How does media play a role in the building and breaking of communities?
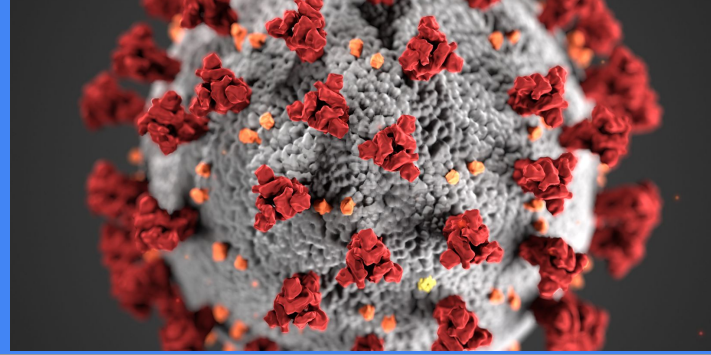
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Media Breaking Communities

- Social media is a common propagator of fake news. Rapid spread of fake news on social media has created unrest and endangered communities.
- Media can also be divisive whenever it takes a contested ideological stance.

Fake News

- Fake News spread on social sites Viber and Facebook claiming that evacuees from a plane containing people from Wuhan China were infected and returning to the Ukraine
- This turned a town in Ukraine into what some called "armageddon"
- People took to the streets and there was massive unrest until the fake news was debunked
  - "Overnight, groups of people left their homes to occupy the town's center and block access to the medical facility, a Soviet-era sanatorium" (Buzzfeed News)

Framing

- The way in which some news outlets covered protests created division in communities.
- Episodic vs Thematic Framing
  - Focusing only on unfolding events and not the underlying reasons for protest.
  - Many news stations choose to air the most graphic parts of the events. Leading the viewer to believe most protests were rowdy rather than peaceful.

Framing Cont.

- Police vs Protesters
  - Professor Doug McLeod from University of Wisconsin said, "This creates an "in-group/out-group" situation in which the protesters are portrayed as a deviant out-group, while the rest of us are the in-group. This builds public hostility toward protesters as an out-group threat, with the protesters being seen as deviants, rather than as active participants seeking social change."

Stereotypes

- News is guilty of perpetuating racial stereotypes and creating inaccurate and divisive portrayals of certain communities
- A study from the Washington Post about news media post election found that:

"At best, media outlets promoted racially biased portrayals and myths that pathologize black families and idealize white families with respect to poverty and crime. At worst, media outlets amplified those inaccurate depictions for political and financial gain."

Stereotypes Cont.

- News channels that focus on rioting and looting are contributing to a narrative that protests are violent
    - Leads people to not be supportive of movements like BLM that may be occurring in their community
    - Creates negative connotations and views on social and political matters

Taking an Ideological Stance: Answering to Corporate Benefactors

Media can also be divisive through their ideological standing on certain issues. Their information is often influenced by their corporate benefactors/donors.

What 'Medicare for All' would really mean for US pocketbooks

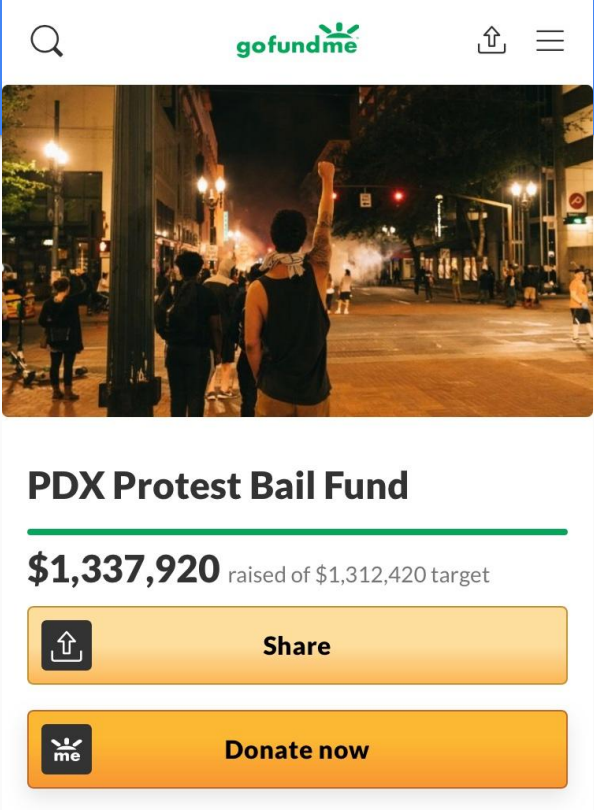Climate Change: What's So Alarming?

Bjorn Lomborg   👁 3.1m

Media Building Communities

- Media also has the capacity to bring communities together
- News Media and Social Media have played a large role in creating communities that are educated and informed
- Social Media has also created a new type of communication within communities

Mutual Aid

- Social Media has been used to uplift members of the community that are in need of help
- Millions of links to GoFund Me's to help activists arrested during BLM protests were shared on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook
- GoFund Me's were also popular tool to help people pay for medical treatment & debt. This has been especially helpful during the COVID pandemic

gofundme

PDX Protest Bail Fund

$1,337,920 raised of $1,312,420 target

Share

Donate now

Organizing

- Social Media has been used as a tool to organize protests to unite and advocate for policies for the good of the community
- Various advocate groups and leaders send out messages, fliers, and social media posts in order to spread word about their end goal

Organizing Cont.

- According to the Washington Post, the rise of BLM protests in small towns this summer was due to youth activist's use of social media

"A typical small town was Pen Argyl, Pa. (pop. 3,600), where three friends in their late teens organized the protest, while younger siblings helped promote it on Instagram. One hundred and 50 people showed up in support."
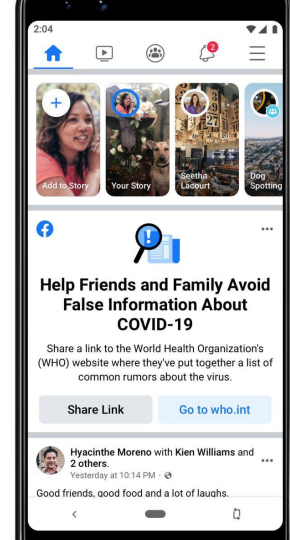
Amplifies Community Voices

- Social Media and News Media are used in order to give a voice to those whose stories would usually go unheard
- Stories, pictures, and videos can go viral and reach large amounts of people around the world which can help spread important news to communities which can be beneficial
- Examples: EndSARS Movement, spreading news about the 2020 election encouraging people to vote, videos of police brutality
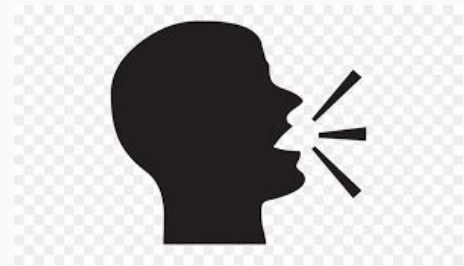
Combating Misinformation

- Traditional news media has done a decent job at debunking false information about COVID
  - Important for the safety of communities
- Social Media has created algorithms that search for misinformation
  - Important because misinformation leads to people taking less precautions and putting the vulnerable within their communities at risk

Conclusion

In conclusion, media plays a role in breaking communities through the spread of fake news, framing, stereotypes, and taking certain ideological stances. Media also builds communities by allowing for mutual aid, assisting in organization, amplifying community voices, and combating misinformation. The various types of media that are published allows consumers to make connections with people in their communities and around the world. It is important to understand that media can help us but also hinder us, so we should stay aware of what we consume.

Discussion Questions

1) In your experience has social media helped build a sense of community or has it created division?
2) How do you use social media in order to connect to your community, especially during this time of COVID-19?
3) Has there been a time where you have come across misleading information in your community? How did you overcome this?

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