



## *Case studying the use of online newspaper reader comment boards in research:*

### *Ingenuity or opened floodgates?*

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### **Abstract**

Even though the methodological approaches for the use of online newspaper comments in academic research are still being finessed (Henrich & Holmes, 2012) and that the ethical and epistemological challenges inherent to this type of unobtrusive data (Lee, 2000) are numerous in comparison with traditional and 'reactive' sources of information (Hine, 2011), I argue in this presentation that readers' comments posted on online newspaper boards could possibly constitute a valuable source of rich data for the investigation of some social and human phenomena.

This is because, while this new form of deliberative journalism (McMillen, 2013) is democratizing access to public debate, it is also allowing us to rethink a number of concepts in research, like truth, validity, profiling, anonymity, representativeness, and the rapport between subject and researcher.

Against these theoretical interrogations, I will then look at some widely held stances on Kreol language in Mauritius by referring to posts published between 2010 and 2014 on the reader comment board of one of the island's most popular online newspapers. I will use as guidepost a reflection by Bavoux (2002) on representations and attitudes vis-à-vis languages in Creolophone spaces, before trying, in the light of the study conducted, to come up with theorisations that could eventually depart from those of Bavoux.

RESEARCH SEMINAR

**Friday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2014**  
**15 hrs**  
**Conference Room, Level 3,**  
**MIE Tower**