

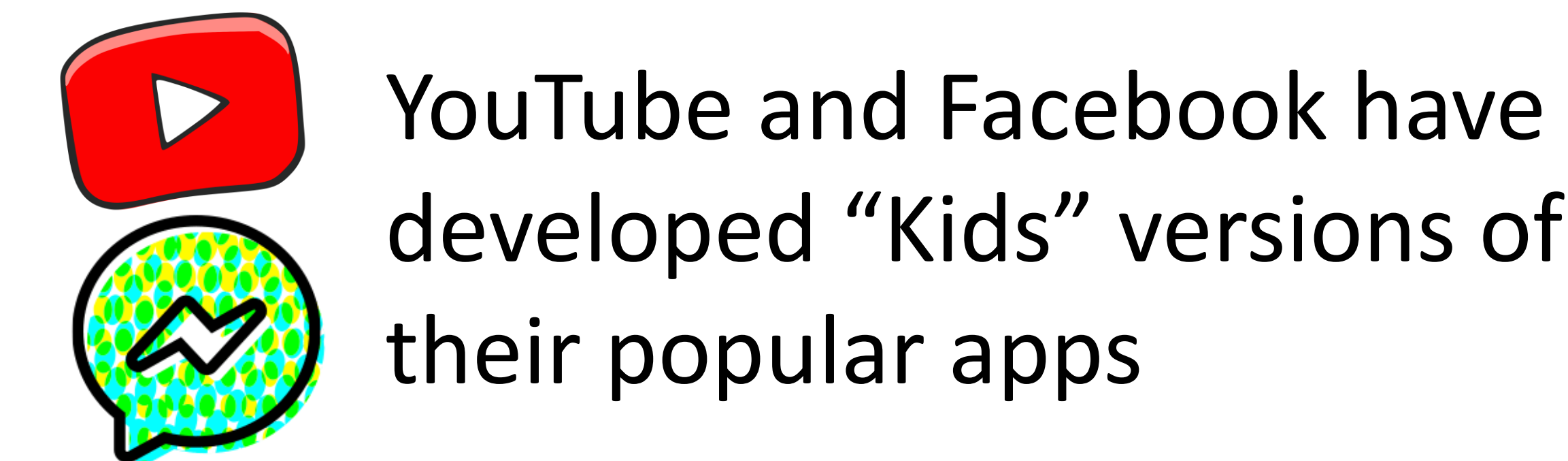
# Policy regarding children and behavioral modification technology

## Background

### Definition

Technology in consumer products designed to collect data on user behavior and, with the use of psychology, change their behavior for the benefit of the product-makers.

### Examples



- YouTube and Facebook have developed “Kids” versions of their popular apps
- Boundless Minds AI
- Provides behavioral modification technologies to other app creators as a service

### Relevant Legislation

- The Children’s Television Act imposes limits on the amount of advertisements which can appear on television programming for children. (Children's Educational Television, 2017)
- “program material [must] be separated from commercials by intervening and unrelated program material”

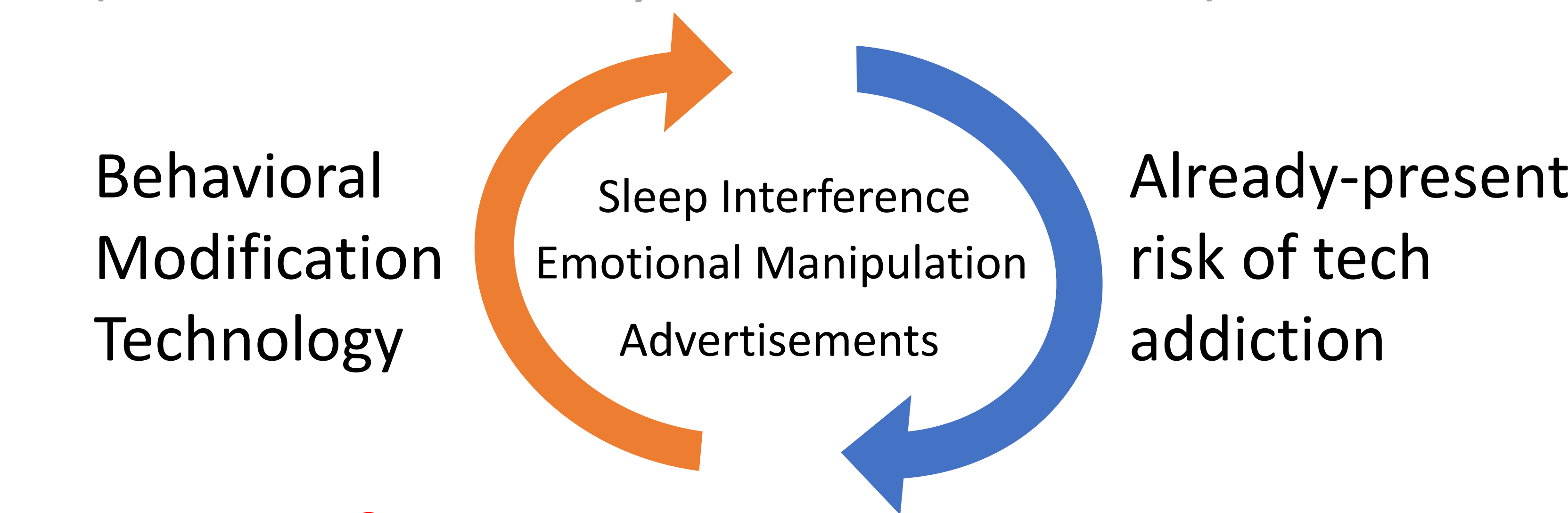
**Behavioral modification technologies should be restricted in apps and web services which target minors.**

### Addiction

- Designed to keep users on product (Boundless Minds AI)
- Risk of problematic internet use and Internet gaming disorder (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2016)

### Other Psychological Impacts

- Children have trouble distinguishing advertisements from in-app content (Verdoodt, Clifford, Lievens 2016)
- “advergames have a positive effect on resulting intended and actual behaviour” (Verdoodt, Clifford, Lievens 2016)
- Mobile device use (which BMT encourages) can negatively impact sleep habits and school performance (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2016)



### Response from Experts

- This technology should be regulated “exactly the same way that you regulated the cigarette industry”  
-SalesForce CEO Marc Benioff
- Many people who work for large Silicon Valley tech companies send their children to no-tech schools (Richtel 2011)

## Implications

### Benefits

- Limits developmental harm and stress
- Creates legal precedent for further legislation regarding behavioral modification technologies

### Drawbacks

- Little existing legal precedent makes regulations like this hard to phrase
- “Behavioral modification” is a vague term, opening up room for loopholes

## Conclusion

Just like the FTC has already done with advertising during children’s programming, and with children’s online privacy through COPPA, there needs to exist government regulation limiting the scope of behavioral modification techniques apps can employ when targeted towards children.

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