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Design features of social media platforms are exploited to promote extremism. The platforms' after the fact, whack-a-mole approach to content moderation is insufficient. However, Section 230 reform – a popular rallying cry – is a blunt instrument that may lead to unintended suppression of important speech and not address radicalization. Congress or agencies acting on their own should push for transparency, consumer protection (in terms of consistent, transparent enforcement of terms of service), and development of transparent codes of conduct. This approach mirrors elements of Europe's Digital Services Act and could be endorsed by the United States and European Union (EU).

When an internal Facebook experiment created a fake account for a fictional user – “Carol Smith,” a 41-year old conservative mother from North Carolina – this account was recommended pages and groups related to QAnon within days of its creation. “Carol” was recommended an account associated with the militia group Three Percenters within three weeks.

This research and other documents released by the Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen underscore that the design features of large social media platforms are exploited to promote extremism.

[...]

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