Room to Grow: Understanding Factors Behind Volitional Personal Change Using Social Media

MeiXing Dong (*meixingd@umich.edu*), Xueming Xu, Yiwei Zhang, Rada Mihalcea
University of Michigan

Research Question

- Can we computationally identify characteristics of people who are likely to persist in personal change?

Data

reddit r/getdisciplined

Posted by u/cdaction1234567 2 days ago

26 [NeedAdvice] Avoiding responsibility and anxiety induced binges.

Posted by u/Rusty_James 3 days ago

4 [Need Advice] Techniques for getting focus back mid-day

- Focus on those who post for the first time within 5 month period
    - Persistently active - 3 or more posts
    - Temporarily active - only one post

Task

- Classify those whose interest in self change persists (persistently active) vs those with momentary interest (temporarily active)
- Use posting behavior of each person
    - Prior general posts on Reddit
    - Initial r/getdisciplined-specific posts

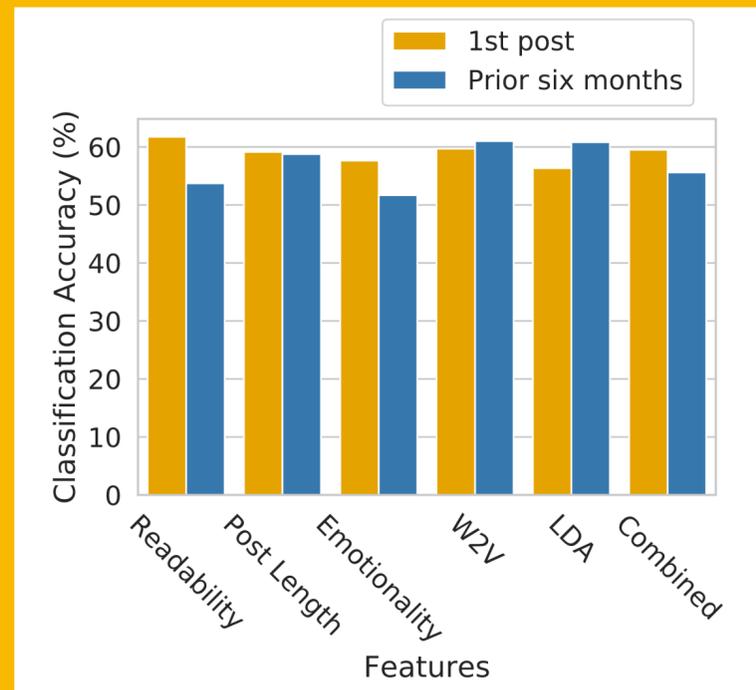People's online **posting behavior** can **predict** their **persistence in self-improvement**.

Table 1. Prediction results for binary classification of activity level in r/getdisciplined.
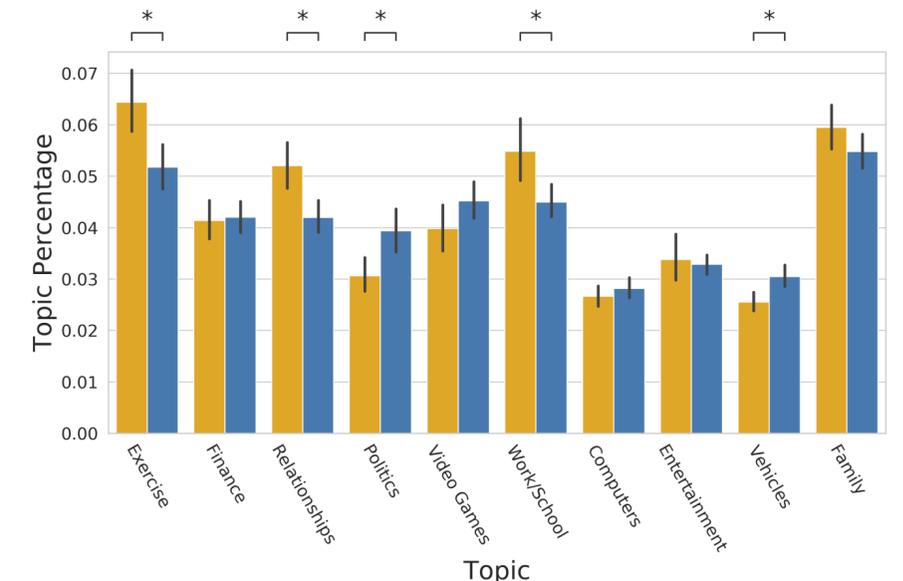
Methods

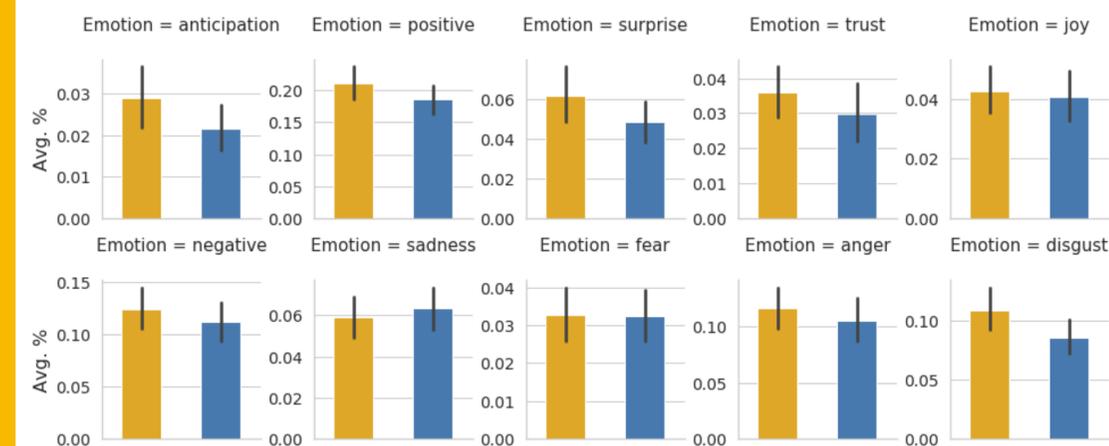Fig. 1: Topical interests from 30-topic LDA model based on prior behavior

Fig 2: Emotional features from NRC Emotion Lexicon based on initial r/getdisciplined activity