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Sociology Integrative Seminar

Film Analysis

This film was about Mark Zuckerberg and how he changed the way we use social media today. Frontline PBS investigates Facebook's impact on privacy and democracy around the world. Zuckerberg had a disrespect for authority, which led to the Facebook motto, "move fast and break things." In an interview, Zuckerberg shows his interest in building things that change the world and goes on to say, "if you're building a product that people love, you can make a lot of mistakes." It seems as though the intention wasn't to harm, but at the same time, they didn't do anything to stop it and wasn't really aware of the possibility that a site like this could create harm. At the same time, he was quoted saying, "I think it's more useful to make things happen, and then like apologize later than to make sure you do all your I's now and then just not get stuff done."

Roger McNamee, an early Facebook investor, shared how the assumption that technology makes the world a better place masked a set of changes that were going on in a culture that they didn't know could be dangerous. This brings me back to Neil Postman's book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, and his theory on how television/technology has changed the way we view things. Facebook was created to connect the world and to give people the power to share in order to make the world more open and connected, that is their mission statement. But, Frontline finds that there are many alarming issues about this social media platform that impacts our privacy and democracy. This film uncovers them through many interviews with current and former Facebook employees, former insiders, whistleblowers, and experts about fake news, polarization, Russian interference, and Facebook's impact on democracy. Early on, Facebook knew that they could be the greatest experiment of free speech in human history; they were creating their kind of digital nation-state.

The social media's growth team was slow to understand that people could be using Facebook for bad things, and when they did, they just decided to focus on the good. The world then saw how connecting through social media could be disastrous when The Arab Spring protested in Cairo, Egypt, in 2011. The point was to protest the abuse the Regime of Hosni Mubarak caused. It was all started by a Facebook page. This is where mindfulness comes to play. Perhaps if Mark Zuckerberg or his team thought of these possibilities when they made their rules and policies to their site, it would've never gotten so far. Through a Facebook group, it only took 28 days for the fall of the regime in Tunisia. Then Wael Ghonim got the idea to protest the Mubarak regime where he set an event on Facebook so people could come out and support by protesting. Within 18 days the President Muhammad Hosni Mubarak stepped down. When the creator of this event was interviewed, they asked him what was next, and he responded with, "Ask Facebook." At this point, Facebook already had a lot of power that they weren't aware of, but after his statement, it just gave them so much more power than Zuckerberg probably imagined.

Without this platform, Ghonim would not have been able to propagate to others, engage others, and enable them. After the president stepped down, different voices started to clash, and the social media created an environment that bred the polarization, and it was rewarded. He was watching the same tool that brought them together, ultimately tear them apart.

Ghonim shifted his focus from the politics in Cairo to what was happening in Silicon Valley. Since Silicone Valley is in such a vastly different location, the people there wouldn't understand the full impact their work was having on the people in Egypt. They needed to be more aware and have sociological mindfulness of their consequences. Facebook should have

been investing more and trying to make sure that what they were making doesn't take a turn for the worst.

Another issue the company started to worry about was how this platform had the ability to spread rumors. It was the most noticeable during the presidential elections when there was a lot of noise from Russia about the elections popping up all over Facebook. There was also the problem of privacy. Was our personal information really covered and private? There was a problem in the system where that was not the case. Information that was sensitive and that had thought to be deleted was still saved on their servers.

Overall, I don't think Facebook is being sociologically mindful to gain a better nonviolent world. It needs to take accountability for their lack of actions and take charge in their work. If their end goal is to make people happy for using their website then I would start with figuring out a resolution to these issues.