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Should Social Media Companies Censor Certain Content

Modern social media is very different from how it was in the past. There used to be little to no censorship, leaving the media a place of pure free speech. More content has been censored to refrain the younger generation from seeing inappropriate content. In general, it can be very helpful and maintain their innocence. Another form of censorship is political views and political media. Social media is mainly democratic and has a very consistent standpoint in politics. Anything outside of that is censored and/or deleted, which affects free speech. To some degree, censoring content is harmful and over the top, and can easily be misused. It is seen as something that is mainly helpful toward negative content, but not everything should fall under that category. Certain content should be censored, but a lot shouldn't for the simple fact that it goes against the first amendment.

Not only is political content censored, but hate speech is as well. In hindsight, it seems beneficial to do so. However, it's not very effective. David French in his article, Social Media's Censorship is a Dumpster Fire discusses this issue. "A post calling someone "my favorite n—" is allowed to stay up, because under the policy it is considered "explicitly positive content." "Autistic people should be sterilized" seems offensive to him, but it stays up as well. Autism is not a "protected characteristic" the way race and gender are, and so it doesn't violate the policy. ("Men should be sterilized" would be taken down.) There are inherent costs when any company (or campus) that is intent on creating a marketplace of ideas turns its back on the accumulated experience of centuries of American free-speech traditions and jurisprudence. There are reasons, for example, why there is no "hate speech"

category in American constitutional law. There is no workable definition that does not sweep too broadly. There are reasons why viewpoint neutrality is the hallmark of First Amendment jurisprudence. Censors can behave in unpredictable, arbitrary, and capricious ways — and no one has a sufficient monopoly on truth to serve as philosopher-king over speech and debate.” This information isn’t censored very well, making it ineffective. One group is protected while the other isn’t in the same situation. As mentioned, hate speech is too broad and doesn’t affect more specific forms of hate speech.

The counterargument to censorship is the fact that hate speech can become too severe and be taken too far. While it is true, numerous forms of hate speech aren't censored and aren't considered, leaving it vastly ineffective. Sarah Pellis in *The Daily Collegian* argued “I don’t think censoring everything is the answer to the world’s problems, but censoring violent, dangerous and discriminatory speech — even though it is a right — is the next step for productive politics and our social wellbeing as a whole.” Censorship of politics isn’t mainly about hate speech, it’s about censoring a specific party. In fact, most hate speech towards the other party isn’t censored in any way. Twitter is very popular in political information and has censored a lot of information that is against the democratic party. They favor the popular vote, whether it contains hate speech or not. Censorship can be beneficial, but it isn’t being used effectively. Joan Donovan in his article *Why Social Media Can’t Keep Moderating Content in the Shadows* addresses this issue. “And yet, even with more options at their disposal, misinformation remains a serious problem. There was a great deal of coverage about misinformation on Election Day—my colleague Emily Dreyfuss found, for example, that when Twitter tried to deal with content using the hashtag #BidenCrimeFamily, with tactics including “de-indexing” by blocking search results, users including Donald Trump adapted by using variants of the same tag. But we still don’t know much about how Twitter decided to do those things in the first place, or how it weighs and learns from the ways users

react to moderation.” He continues with “until then, we need more transparency.

Misinformation is not solely about the facts; it’s about who gets to say what the facts are. Fair content moderation decisions are key to public accountability.” The statement he mentioned, “it’s about who gets to say what the facts are,” is exactly how censorship works for political media. The media has chosen what is right, what is mainstream, what is talked about the most, and what is accepted. If an opinion isn’t accepted and popular, it is going to be censored. Despite the idolization of “free speech,” it is never truly free. It is either censored or a victim of hate crime, and it would be assumed that the hate speech is censored, but it isn’t. It’s only censored for the mainstream vote since that is the only acceptable opinion.

To conclude, censorship is beneficial to a certain extent. It’s beneficial for specific groups of people and for those who have a popular opinion. It’s aimed toward helping cyberbullying and hate speech but has failed to be effective to a certain extent. It leaves political parties completely diminished and banned from mainstream media, censors broad forms of hate speech, and is harmful toward the first amendment. It has a lot of room to be fixed and used for more beneficial things, but for the time being it’s censoring the wrong things for the wrong reasons. “Rather than hold on to technostalgia for a time when it wasn’t this bad, sometimes it is worth asking what it would take to reinvent social media so that we can chart a course for the web we want—a web that promotes democracy, knowledge, care, and equity.”

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