The Impact of American Cultural values on Facebook's Interface and Functionalities.

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Abstract

This article tackles the unexplored relationship between Facebook and American cultural values. The main concern of this paper is to demonstrate the strong impact of American cultural values on the features of Facebook. Americanization via the internet and social media is investigated in this research paper. Facebook, which is one of the social media networking sites, helps transmit American cultural values on a global scale. This can be vividly noticed on the way the interface of Facebook is designed. American core values like individualism, self-reliance, equality of opportunity, competition, material wealth, hard work and many other values exercise a strong influence on the functionalities of Facebook. As a result, the purpose of this paper is to extract and analyze Facebook's functionalities that highly reflect the main American cultural value.

Key words: *American cultural values, Americanization, Internet, social media, Facebook, .*

Introduction

The recent years have witnessed a launch of a great number of networks used to share information to a universal phenomenon providing more information, content and social

connections than ever before. The most interesting evolution in the history of the internet has been social media, " a web – based made of dialogue that uses a wide array of tools, websites and other applications to encourage communication between individuals, corporations, non – profits and other organizations"(Boswell, n.d).

Facebook is one of those social networking sites that continuously longs for facilitating people's communication. It is a means of socialization that is used by almost all the categories of any society. It is an effective tool to maintain strong ties and create new connections. Facebook is a good digital space where the young generation can make a difference in their communities by participating in various activities online and creating Facebook interest groups to organize unlimited events[1].

This social networking site is inspiring researchers to introduce new avenues in social media studies. Facebook is not only a simple site or a wealthy company that is making money, but it is also a computerized human-based virtual universe that is deeply anchored into our lives.

Facebook's popularity is above criticism. Many statistics confirm that it is the top used social networking site worldwide. On the other hand, it is not only a means of socializing, but it has also become an instrument to reach economic political and journalistic aims. And the influence of Facebook "is pervasive, entering homes, businesses and organizations worldwide, and reaching widespread demographic groups" (Raymond, Lu, 2011, p. 03).

I contend that American cultural values have always impacted the cultures of other nations. The advent of the internet has helped transmit American culture worldwide, and social media networking sites like Facebook are helping American culture's

proliferation globally. So I, throughout this work, seek for answers to the following questions: Does Facebook succeed in transmitting American cultural values? Isn't conceivable to state that Facebook is a new carrier of American culture? To what extent do Facebook values intersect with American values?

It is my contention that the interface and functionalities of Facebook are deeply influenced by the American culture. Since Facebook was created in the United States, I believe that American cultural values are highly reflected in the site's functionalities and features. To demonstrate the previously mentioned hypothesis, I give an overview of American culture as well as the main American cultural values, and tackle how these values are transmitted globally by means of the internet. The last part concerns the relationship between Facebook and the American cultural values. The study is, therefore, analytical and descriptive that relies heavily on recent works related to the topic as well as the researcher's interpretations and comments.

Understanding key elements of American culture

Americans come from different religious and cultural backgrounds. Additionally, ethnicity nationality and race play an important role in making The United States culturally diverse. Americans did not have any choice but to accept their differences. They rather consider that this diversity is giving strength to their nation. Cultural pluralism[2] became part of the American character. Although the Western Anglo Saxon Protestant (W.A.S.P) culture characterizes the American mainstream culture, cultural pluralism should also be taken into consideration. The important question that comes to one's mind is: does a nation with this cultural diversity form a common national identity? John Zoghby, who is an American pollster, answers one's question by stating that the American national identity is produced thanks to a number of values they

commonly share. Additionally, he says that Americans are also defined by their rights and that these rights constitute their history."(Datesman, Crandall and Kearny, 2005, p. 28) Similarly, Henry Schissler (2008) describes American culture as being quite specific. He says: "But we do share core values. These values are generally assumed to be 'the American way' and are taught to school children as morality and signs of good character. We are all socialized to believe in them through media presentations, political speeches, and in the workplace" (1)
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The United States has always been portrayed as the Promised Land, "the land of opportunity", enticing a huge number of immigrants from different parts of the world. The social, economic, political opportunities as well as the experiences that most immigrants shared while living in America shaped the American set of values. One notices that the American values that have been stated by different scholars do not include the same list. However, they agree on six values which are the traditional American values: Individual freedom, self-reliance, equality of opportunity, competition, material wealth, and hard work.

1-Individual freedom and self-reliance

The decisions taken by the early settlers of North America have deeply affected the creation of the American Character. Indeed, by putting limits to the government as well as the churches and by forbidding aristocracy, Americans succeeded to make a sphere of freedom that primarily gives importance to the individual. The United States became the synonym of "individual freedom". Some scholars consider it as the most salient American value. Some other scholars, however, rather prefer to name this value "individualism". (Datesman, Crandall and Kearny, 2005, p. 29)

Obviously, Americans had to pay a price for this freedom which is: self-reliance. The term means that Americans have to rely on themselves even if they risk their freedom. (Datesman, Crandall and Kearny, 2005, p.29).The value of self-reliance continues to be considered up to the present as a traditional American value because for most Americans protecting freedom requires self-reliance.(Datesman, Crandall and Kearny, 2005, p. 30)

One of the most important consequences of individualism is privacy, which is also considered as a very important value in American culture. (Kohls, n.d). The American constitution protects Americans' privacy in the fourth amendment, previously known as the bill of rights. It is clearly stated in this amendment that "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized" (American constitution, Amendment 4 - Search and Seizure. Ratified 12/15/1791). So it seems reasonable to infer from the formerly stated elements that "the right to privacy is a notion runs deep in American culture. Both respected and defended, privacy is considered fundamental to a free society. Americans carry this right like a shield" ("American culture and values", n.d).

- **Equality of opportunity and competition**

Comprehending what Americans mean by equality and opportunity is mandatory. For them equality does not mean that every individual is or has to be equal. They rather mean that every individual has to be provided with the chance to succeed. Americans value race for the sake of success. (Datesman, Crandall and Kearny, 2005, p. 31). It implies that the race for success is a right for any American individual, no matter what his financial, racial or religious background is. The ideal of

equality of opportunity is also mentioned in their Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal"(The Declaration of Independence).

Nevertheless, equality of opportunity requires competition. (Datesman, Crandall and Kearny, 2005, p. 31). Americans, on another hand, believe that "competition brings out the best in any individual. They assert that it challenges or forces each person to produce the very best that is humanly possible" (Kohls, n.d). And thanks to competition, Americans succeeded to establish an economic system that is based on free enterprise. In fact, Americans strongly believe that any competitive economy that extracts the best from its people will definitely prosper and progress in a very short time (Kohls, n.d)

- **Material Wealth and hard work**

Materialism, one of the American values, refers to material ownership. (Datesman, Crandall and Kearny, 2005, p. 32). Material wealth has historically been an acceptable tool to determine the social standard of any American individual. Since Americans did not accept the European system of government that was based on aristocracy, they were under an obligation to find another alternative for social status determination. As it is mentioned by Datesman, Crandel and Kearny (2005) in their essay *Traditional American Values and Beliefs,* "The quality and quantity of an individual's material possessions became an accepted measure of success and social status" (32). This confirms the significance of material wealth as a tool to determine the American individual's social status.

Americans, however, had to embrace another value which is hard work in order to reach material success and wealth. In fact, the northern part of the American continent contained a great deal of natural recourses when the early settlers stepped in. They had no choice but to work hard in order to transform these

natural resources into "material possessions" (Datesman, Crandall and Kearny, 2005, p. 33). Material wealth, therefore, allowed them to have a comfortable way of living. Traditionally and historically Americans have considered hard work as a necessity to reach rewarding outcomes like material wealth (Datesman, Crandall and Kearny, 2005, p. 33). As Gregory Jay (n.d) States in his article *Do Americans share a common culture?*, material success is the lonely standard that determines the social stratification of individuals in America because he clearly claims "individuals who accumulate great amounts of capital are thus very powerful and much respected in a capitalist society, which looks down on poorer people because they have failed to succeed. Economic success or failure is judged to be the responsibility of individuals, and thus a matter of merit or achievement" (2).

Before proceeding, it may be useful to state that the previously mentioned American cultural values do not unveil the whole truth about the American character. Many other American values are of genuine import that guide and sensitize the investigator to reach reasonable conclusions about the unexplored relationship between American values and the social networking site Facebook. The next values that are going to be discussed are: time management, friendships and practicality. The three aforementioned values are significant for this paper because they are highly present in the Americans' social intercourse and constitute a great part of the American character.

Americans give a great significance to time. They tend to accomplish their tasks according to a predetermined planning. Their schedule includes every detail that may affect their punctuality. The reason behind Americans' valorization of time is that they wholeheartedly believe that a person who keeps on working and doesn't waste time is the one who accomplishes

various things in his life. For most Americans time management leads to productivity, which is considerably praised in the American society. In fact, many American proverbs value time, focusing on the idea that if it is used wisely to reach particular objectives, many other results of hard work may arise but in later times (Kohls, n.d). In the same line of thought, Luis Hestres (2003) the author of the article *The Influence of American Culture on Software Design Microsoft Outlook as a Case Study* claims that Americans are monochromic people. Monochromic time refers to "emphasizing schedule, segmentation, and promtness" (6). The way Americans talk about time reveals the extent to which it is valuable in their lives. They usually mention expressions like "saving", "spending", or "wasting" time. He continues stating that Americans give such importance to time because their short history compels them to value only the present and future, neglecting the past and history (Hestres, 2003, p. 07).

As far as practicality is concerned, Americans view themselves as efficient, realistic pragmatic and practical. Practicality is present everywhere in the United States of America. Additionally, Americans tend to be pragmatically oriented and no room is given to philosophy and theory. Practicality enables also Americans to be objective in their assessments, avoiding the intervention of sentiments in the decision making process (Kohls, n.d). The value of practicality "is partly due to the culture's western heritage, which is rooted on rationalism. Things must always 'make sense', and they trust facts and figures above else" (Hestres, 2003, p. 07).

Last but not least, friendship for Americans can refer either to acquaintances or to friends with whom they have been in contact for a long time. An American's friend can be a school classmate, a coworker or a person met during a sport activity. Americans, on another hand, have the tendency to be informal,

and formality is considered "Un-American". Additionally, Americans are direct and straightforward in interactions. In the meanwhile, they dislike confrontation (Hestres, 2003, p. 05).

Internationalization of American cultural values via Internet

All the previously discussed American values are influencing not only Americans but also the lives of those beyond America's borders. Defining what is meant by American and un-American has been accomplished within American borders. Indeed, "America was defined as part of a national self-assertion". (Kean and Campbell, 2006, p. 289) Nevertheless, according to the same source *American Cultural Studies,* it is through the analysis of "Americanization"[3] that many other aspects of the American character are unveiled and, thus, studied. Accordingly, the identity of America in the world is shaped not only by Americans themselves but also by interactions that other individuals have experienced with America (Campbell and Kean, 2006, p. 289). Indeed, the United States has exercised its power over people outside its borders through military and economic control, including cultural grip (Kean and Campbell, 2006, p. 291). With regard to American cultural influence on the world's diverse cultures, which is a part of this section's concern, it is argued by many scholars as Dwight Macdonald that American culture is taking the lead worldwide and all its values have been transmitted to other peoples of different cultures, resulting in the creation of what he calls mass culture[4]

According to the same cultural expert, "mass culture was 'imposed from above' on audiences who were 'passive consumers' of material that 'mixes and scrambles everything together, producing what might be called homogenized culture'"

(Kean and Campbell, 2006, p. 292). He continues to add that the originality of one's culture was doomed to disappearance and "in place came 'standardization' and the 'spreading ooze of Mass Culture' which was associated with all things American" (Campbell and Kean, 2006, p. 292). This mass culture, then, becomes known as American mass culture that is enforcing its values on other societies and cultures worldwide (Kean and Campbell, 2006 p. 295).

Additionally, the development of the internet has certainly accentuated the process of Americanization. As it is known, the internet has been controlled by the U.S.A from the first day it was launched and the domination of course includes servers, infrastructures, content and users (Kean and Campbell, 2006, p. 304). On the other hand, the internet is based on the American ideals of "open access to information, liberalization and privatization" (Kean and Campbell, 2006, p. 304). The internet is, therefore, one of the many efficient ways of American culture transmission. It is not a means of celebrating cultural diversity, but it is rather another implicit way to subject people to Americanization. What confirms one's assumptions is that America's domination of the internet can be noticed in the use of the English language as its official language. Moreover, the unceasing commercialization of the internet can have negative consequences on the "free flow of information" (Kean and Campbell, 2006, p. 305). Ann Knysh (n.d), on the other hand, talks about American culture and clearly states that "American style and American way of life are not now only American, but become internationally spread. Investments into pop culture provide it with profit, internet, technologies and mass media transfer American pop culture into other countries, and what used to be American mass culture becomes international."

The author of an article entitled *The Internet in Developing Countries* argues that since the internet is controlled by the same institutions and interests, it is, therefore, reasonable to say that it

reinforces American Culture expansion to every part of the world (Albirini, 2008, p. 52, 53). He continues to add that this may lead to "the global homogenization of culture", eliminating all the other cultures and their traditions. Western cultural patterns, thus, may take the lead in every corner of the globe. He argues that both technology and the internet in particular play a major role in the spread of the American western-based culture by stating "as the new technology culture diffuses, local cultural norms become outdated and are replaced with more 'promising' projections of social behavior and customs (e.g, individualism, consumerism, competitiveness)" (Albirini, 2008, p. 55). Mel Van Elteren (n.d) talks about Americanization but emphasizes its relationship with globalization[5] by means of the internet and its regulation. According to him, The United States of America has prospered in all the domains that are of high prominence in the new decade of globalization. This success is plainly noticeable in "rules governing the Internet and other international communication networks". He carries on asserting that "much of the information revolution originated in the United States and a large part of the content of global information networks is manufactured there, giving globalization a U.S face" (Elteren, n.d, p. 154).

In the same vein, the book *Culture and Media* vividly assert that the internet has eliminated obstacles that may hinder any cultural exchange between world nations. Any content and news can be accessed from any corner of the globe. Accordingly, American culture is exported to the rest of the word thanks to the advanced features of the internet. It is, therefore, possible to state that the internet is a powerful force that drives globalization that is American-based. The notion of a globalized culture has been introduced "one in which content can be distributed as easily as it can be received- now the potential to be realized through the Internet. While some political and social barriers still remain, from a technological standpoint there is

nothing to stop the two-way flow of information and culture across the globe" ("Culture and Media", n.d, p. 535).

One of the most important advances in the contemporary era of technology is the emergence of the web 2.0 more precisely social media. The impact of the internet and its Americanized content over other countries' cultures has indeed increased and a global communication without any barriers became possible. Safak Erkayhan (2014) describes social media as global because many structures worldwide are "connected", resulting in the "transformation" of cultures by means of continuous global interactions (26). Communication via social media gave birth to what is known as "global sharing". The term does not refer only to particular sites that generate data to banks globally, but it refers also to the process through which any individual and organism tries to share information that concerns global politics, or attempts to make the world of business open to any professional worldwide. Other individuals use social media to promote "common values of humanity such as ecology, peace, human rights" (Erkayhan, 2014, p. 27). Consequently, social media has been very efficient in putting into existence "common sharing such as global consciousness, global discussions and enlightenment". On the other hand, social media has proved its effectiveness in shaping public opinion. Users of such a kind of social media sites form a virtual world that "behaves like a nation that has common targets, they almost represent a single nation in the world" (Erkayhan, 2014, p. 27). National Citizenship, according to Erkayhan, is disappearing and it is replaced by what he calls "global citizenship". People are now citizens of one global village sharing information that serves common interests to reach global ends. What confirm one's argument are the words of Erkayhan when he said: "Social networksites such as [Wikipedia and Facebook] have emerged as media tools that provide sharings for global citizenship related ideas, thoughts and concepts. Web 2.0[6]. has ensured that people

came unite around certain targets and ideologies through social media" (Erkayhan, 2014, p. 29).Facebook is one of the social media networking sites that is reinforcing "global citizenship". Since an analysis of all social media sites is not possible throughout this humble article, I prefer to limit its scope of research to Facebook only.

American cultural values and Facebook

The main reason behind the creation of such a networking site is the quest for globalization, making people better understand each other, and eliminating any distance barriers that hinder any continuous, long-lasting, and instantaneous communication. Facebook is indeed a distance killer. The whole world is transformed into a global village thanks to Facebook and many other social media networking sites. This view was confirmed by Horváth (2014) when she stated that Facebook "strengthened the world's global village character. Geographical distances play none ever-increasing role in our lives given the possibility of being in the same cyberspace, whatever our geographical location might be. Maintaining contact does not depend on geographical proximity anymore, what does count, though, is internet availability" (Horváth, 2014, p. 86).However, one may argue that Facebook is taking the lead in social networking worldwide. Gajewski (2014) confirms one line of reasoning by stating that Facebook is a new layer of the internet. He manifestly asserts that "instead of perceiving Facebook as a huge social network, one should rather recognize it as a new layer of the internet, providing completely new approach to internet communication. The layered structure of the internet allows creating new layers, and now Facebook seems to become the top one, determining to a great extent the way we use computer-mediated communication today" (Gajewski, 2014, p. 49).

Many studies have been conducted to examine social media networking sites in general and Facebook in particular. These studies have been mainly focusing on the number of friends one can have on Facebook, the extent to which its features allow the users to share information, and the privacy issues that may arise from its non protected-use. On the other hand, much of the literature primarily addresses the young generation, more precisely college students because Facebook was created to serve in the first place this category of the society. However, no studies if not very rare ones have tackled Facebook as a culture conductor.

Accordingly, I found a single study that tackled Facebook and its relationship with American core cultural values. The author of this work says Facebook "becomes, in essence, a culture with its own values- its own ways of knowing. Facebook is an interestingly fluid cultural location, with its users moving in and out of it and the location in which they physically subside" (Carlson, 2011, p. 01). Additionally, the same author considers Facebook as a culture and "shifting the focus to Facebook as a culture, while seeking to understand American values, provides richer understanding of Facebook at the present moment while also addressing the longevity of cultural values" (Carlson, 2011, p. 02). The author then confirms the tight relationship between American cultural values and Facebook's interface. Stated differently, this author considers Facebook as a culturally American-based social networking site.

So the questions that come to one's mind are: What cultural values does Facebook convey? And to what extent do these values intersect with the American cultural ones? Or stated differently, isn't conceivable to state that Facebook is a new carrier of American culture? Does Facebook succeed in transmitting American cultural values worldwide?

Before embarking upon an analysis of how the site of Facebook and its functionalities reflect American cultural values, it would be necessary to shed light on the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of this widely used networking site. The co-founder and CEO of Facebook, Mark Elliot Zuckerberg is considered as the embodiment of American culture. It is essential to state that he comes from a solid, middle class background: his father owned a dental practice next to the family's house and his mother was a psychiatrist. Zuckerberg was interested in computing at a very early age. His parents hired a private computer tutor David Newman to help mark excel in computing. In 2002 Mark Zuckerberg graduated from Philip Exeter Academy. Later, he decided to prepare for another diploma at Harvard University. However, during his sophomore year he decided along with his friends to create "the facebook" ("Mark Zuckerberg biography", n.d). Based on Mark Zuckerberg's biography, one may state that his life represents core American cultural values like Individualism, the prominence of American culture, practicality, interest in technology, a forward looking attitude, hard work and an intense competitive spirit. He wholeheartedly believes that hard work and progress are the keys for success. In fact, Marie Carlson (2011) takes the same stand and states:

Since an American, born in and residing in the United States, created Facebook, it makes sense that this value would be extremely coherent between American culture and Facebook culture. Therefore, features like tagging friends to show connectivity, highlighting important family relationships on profiles, posting events, checking in to places, and the sharing of posts/ deals/ pictures perpetuate this notion (76).

In the last part,the features and user interface of Facebook and how they embody American cultural values already outlined previously in this section will be examined. To that end, I need to shed light again on the cultural values, point to the most

important features of Facebook, and then analyze the relationship between them.

Individualism: This cultural value is embodied and reinforced throughout the site. Each Facebook user has a private profile which can be accessed only by the user himself. The user can also utilize the instantaneous chatting feature to send private messages to his friends. All the private messages that are sent or received from his account or profile, all journal notes as well as the calendar activities created under it are private and can be accessible only by that user. The contacts accepted within a particular profile are relevant only to that particular user and thus they are private. The user, on the hand, can edit his profile by deleting or adding new friends. This feature then represents the American cultural value "privacy", which is, as mentioned earlier, intrinsic to individuality.

The other feature that emphasizes individuality is the customization of one's profile. The user can join the groups he prefers, add photos and videos, play games and add applications to his profile. The user can control who can see what he shares when he posts from the top of newsfeed or his profile. He can turn on or off his chatting feature. Additionally, the user can organize his contacts into categories: family, close friends, acquaintances, or simply create his own list. As he can unfriend any contact at any time. The existence of all these features, including others, in one's profile is analogous to a very individual and private activity in real life.

Friendships and communication: While Facebook's main mission is to make the world more open and connected, its other important function is to enable people express themselves through "update status", posting comments on any publication, sharing different types of information (photos, links, news, pages….etc), and joining common interest groups. Expressing one's thoughts online via Facebook reflects a cherished

American cultural value: freedom of speech. The access, ease and speed that Facebook offers boost users' capability to express their opinions freely. Every user on Facebook is a publisher and his ideas can reach various parts of the globe in minutes if not seconds. The other feature that is of high importance is the inclusion of calling in the mobile version of Facebook application. The user cannot only text his friends but he can also interact with them using the free phone calls that Facebook is now offering to his users.

American relationship and communication model can be also noticed in other functionalities of Facebook. As a way of example, the use of the word "friend" to identify the list of family, friends, acquaintances and even business associates created by the user reflects the high level of informality as well as the superficiality of personal relationships that exist in American culture.

Competition and cooporation: Facebook addresses competition in many ways. First, competition is exemplified in the "Events" feature, which enables users to schedule meetings and invite other users to participate in them. The creation of events encourages cooperation by allowing users to see what events are available to either participate online or in real life scheduled meetings.

The most interesting page on Facebook is the "careers of Facebook". People with high qualifications can still apply to work for Facebook. The site suggests a considerable number of positions and encourages the applicants to compete for the stated positions by inserting tempting statements like: "Facebook is always looking for intelligent undergraduate graduate and PhD students from around the world to join our growing team" or "We need dynamic people who get excited by big questions and unsolved problems. If you're ready to make an

impact, we want to hear from you" (Facebook, 2015). Another appealing passage that promotes competition to work for Facebook is as follows "It should come as no surprise that we apply the same mission of 'making the world more open and connected' to our company as a whole. As 'one team', People@ focuses on three major areas: hire the best people, foster continuous personal growth and enrich the overall Facebook experience. Our culture is our most important asset, and as the keepers of that culture, we're seeking folks who share our values of moving fast, openness and impact" (Facebook, 2015). All the aforementioned statements reflect the competitive nature of American culture that is transmitted via Facebook worldwide.

Enterprise and Business Facebook makes money from advertising. Facebook also promotes other brands to promote their businesses through posting ads on the site. This can be done through three main steps. First, the company has to build a Facebook page that allows it to communicate with its customers. Second, the company has to connect with people by asking them to like the page and creating several targeted ads based on location, interests and demographics. Again the American spirit of competition is very apparent within this step. The more the brand receives likes, the more it becomes popular online and gets more sales and financial success. The last step is that the company has to engage with its audience. This can be achievable by posting quality updates, and promoting posts to engage its customers with their friends (Facebook, 2015). As it is clearly stated by Mark Zuckerberg's letter describing Facebook's purpose, values, and social mission:
We hope to improve how people connect to businesses and the economy. We think a more open and connected world will help create a stronger economy with more authentic businesses that build better products and services. One result of making it easier to find better products is that businesses will be rewarded for building better products — ones that are personalized and

designed around people. We have found that products that are 'social by design' tend to be more engaging than their traditional counterparts, and we look forward to seeing more of the world's products move in this direction. ("Prosperos World", 2012).

Facebook encourages its developers to provide the site with more appealing applications with a social face. Hundreds of applications are now part of the networking site and many others are welcome only if they meet the site's predetermined exigencies. Through accepting high quality applications, Facebook never ceases to progress. There would be food for thought in the words of Zuckerberg when he said

Our developer platform has already enabled hundreds of thousands of businesses to build higher-quality and more social products. We have seen disruptive new approaches in industries like games, music and news, and we expect to see similar disruption in more industries by new approaches that are social by design ("Prosperos World", 2012).

Time Management: The features provided by the events tool are the representation of monochromic time. The events tool gives importance to time segmentation and absolute dependence on schedules through the use of scheduled reminders on the profile's interface of any user. Through this tool, meetings can be organized through time segmentation which is closely related to American culture. The user can take advantage of this tool to schedule meetings and tasks and thus meet deadlines to accomplish work-related goals in a timely manner, reinforcing the importance of work in American culture.

Hard work: Facebook users share their successes and achievements in a form of postings on their personal profiles. Being aware of the importance of the work ethic and success and sharing them with other Facebook users does meet the American cultural value "successful hard work and ambition". On the other hand, sharing this kind of content creates a kind of

competition among Facebook users, and the winner is determined by the number of likes and comments he succeeds to get. This user is then considered the most successful person within his network if he receives the greatest number of likes. Additionally, such contests can be launched in common interest groups created in Facebook. Whatever orientation (political, religious, economic, educational, social….etc) these groups have something in common: the possibility of launching contests within networks. This spirit of competition to reach success is deeply rooted in American culture and it is proliferated to the rest of the world via Facebook. As it is confirmed by Marie Carlson (2011) "Facebook users believe in ambition to succeed at work hard and sacrifice to achieve success. Facebook users value higher education, most likely to help the previous" (72). Consequently, the value of hard work is strongly present on Facebook through the group feature on one hand, users' awareness of its importance and their efforts to promote it on the other hand.

Practicality: This value which is closely related to the western ones like logic and reason is highly embodied throughout the networking site Facebook. Since the primary mission of Facebook is to make the world interconnected, it is a very practical way to communicate freely with any person on the globe, eliminating any geographical borders that may hinder such interactions. Any user can direct any private message to the destination he believes it is the most appropriate one in order to gain time and money (since it is a free website). The American cultural impulse to "get to the point" is reflected through the way the site is organized. Every single application and icon of the site is clearly designed and presented. Practicality is then the reason behind the old generation's preference to use Facebook. Moreover, journalistic content can be published on Facebook. The content of such information cannot be always reliable, but

reading the news on Facebook can be practical especially if the person's schedule is very tight.

Conclusion

This analysis of Facebook's functionalities and features vividly demonstrates how they reflect and represent many of core values of American culture. While this study is limited to one social networking site, one may suggest that similar studies on other social media networking sites might reach similar conclusions. The question that must be asked here: why are such studies that concern social media networking and their relationship with certain cultural values so significant?

The answer to this question should take into consideration Americanization and the spread of American culture worldwide. The more the impact of American culture grows worldwide, the more people worry about the survival of their cultural heritage. Social networking sites like Facebook are considered by members of local cultures as strong carriers of core characteristics of American culture that undoubtedly affect their own cultures, especially that of the young generation. Throughout the analysis, I tried to demonstrate how Facebook is a carrier of American cultural traits and values. On other hand, one may contend that the potential impact of Facebook, as well as many other networking sites, on cultures worldwide will increase as long as Facebook's functionalities are continuously derived from American cultural values. Millions of people worldwide are increasingly interacting, working or entertaining themselves using Facebook. In the meanwhile, the values and thoughts embedded in Facebook become gradually part of its users' characters. Since Facebook's usage is growing among various cultures on a global scale, it becomes necessary to figure out how Facebook, as an example of a social

networking site, can play the role of a culture carrier, and what consequences this may have on other nation's cultures.

Endnotes

[1]The use of Facebook tools to organize protests in the Arab world is a plain example of how a simple networking site can cause political upheavals and drastic changes in any country's political arena on one hand, enhance democracy, on the other hand. To bring an end to the longtime governments in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and many other Arab countries, activists used Facebook to organize and publicize protests, leading to what is called the "Arab Spring".

[2] Cultural pluralism is a term used to describe a minority group that participates in a society's mainstream culture, but maintains its cultural values and heritage.

[3] Americanization means the spread impact of American culture over other countries' cultures.

[4] Mass culture refers to the set of cultural values that surface from common exposure of a given nation to the identical cultural practices and mass media. Thanks to modern technologies and electronic communication mass culture is successfully produced and spread to other individuals on a global scale.

[5] According to a book entitled culture and media globalization in the realm of culture and the internet "can take the form of access to foreign newspapers (without the difficulty of procuring a printed copy) or, conversely, the ability of people living in previously closed countries to communicate experiences to the outside world relatively cheaply" (534).

[6] According to webopedia, the term Web 2.0 refers to the second generation of the world wide web that enables people to share information online. The change that the web 2.0 brought is the shift from static HTML web pages to dynamic ones that are well organized. Such a new structure of the web provides users with a wide range of applications that can be used online as well as offline.

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ملخص

تأثير القيم الثقافية الأميركية على تصميم الفيسبوك و وظائفه.

يهدف هذا البحث تمثل وتحليل العلاقة بين الفيسبوك والقيم الثقافية الأميركية.من خلال الكشف عن الدور الكبير الذي تلعبه هذه القيم في تصميم شكل الفيسبوك، فضلا عن تناول الأمركة عبر شبكة الإنترنت ووسائل الإعلام الاجتماعية. ويعد الفيسبوك واحدا من وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي المساعد على نقل القيم الثقافية الأميركية على نطاق عالمي واسع ، وهذا ما يتمظهر بشكل واضح على الطريقة التي تم من خلالها تصميم واجهته، وهي القيم التي ترتكز على الفردية والاعتماد على الذات، وتكافؤ الفرص والمنافسة والثروة المادية، والعمل الجاد ، فضلا عن وقيم أخرى كثيرة تمارس تأثيرا قويا على وظائفه.

الكلمات المفتاحية : القيم الثقافية الأمريكية الأمركة ، شبكة الإنترنت، وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، الفيسبوك