Internet Fixation on Communities in Response to Crisis Events

**Purpose:**

How do local crises resonate on a broader stage? Why do some tragedies linger within the global consciousness while others barely make national news? With the rise of social media and hashtag activism, people from all over the globe weigh in on issues unique to a particular locale. But how long do these fascinations last for and what types of events incite the most response? I aim to measure internet-community response to local crises by analyzing Reddit data mentioning certain locations before, during, and after key events. Measures include the volume and sentiment of comments regarding certain locales. Baseline measures are taken for each event and subsequent measures are standardized to the baseline. Standardized distributions are then modelled using time-series analysis to describe the duration of the awareness for a certain location. Model coefficients are modelled against key characteristics including relevant political issues, the location of the event, and chief causes (i.e. natural disaster, crime, social unrest) to train machine learning/regression algorithms. The final aim is to gauge what event, climate, and location characteristics launch a community into the public eye for the longest period.

**Primary Outcome:**

* Categorical and Continuous variables which most significantly predict the distribution of sentiment towards and awareness of a location following a crisis event.

**Secondary Outcomes:**

* Theoretical model of a crisis news cycle
* Descriptive statistics regarding past key American events

**Methods:**

*Selection of Events:*

*Selection of Keywords for Search Terms:*

The aim of the project is to approximate internet awareness for local communities in response to events, not to gauge the impact of the events themselves on a broader stage. Thus, all keywords are selected based on their ability to describe the local community in which the event occurred. Colloquial names for events, social movements, or key people associated with the events are not used for search and analysis thus excluding posts without specific mention of the community in question. Posts of that nature are more closely related to the broader national narrative and are not relevant to the particular question of interest.

To be continued & refined with further research…

References:

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Heil, B. and Piskorski, M. 2009 New Twitter Research: Men Follow Men and Nobody Tweets, viewed (9 January 2012), <http://blog.harvardbusiness.org/cs/2009/06/new_twitter_research_men_follo.html>

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