 131 Fourth Avenue, in Brooklyn, where he had been visiting after finishing his day shift yesterday, officials said. He was assigned to the 124th Precinct.
 Tag: Add Tag Edit



TWEETS (10469)

MORGANBLACKXXX Fri, 10/26/2012 at 11:16AM
 @ThaMfariyn @tsalm65...ha_ha...frs Friday! Headed out for a haircut & s...

RONGEORGE Fri, 10/26/2012 at 11:16AM
 Tropical Storm warning? I call it a jetski opportunity. #gopro...

LYRIEEE Fri, 10/26/2012 at 11:20AM
 My main concern for this hurricane is figuring out who I'll be with and in who's...

STEVENH2 Fri, 10/26/2012 at 11:19AM
 Google News: Hurricane Sandy: Region braces itself for potentially devastating s...

HOLYNAMEDECTR Fri, 10/26/2012 at 11:21AM
 RT @UJCEM2010: Red Cross Hurricane Preparedness App is a great tool...

MISSZEE_ Fri, 10/26/2012 at 11:22AM
 RT @Mexican_Dorito: @MissZee_ umm i am the one that lives in florida thank u ver...

ODIELISA Fri, 10/26/2012 at 11:22AM
 @AlbieManzo Yes. Last yr we did not have Halloween on my block because not i had p...

ERICSZYSKA Fri, 10/26/2012 at 11:22AM
 RT @WashingtonPost: nsa spying on americans: washington post agency online legal adu l image nation tap nsa post at web edward leah young's british content leak 'muscular' filter camera server parent david govern internet service

Topic Browser

Sort by: Document Entropy

Filters:

Metric: Coherence Greater than 0.96

Add a filter by:

- Page 1 of 5
- 119: make national
 - 42: people don
 - 101: children family
 - 120: law government
 - 8: congress government
 - 104: states united
 - 142: government people
 - 143: jobs ve
 - 38: economy economic
 - 25: party vote
 - 41: world security
 - 60: barack remarks
 - 17: work access
 - 32: government tax
 - 136: military war
 - 66: dollars reform
 - 47: McCain senator
 - 70: health care
 - 97: Iraq troops
 - 16: young service

Stanley Kubrick

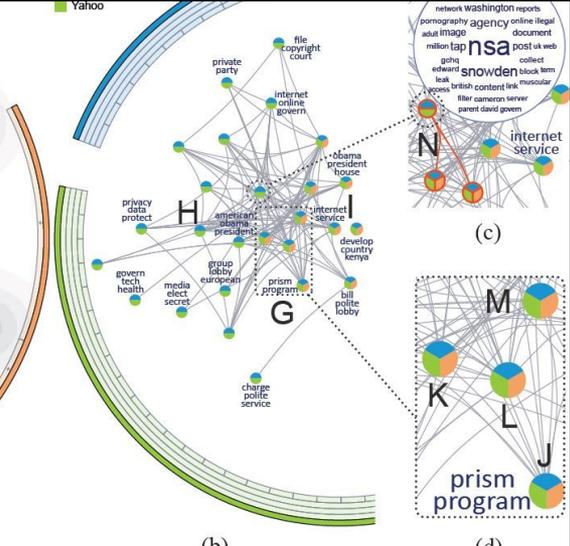
Stanley Kubrick (July 26, 1928 – March 7, 1999) was an American film director, writer, producer, and photographer who lived in England during most of the last four decades of his career. Kubrick was noted for the scrupulous care with which he chose his subjects, the variety of genres he worked in, his technical perfectionism, and his reluctance about his films and personal life. He worked far beyond the confines of the Hollywood system, maintaining almost complete artistic control and making movies according to his

related documents	related topics
Orson Welles B movie Mystery Science Theater 3000 Doctor Who Sam Peckinpah The A-Team Pulp Fiction (film) Buffy the Vampire	(film, series, show) (theory, work, human) (album, band, music) (woman, child, man) (law, state, case) (black, white, people) (theory, work, human) (@car@, make, design) (war, force, army) (god, call, give) (son, year, death)

Existentialism

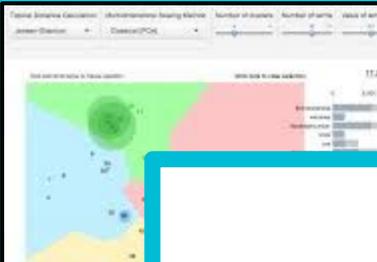
Existentialism is a term applied to the work of a number of 19th and 20th-century philosophers who, despite profound doctrinal differences,^[1] generally held that the focus of philosophical thought should be to deal with the conditions of existence of the individual person and his or her emotions, actions, responsibilities, and thoughts.^[2] The early 19th century philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, posthumously regarded as the father of existentialism,^[3] maintained that the individual is solely responsible for giving his or her own life

related documents	related topics
Deconstruction Charles Peirce Social sciences Idealism Franc Boas Karl Marx Mysticism Truth Free will Solomon	(theory, work, human) (god, call, give)



Finding mechanisms to improve these visual representations is still an open challenge [1]

[1] Jelodar, H., Wang, Y., Yuan, C., Feng, X., Jiang, X., Li, Y., & Zhao, L. (2019). Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) and Topic modeling: models, applications, a survey. Multimedia Tools and Applications, 78(11), 15169-15211.



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topic 81. (police, officers, officer) => 3%	X
Locations => NEW YORK CITY	X

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Tags: Add Tag
Expand



TWEETS (10469)

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this hurricane is figuring it out in who's...

10/26/2012 at 11:19AM
Sandy: Regionally devastating s...

10/26/2012
ed Cross Hurricane a great tool...

10/26/2012 at 11:22AM
@MissZee_umm i am on a thank u ver...

10/26/2012 at 11:22AM
ast yr we did not have it because not 1 had p...



(c)

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
NLP

Datasets Favorites

Words Topics

Sort by: Document

Filters

Metric: Coherence Greater than

Add a filter by

- 119: ...
- 47: ...
- 101: ...
- 120: ...
- 8: com...
- 104: ...
- 142: g...
- 1: ...
- 38: ec...
- 2: ...
- 41: ...
- 60: b...
- 17: ...
- 32: ...
- 136: history...
- 66: dollars reform
- 47: McCain senator
- 70: health care
- 97: Iraq troops
- 16: young service

work	Intelligent design	(law, state, case)
human	Immanuel Kant	(son, year, death)
idea	Philosophy of mathematics	(woman, child, man)
term	History of science	(god, call, give)
study	Free will	(black, white, people)
view	Truth	(film, series, show)
science	Psychoanalysis	(law, force, army)
concept	Charles Peirce	(language, word, form)
form	Existentialism	(@card@, make, design)

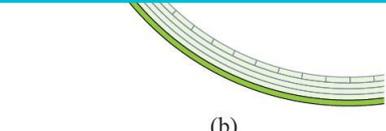
related topics

(theory, work, human)

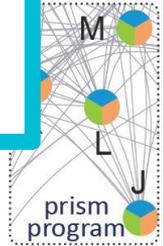
(film, series, show)

(god, call, give)

Charles Peirce
Social sciences
Idealism
Franc Boas
Karl Marx
Mysticism
Truth
Free will
Solipsism



(b)



(d)

Lack of support on qualitative analysis of topic models

- ▶ Visual Analytics systems can provide valuable insights about machine learning model's intrinsic properties and behaviors [1][2]
 - ▷ NLP experts can use these systems to evaluate the quality of topic models
 - ▷ **Current topic modeling visualizations tools do not provide explicit functionalities to support this task.**

[1] Li, R., Xiao, W., Wang, L., Jang, H., & Carenini, G. (2021). T3-Vis: a visual analytic framework for Training and fine-Tuning Transformers in NLP.

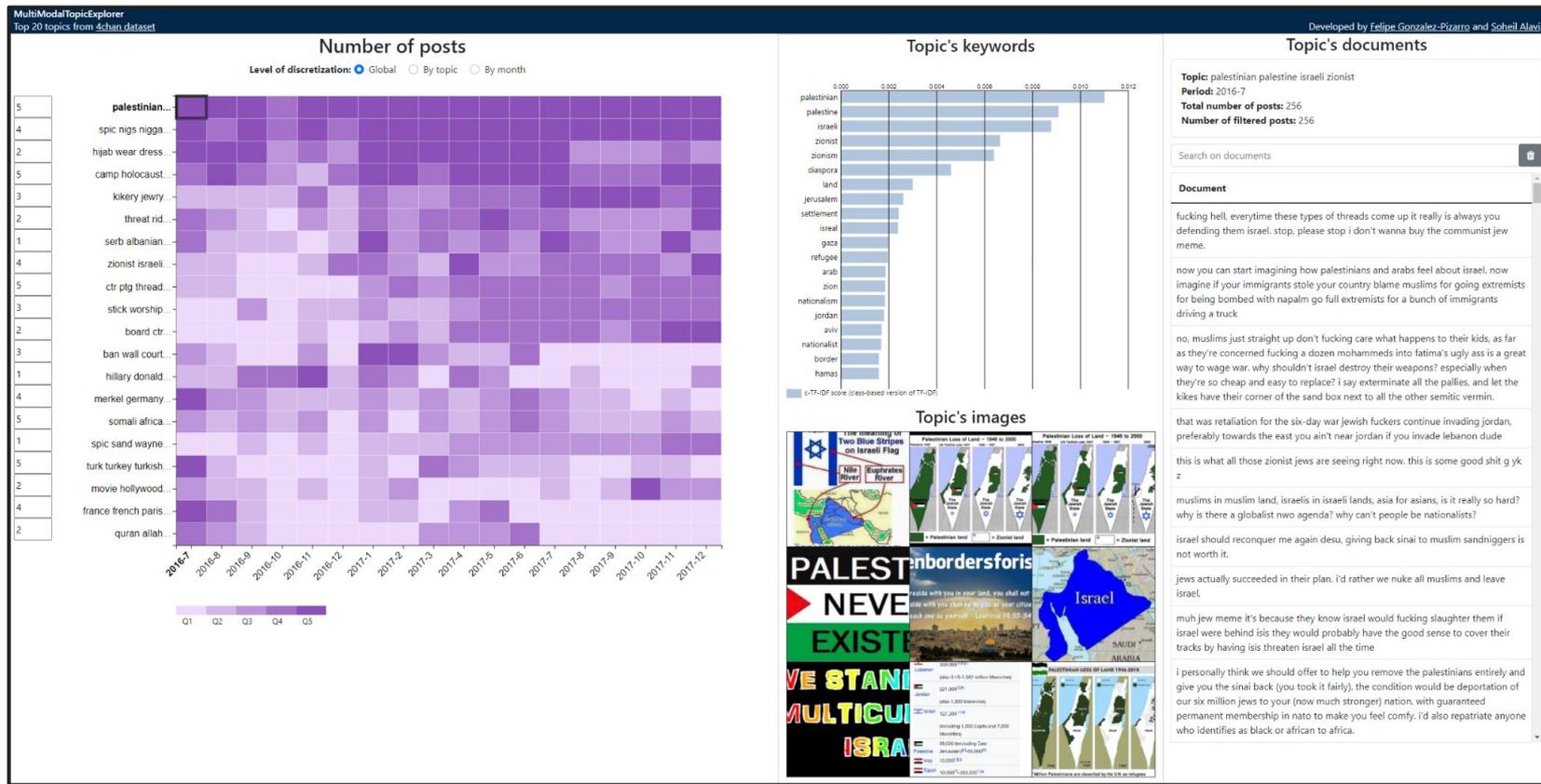
[2] Nan-Chen Chen, Margaret Drouhard, Rafal Kocielnik, Jina Suh, and Cecilia R. Aragon. 2018. Using Machine Learning to Support Qualitative Coding in Social Science: Shifting the Focus to Ambiguity. *ACM Trans. Interact. Intell. Syst.* 8, 2, Article 9 (July 2018), 20 pages.

Lack of support on multi-modal conversations

- ▶ With the proliferation of web-based social media, there has been an exponential growth of asynchronous online conversations discussing a large variety of popular issues [1]
 - ▷ To discuss these and other topics, social media **users post textual and image data.**
 - ▷ To the best of our knowledge, **none of the current topic modeling visualization tools support image representation of topics**

[1] Hoque, E., & Carenini, G. (2015, March). Convisit: Interactive topic modeling for exploring asynchronous online conversations. In *Proceedings of the 20th International Conference on Intelligent User Interfaces* (pp. 169-180).

Our proposal: MultiModalTopicExplorer



Dataset: 4chan dataset



3.3M threads and 134M posts from the Politically incorrect board (/pol/), posted over a period of almost 3.5 years

Multimodal (Image + Text) : 4chan <https://zenodo.org/record/3606810#.YU-wSLhKiUk>

Raiders of the Lost Kek: 3.5 Years of Augmented 4chan Posts from the Politically Incorrect Board*

Antonis Papasavva^{1,2}, Savvas Zannettou^{2,3}, Emiliano De Cristofaro^{1,4}, Gianluca Stringhini^{1,5}, and Jeremy Blackburn^{4,6}

¹University College London, ²Max-Planck-Institut für Informatik, ³Boston University, ⁴Binghamton University, ⁵iDRAMA Lab (antonis.papasavva.19, e.decrisofaro)@ucl.ac.uk, szannett@mpi-inf.mpg.de, gian@bu.edu, jblackbu@binghamton.edu

Abstract

This paper presents a dataset with over 3.3M threads and 134.5M posts from the Politically Incorrect board (/pol/) of the imageboard forum 4chan, posted over a period of almost 3.5 years (June 2016–November 2019). To the best of our knowledge, this represents the largest publicly available 4chan dataset, providing the community with an archive of posts that have been permanently deleted from 4chan and are otherwise inaccessible. We augment the data with a set of additional labels, including toxicity scores and the named entities mentioned in each post. We also present a statistical analysis of the dataset, providing an overview of what researchers interested in using it can expect, as well as a simple content analysis, shedding light on the most prominent discussion topics, the most popular entities mentioned, and the toxicity level of each post. Overall, we are confident that our work will motivate and assist researchers in studying and understanding 4chan, as well as its role on the greater Web. For instance, we hope this dataset may be used for cross-platform studies of social media, as well as being useful for other types of research like natural language processing. Finally, our dataset can assist qualitative work focusing on in-depth case studies of specific narratives, events, or social theories.

1 Introduction

Modern society increasingly relies on the Internet for a wide range of tasks, including gathering, sharing, and commenting on content, events, and discussions. Alas, the Web has also enabled anti-social and toxic behavior to occur at an unprecedented scale. Malvolent actors routinely exploit social networks to target other users via hate speech and abusive behavior, or spread extremist ideologies [3, 12, 13, 40].

A non-negligible portion of these nefarious activities often originate on “fringe” online platforms, e.g., 4chan, 8chan, Gab. In fact, research has shown how influential 4chan is in spread-

ing disinformation [11, 43], hateful memes [42], and coordinating harassment campaigns on other platforms [21, 25, 34]. These platforms are also linked to various real-world violent events, including the radicalization of users who committed mass shootings [2, 6, 16].

4chan is an imageboard where users (aka Original Posters, or OPs) can create a thread by posting an image and a message to a board; others can post in the OP’s thread, with a message and/or an image. Among 4chan’s key features are anonymity and ephemerality: users do not need to register to post content, and in fact the overwhelming majority of posts are anonymous. At most, threads are archived after they become inactive and deleted within 7 days.

Overall, 4chan is widely known for the large amount of content, memes, slang, and Internet culture it has generated over the years [15]. For example, 4chan popularized the “lolcat” meme on the early Web. More recently, politically charged memes, e.g., “God Emperor Trump” [24] have also originated on the platform.

Data Release. In this work, we focus on the “Politically Incorrect” board (/pol/), given the interest it has generated in prior research and the influential role it seems to play on the rest of the Web [7, 21, 43, 34, 42, 39]. Along with the paper, we release a dataset [44] including 134.5M posts from over 3.3M /pol/ conversation threads, made over a period of approximately 3.5 years (June 2016–November 2019). Each post in our dataset has the text provided by the poster, along with various post metadata (e.g., post id, time, etc.).

We also augment the dataset by attaching additional set of labels to each post, including: 1) the named entities mentioned in the post, and 2) the toxicity scores of the post. For the former, we use the spaCy library [35], and for the latter, Google’s Perspective API [30].

We also wish to warn the readers that some of the content in our dataset, as well as in this paper, is highly toxic, racist, and hateful, and can be rather disturbing.

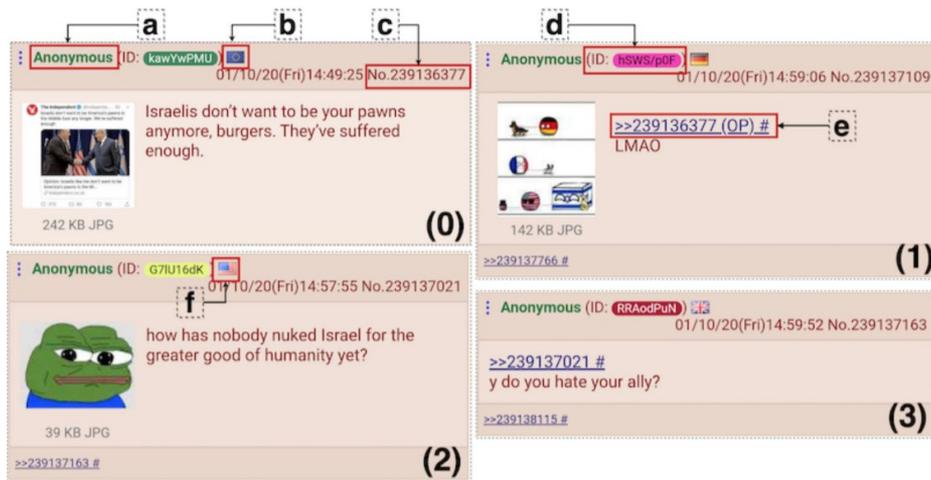
Release. We are confident that our dataset will be useful to the research community in several ways. First, /pol/ con-

*Published at the 14th International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media (ICWSM 2020). Please cite the ICWSM version.

¹<http://boards.4chan.org/pol/>

arXiv:2001.07487v2 [cs.CY] 1 Apr 2020

Why 4chan dataset?



- An exploration of these conversations could help understand how these communities interact on these platforms.
- It is the first step before creating automated hate speech detection and mitigation systems

Multimodal (Image + Text) : 4chan <https://zenodo.org/record/3606810#.YU-wSLhKiUk>

Base Dataset

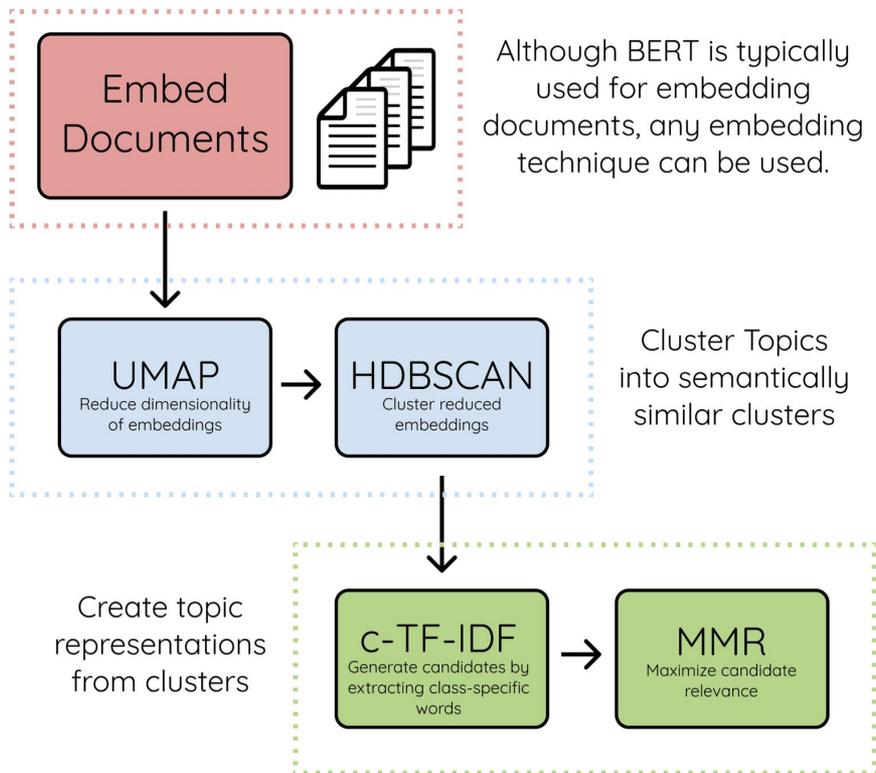


Our adopted Base Dataset:

- More than 0.5 million randomly selected samples
- Over a period of 1.5 years (June 2016-Dec 2017)
- Remove HTML tags and punctuations
- Lowercase the words
- Lemmatization, Stop words removal,

Multimodal (Image + Text) : 4chan <https://zenodo.org/record/3606810#.YU-wSLhKiUk>

BERTOPIC



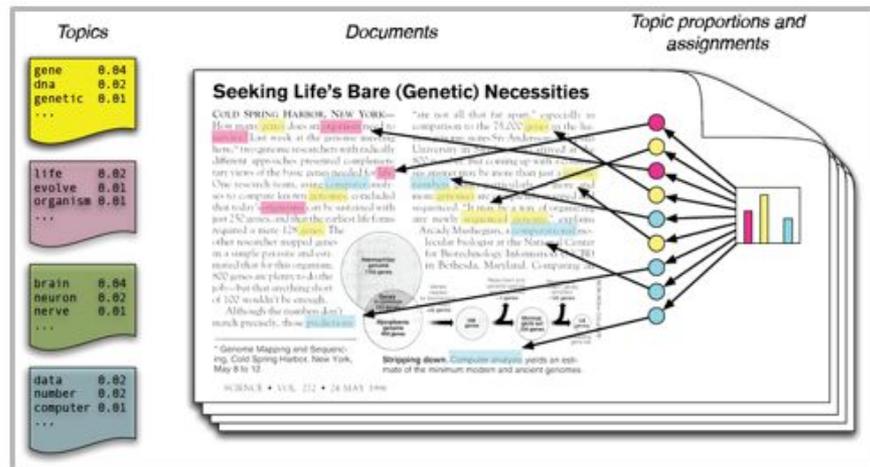
BERTOPIC-Implementation

- ▶ BERTopic finds the number of topics automatically
 - ▷ We found 815 topics
- ▶ No Bigrams and Trigrams calculations needed for phrase generation!
- ▶ Training:
 - ▷ 2 hours: 4 GeForce GTX 1080 Ti GPUs
 - ▷ Chunks of size 130k samples



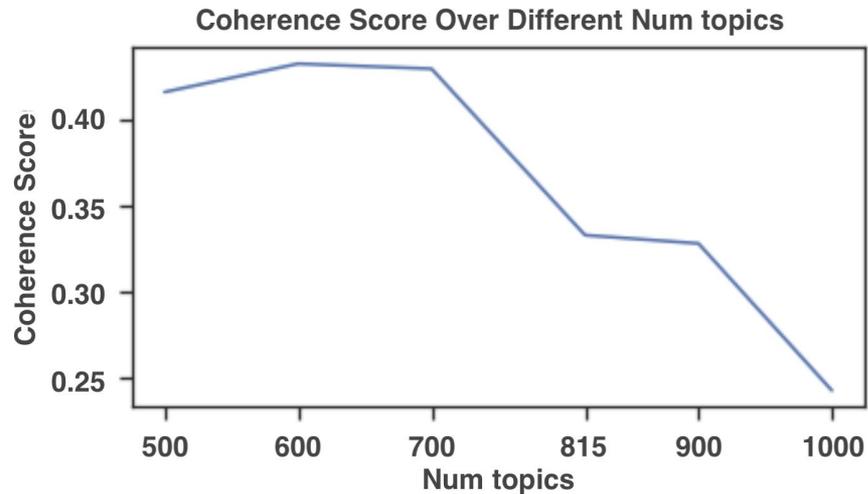
LDA

- ▶ It is based on the assumption that document collections have latent topics in the form of a multinomial distribution of words, which is typically presented to users via its top-N highest probability words (Lau et al., 2014)
- ▶ Traditional and popular method even today



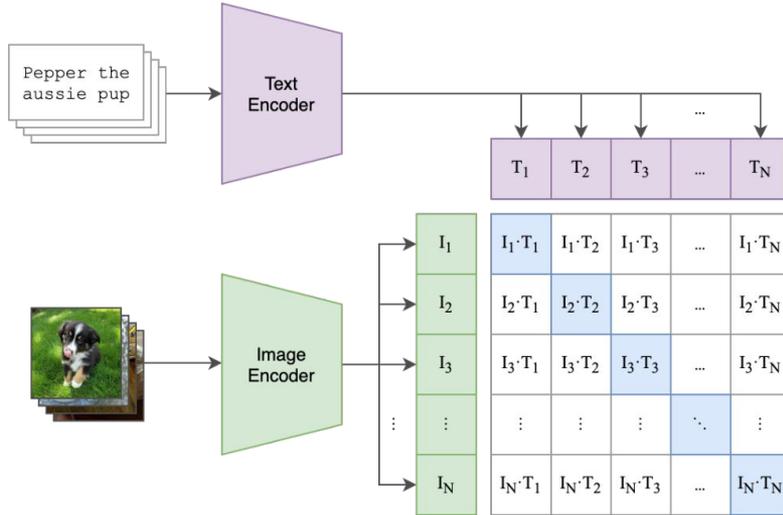
LDA-Implementation

- ▶ Calculated bigrams and trigrams for finding phrase keywords
- ▶ Used gensim LDA multicore
 - ▷ 9 cores cpu took 6 hours to train the best model
- ▶ Num topics = 600 yields best Coherence Score

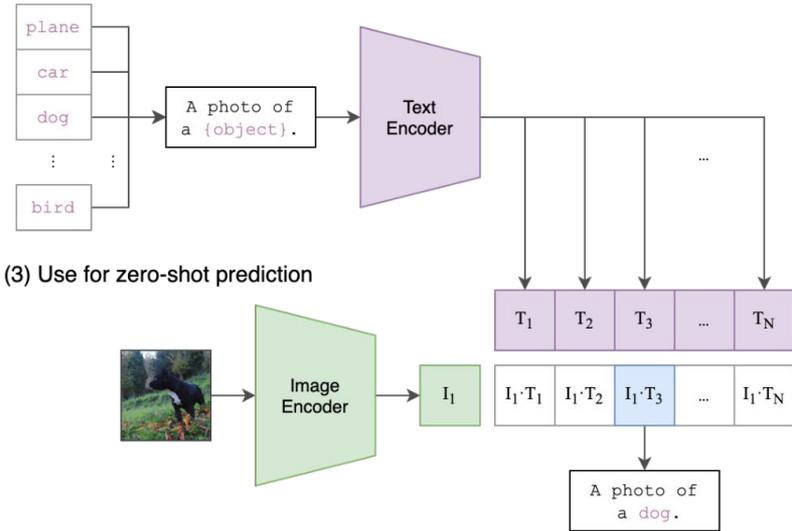


CLIP: Contrastive Language-Image Pre-Training

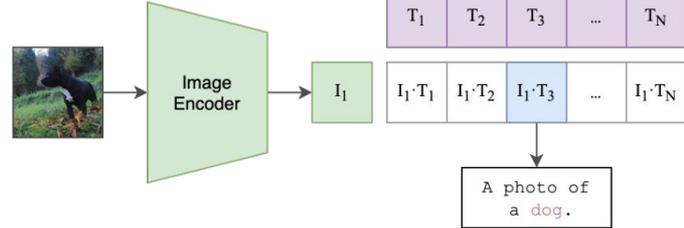
(1) Contrastive pre-training



(2) Create dataset classifier from label text



(3) Use for zero-shot prediction



Neural network trained on a variety of (image, text) pairs.

Source: <https://github.com/openai/CLIP>

Content Warning

*Our results contain textual and graphic elements that are **anti-semitic, anti-muslim, racist, sexist, homophobic, and offensive in many other ways.***

Demo Url

<http://MultiModalTopicExplorer.ml>

User study design

Dataset

4chan /pol/
threads

Tasks

Report Topics'
Coherence

Report Workload

Conditions

Group 1

LDA

Group 2

BERTopic

Group 1

BERTopic

Group 2

LDA



* How coherent topic 1 is? 🗨️ 0

1 star - No coherent at all

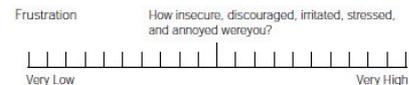
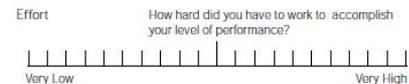
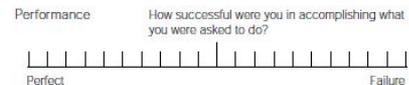
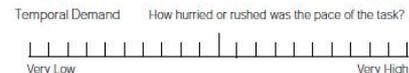
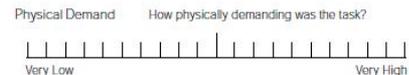
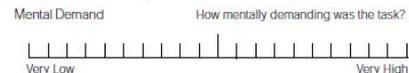
5 stars - Very coherent



NASA Task Load Index

Hart and Staveland's NASA Task Load Index (TLX) method assesses work load on five 7-point scales. Increments of high, medium and low estimates for each point result in 21 gradations on the scales.

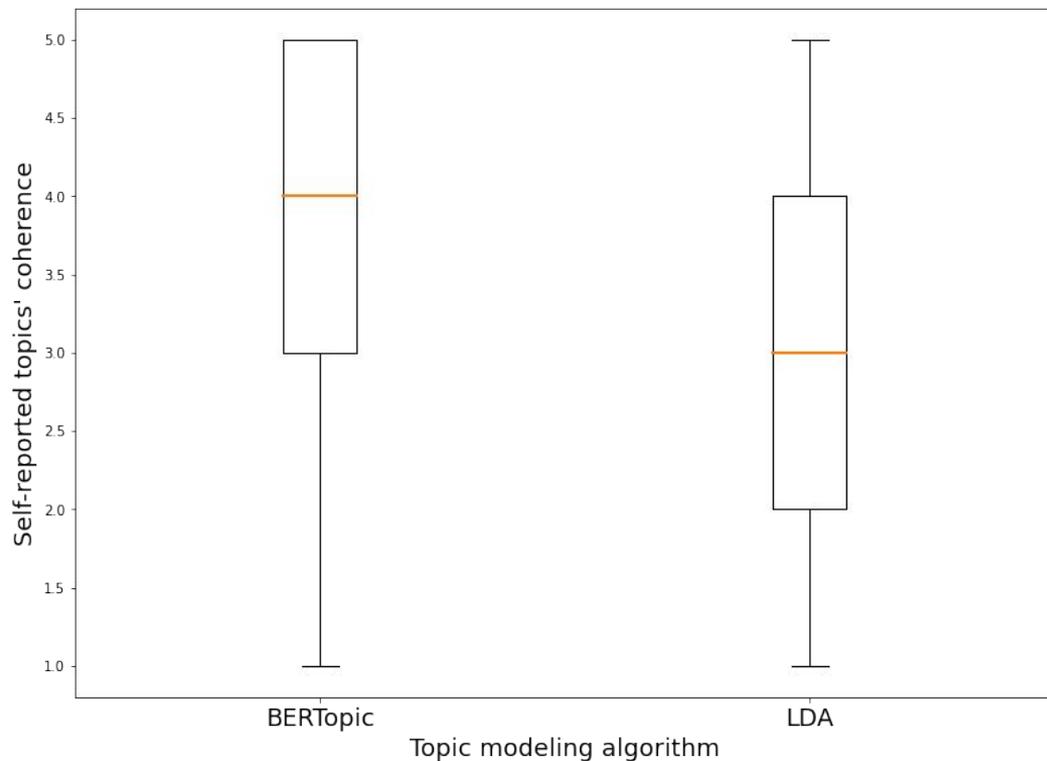
Name	Task	Date



Null hypothesis (H_0)

H_0 : There are no differences in the coherence of topics emerged from BERTopic and LDA

Results - Quality of topics



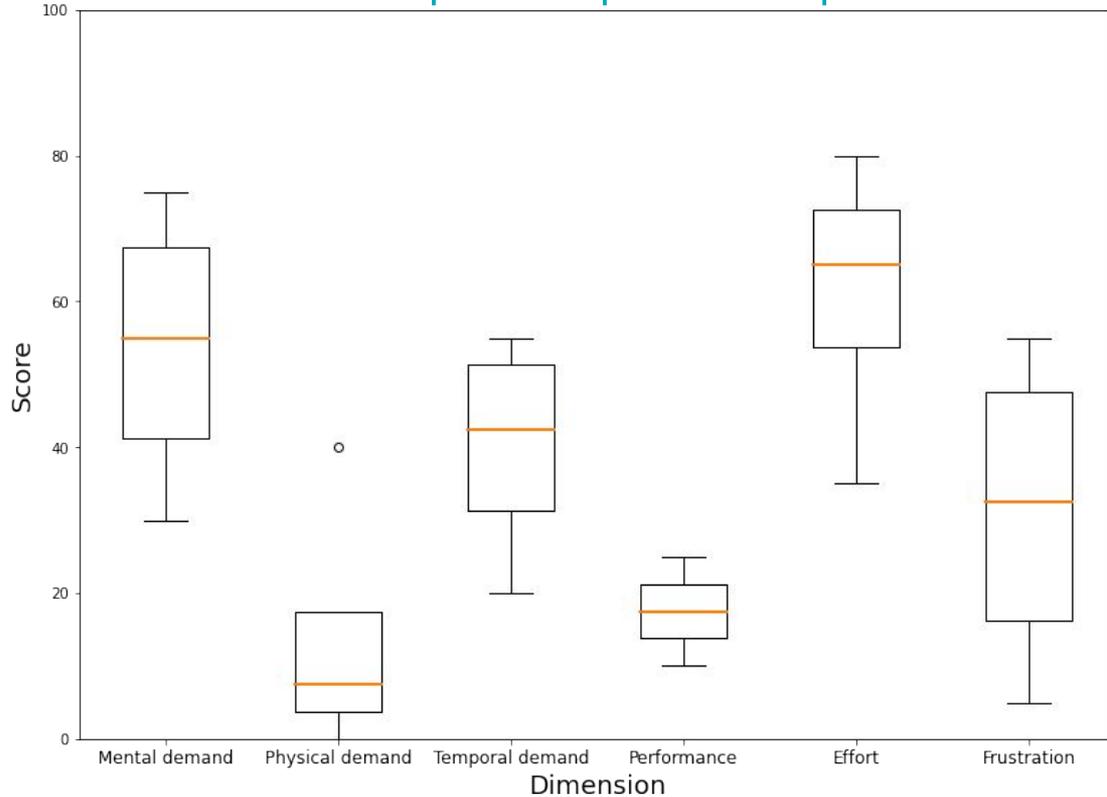
We found statistically significant differences between conditions

($U = 4811.0$, $N_{bertopic}=80$, $N_{lda} = 84$, $p = <.001$)

We can reject Null hypothesis

Ho: There are no differences in the coherence of topics emerged from BERTopic and LDA

Distribution of participant responses to the NASA TLX questionnaire



Cao, A., Chintamani, K. K., Pandya, A. K., & Ellis, R. D. (2009). NASA TLX: Software for assessing subjective mental workload. *Behavior research methods*, 41(1), 113-117.

NASA Task Load Index

Hart and Staveland's NASA Task Load Index (TLX) method assesses work load on five 7-point scales. Increments of high, medium and low estimates for each point result in 21 gradations on the scales.

Name	Task	Date
------	------	------

Mental Demand How mentally demanding was the task?

Very Low Very High

Physical Demand How physically demanding was the task?

Very Low Very High

Temporal Demand How hurried or rushed was the pace of the task?

Very Low Very High

Performance How successful were you in accomplishing what you were asked to do?

Perfect Failure

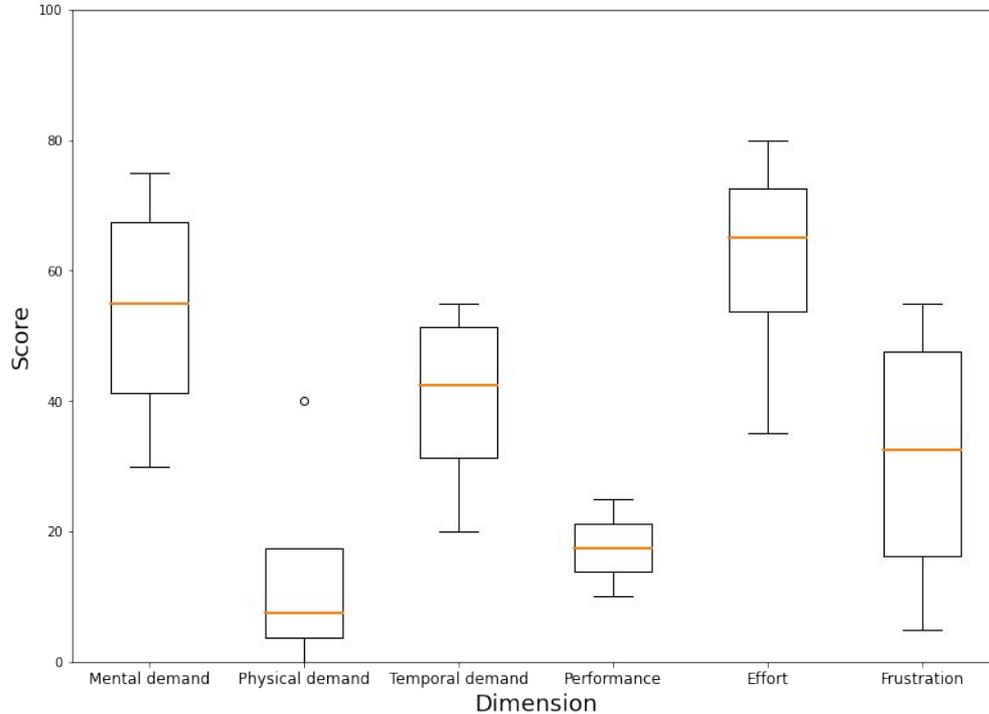
Effort How hard did you have to work to accomplish your level of performance?

Very Low Very High

Frustration How insecure, discouraged, irritated, stressed, and annoyed were you?

Very Low Very High

Distribution of participant responses to the NASA TLX questionnaire



A lower score indicates a better result

The results **hint** that:
Users participants **felt successful in accomplishing the task**, but it required effort and mental demand.

MultiModalTopicExplorer functionalities allow users to feel successful while evaluating topic models.

Future work

- ❖ **Datasets:** Investigate MultiModelTopicExplorer functionalities in other domains
- ❖ **Scalability:** Seek options to visualize a larger number of topics (e.g., 300 topics) in a longer period of time (e.g, 100 months) in a compact manner
- ❖ **User study:**
 - Increase the number of users participants
 - Compare our tool with other topic modeling visualization tools
- ❖ **Users in control:** Allow users to change the number of keywords and images displayed

Future work

- ❖ Use of automatically calculated metrics such Coherence to compare the BERTopic vs LDA
- ❖ Consider topic hierarchy
- ❖ Consider hierarchy in conversation threads (Replies, comments, etc.)
- ❖ Improve the BERTopic model to be more scalable (Right now it can only fit to 130000 samples, and predict the rest)
- ❖ Find a way to boost LDA's training speed with GPUs

Questions?

Thank You! :)