Diversity and social media

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2016 election spawns diversity dialogue

- During Mark Zuckerberg's hearing this week, Rep. Yvette Clarke (D—New York) asked him if he thought the reason fake news was so prolific in the 2016 presidential election was due to a lack of diversity in his company.
- This line of questioning spawned from the amount of advertisements on Facebook that played on people's prejudices and vilified groups like Black Lives Matter.
- Sen. Cory Booker (D—New Jersey) questioned Zuckerberg about why Facebook's advertisers were allowed to use a person's race to tailor their ads to specific individuals.
- Rep. G.K. Butterfield (D—North Carolina) said to Zuckerberg during his hearing that CEO leadership on matters of diversity was the only way things will change before asking him about his commitment to it.

The numbers

- Facebook currently has a majority of white male employees, with men composing 65 percent and white people making up almost half of the entire company, according to its self-reported 2017 diversity data. Senior leadership at the company is 71 percent white and 72 percent male.
- Twitter also has a majority white and male faculty, with men making up over 60 percent and white people making up about 44 percent of the whole company. Senior leadership at Twitter is also over half white people and almost 68 percent male.
- Google's 2017 diversity data shows similar trends, with its employees being 69 percent male and 56 percent white. Its senior leadership is three-quarters male and 68 percent white.

Why diversity matters

- As the Senators and Congressmembers pointed out during Zuckerberg's hearing, if more people with varying viewpoints are there to contribute, then a more inclusive product, service or outcome will emerge.
- Companies with more gender and ethnic diversity have been shown to perform better financially, according to McKinsey&Company's 2015 Diversity Matters study.
- While women compose over half the population in the United Kingdom, the United States and Brazil, they only have senior leadership positions in 12, 16 and 6 percent of companies, respectively, according to the same study.
- More ethnically diverse companies are also more likely to perform better, according to the same study.

Course concepts

- People without access to digital platforms, who are often people who have intersectional identities, may not have a high digital literacy, which leads to digital inequality.
- One's social class, part of an intersectional identity, is the education, income and type of job that places people on a hierarchy.
- People often have a tendency to gravitate toward people who look and are like them, which is called homophily.
- Rep. Clarke claimed some advertisers were playing on preconceived notions and hate speech that attacks, threatens or insults a person or group based on traits like race, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability or other traits.

Questions

- Why do you personally think diversity is or is not important?
- How should Mark Zuckerberg and other senior leaders at companies find ways to increase their diversity numbers?
- Why is it that companies are not more representative of the population of the country or place they are in?

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