Are Universities Fueling Silicon Valley Crisis?
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Universities across the country are graduating record numbers of computer scientists, many of whom are finding employment in Silicon Valley. At the same time, we are seeing alarming failures of corporate responsibility on the part of the largest Silicon Valley companies. What role do we in the academy have in fueling the crisis in Silicon Valley and what can we do about it?

Silicon Valley companies have allowed their platforms to be used for a range of troubling activities from child exploitation to child sex trade, revenge porn, radicalization and recruitment of extremists, fake news, trolling, bullying, and election tampering. Technology companies have cultivated and tolerated misogynistic work cultures. Until increasing public pressure forced them to relent, technology companies fought against the passage of sensible legislation, the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act, to make it possible for victims of sex trafficking to hold online enablers accountable. Facebook has enabled target advertising to self-identified "Jew haters" and has allowed advertisers to illegally target housing ads to "whites only". Google recently admitted to tracking Android users even when users explicitly disabled location services. Twitter remains stubbornly oblivious to its platform being used for abuse, harassment, bullying, propaganda, and fake news. YouTube, until just a few months ago, has allowed videos of al-Qaeda recruiter Anwar al-Awlaki to remain on its platform. And, adding to their growing bad behavior over the past few years, Uber recently admitted to concealing the theft of personal data from 57 million people.

The failures of Silicon Valley have become so alarming that the Senate Judiciary Committee, and the Senate and House Intelligence Committees recently held several hearings where

representatives from Facebook, Google and Twitter were grilled on a variety of topics, from data privacy to election tampering. In January, the Senate Commerce Committee held a hearing to specifically examine the problem of extremist propaganda on Google, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter.

These concerns are not limited to the United States. Reeling from the third terrorist attack in three months in which terrorists were, in part, radicalized and recruited on-line, and citing the failures of Silicon Valley to rein in abuses on their platforms, British Prime Minister Theresa May recently called for regulatory legislation to prevent terror groups from continuing to weaponize the internet. Similarly frustrated by inaction in Silicon Valley, Germany passed a law imposing fines up to $59 million on sites that don't remove hate speech within 24 hours of notification. At the same time, the European Union has slapped Facebook with a $122 million fine for providing misleading statements during its acquisition of WhatsApp, Amazon with a $294 million fine for unpaid taxes, and Google with a record $2.7 billion antitrust fine.

It is the juxtaposition of Silicon Valley abuses and indifference and the funneling of students and faculty to Silicon Valley that should give academia pause. We are developing the latest technologies that are in turn being commercialized by Silicon Valley, many of us are working directly for or receiving funding from Silicon Valley, and we are directly or indirectly funneling our students to Silicon Valley.

Academics, therefore, hold some responsibility for the ultimate actions and failures of Silicon Valley.

As we ride the wave of enthusiasm for computer science, we should not overlook the broader impact that our own innovations and students are having on our society.

To this end, I suggest that we as educators (1) incorporate into our curricula ethics training in technology (as we do with bioethics) so that the next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs are better prepared to tackle the complexities of ubiquitous technology in our lives and society; (2) provide more leadership in the private and public spheres on pressing issues, including privacy, the ethical use of artificial intelligence, and the abuse and harassment that is all too common on social media; (3) present to our students—particularly during campus recruiting events—a broad range of options for internships and post-graduation employment that go beyond Big Tech; and (4) provide on-campus resources to encourage entrepreneurship among our students and faculty with a focus on social entrepreneurship focused on solving pressing social, cultural, and environmental issues.

We should celebrate the growing interest in computer science.

Computing technology has and will continue to lead to insights and innovations across many disciplines. Studying computer science is vital to teaching strong analytical and critical reasoning skills.

At the same time, however, we in academia should think carefully about our role as individuals and educators in fueling what appears at times to be a morally bankrupt technology sector.

Dr. Hany Farid is the Albert Bradley 1915 Third Century Professor and Chair of Computer Science at Dartmouth College and a senior adviser to the Counter Extremism Project.