Cults, Conspiracy Theories and Thwarting Online Radicalization

Mis- and disinformation has driven individuals to embrace fringe, radical views. Its roots go back decades as a cyclical relationship between public curiosity and the media and entertainment industry have led to the dramatization and amplification of cults and conspiracy theories. The advent of social media and tech platforms gave rise to algorithmic targeting and private online groups, driving people deeper into partisan camps and fabricated belief networks resulting in dangerous, disinfo-fueled events around the world.

Selected Experts on the Topic:

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Reading Resources:

I Escaped the Cult. But I Couldn’t Escape the Cult Mentality (Narratively, Daniella Young)

What we can learn from conspiracy theories (BBC, Zaria Gorvett)

How to talk to conspiracy theorists—and still be kind (Technology Review, Tanya Basu)

Why Countering Violent Extremism Programs Are Bad Policy (The Brennan Center for Justice)

Online Extremism: Research Trends in Internet Activism, Radicalization, and Counter-Strategies (International Journal of Conflict and Violence)

Could One of Your Facebook Friends Be The Next QAnon Shaman? (John Semley, The Nation)

Facebook’s Militia Mess (Tech Transparency Project)

7 Insights From Interviewing Conspiracy Theory Believers (Jigsaw)