

Class 21: Fixing social media

Matthew J. Salganik

Sociology 204: Social Networks
Princeton University

1/2 Background and context



Fixing social media

“Fixing” social media

Changing social media



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUNErhONqCY>

Two broad categories: Structural changes vs tweaks

ECONOMIC VIEW

The Economic Case for Regulating Social Media

The core business model of platforms like Facebook and Twitter poses a threat to society and requires retooling, an economist says.

Force social media companies to switch to a subscription model.

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Force social media companies to switch to a subscription model. What kinds of changes would happen? How can we know? Who would be harmed?

Structural changes

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- ▶ creating online privacy regulations
- ▶ changing Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act (“No provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by another information content provider”)

All the Ways Congress Wants to Change Section 230

Republicans and Democrats alike want to change Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. Here's a comprehensive list of the proposed legislation so far.

BY KIRAN JEEVANJEE, BRIAN LIM, IRENE LY, MATT PERAULT, JENNA RUDDOCK, TIM SCHMELING, NIHARIKA VATTIKONDA, AND JOYCE ZHOU

MARCH 23, 2021 • 5:45 AM



[https://slate.com/technology/2021/03/
section-230-reform-legislative-tracker.html](https://slate.com/technology/2021/03/section-230-reform-legislative-tracker.html)

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- ▶ This need require inaction but it should encourage humility.

Opinion

The Right Way to Fight Fake News

Social media platforms need to make sure their anti-misinformation strategies are empirically grounded.

By Gordon Pennycook and David Rand

Dr. Pennycook and Dr. Rand are cognitive psychologists.

March 24, 2020

But just because a strategy sounds reasonable doesn't mean it works. Although the platforms are making some progress in their fight against misinformation, recent research by us and other scholars suggests that many of their tactics may be ineffective — and can even make matters worse, leading to confusion, not clarity, about the truth. Social media companies need to empirically investigate whether the concerns raised in these experiments are relevant to how their users are processing information on their platforms.

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The obvious conclusion to draw from all this evidence is that social media platforms should rigorously test their ideas for combating fake news and not just rely on common sense or intuition about what will work. We realize that a more scientific and evidence-based approach takes time. But if these companies show that they are seriously committed to that research — being transparent about any evaluations that they conduct internally and collaborating more with outside independent researchers who will publish publicly accessible reports — the public, for its part, should be prepared to be patient and not demand instant results.

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Experimental evidence of massive-scale emotional contagion through social networks

Adam D. I. Kramer^{a,1}, Jamie E. Guillory^{b,2}, and Jeffrey T. Hancock^{b,c}

^aCore Data Science Team, Facebook, Inc., Menlo Park, CA 94025; and Departments of ^bCommunication and ^cInformation Science, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853

Let's see some interventions that can be tested