SPLC

Polarization & Extremism Research & Innovation Lab

Not Just a Joke

Understanding & Preventing Gender- & Sexuality-Based Bigotry

Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL)
PERIL's mission is to utilize a public health approach to design, test and scale-up evidence-based tools and intervention strategies to prevent hate, bias and extremist radicalization.

Southern Poverty Law Center
The SPLC seeks to be a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond, working in partnership with communities to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements and advance the human rights of all people.

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Introduction

Content Warning

Some content in this guide is difficult to read. It may challenge and change your understanding of past experiences or current relationships. For survivors of gender- and sexual-based violence and bigotry, those impacted by reproductive coercion and health care discrimination, and those who navigate bigotry related to their race, ethnicity, religion or immigration status, such content may be particularly difficult. Please read with care.

Why this guide?

A wide variety of forms of misogyny and gender-based bigotry have spiked in recent years.[1] This includes a documented rise in forms of male supremacist violence that are now recognized as part of the spectrum of domestic violent extremism, including threats, plots and attacks from misogynist incels.[2] [3] Everyday forms of misogyny and hostile sexism, especially online, have also increased, with one study showing that misogynistic tweets positively predict domestic and family violence in the United States.[4] Further, anti-feminist sentiments have been rising among Generation Z boys and young men.[5]

This rise in gender-based bigotry includes a surge of anti-LGBTQ+ ideas and beliefs, evidenced through the hundreds of discriminatory bills introduced across the United States in 2024.[6] At the intersection of anti-Black racism, anti-LGBTQ+ hate and misogyny, Black women, girls and transgender women experience an outsized amount of harm and violence. On the community level, these harms manifest from harassment at Pride month events and attacks on LGBTQ+ friendly businesses to unequal reproductive health care access and deadly transmisogynist violence.

These surges are partially explained by the sheer breadth of online spaces where gender-based hate is fostered and thrives, such as video game chats, comment trolls on mainstream social media sites, and dedicated Reddit pages focused on ways to manipulate and denigrate women. Because hateful comments, memes and short-form videos are often infused with irony, satire or other forms of humor, gender-based hate online is sometimes disguised as "just a joke" or hidden behind the excuse of having two different meanings.

Hate and policing individuals' gender have also been legitimized and normalized by politicians, elected officials, and online influencers who peddle supposed success stories of wealth and status that rely on the exploitation and domination of women. And extremist groups who embrace racism and political violence, like the Proud Boys, have joined the fray by directly targeting bookstores that host Drag Story Hours and demonstrations advocating for abortion rights. Falsely linking drag performances and LGBTQ+ people with sexual predation, sometimes called "grooming," they have sought new ways to build sympathy among mainstream conservatives.[7]

Collaboration & Scope

A collaborative team of experts from the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) and the Polarization & Extremism Research & Innovation Lab (PERIL) drafted this guide. It is part of a broader public health approach for the prevention of violence and harm stemming from extremism, manipulative disinformation and dehumanizing rhetoric. Our organizations root our development of this approach in communities' needs and by centering support for targeted individuals and survivors. And our approach is necessarily non-carceral, so that we can emphasize education and prevention over monitoring, surveillance and other security-based approaches.

This guide is a resource for caregivers who surround and support young people – parents and relatives, teachers and educators, counselors and therapists, coaches and youth mentors, and more. It includes an overview and introduction to the concepts, trends and risks related to gender-based bigotry alongside the tools to build resilience and awareness, as well as ways

to intervene. It also provides strategies and resources to support survivors and targeted individuals and communities. While this guide cannot cover every harm that young people will encounter related to gender-based bigotry, we aim for as wide a breadth as possible.

Because hateful comments, memes and short-form videos are often infused with irony, satire or other forms of humor, gender-based hate online is sometimes disguised as "just a joke" or hidden behind the excuse of having two different meanings.

Glossary Terms

Cisgender
A person whose gender identity or expression is aligned with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Extremism
Beliefs claiming that people of different racial or ethnic, gender or sexual, religious or political identities are in direct and unresolvable conflict. Extremists believe that this conflict between groups is inevitable and can only be resolved through separation, domination or violence. Extremism as it is defined here is the central tenet of all hate groups: "An organization or collection of individuals that attack or malign an entire class of people, typically for their immutable characteristics."[8]

Intersectionality
The multiple and simultaneous experiences of oppression faced by individuals who hold identities in more than one marginalized group.

Intimate partner violence (IPV) and domestic violence (DV)
Violence enacted against lovers, sexual and dating partners, marital spouses, or in the context of a household.

Male supremacy
Belief that cisgender men are naturally, biologically and genetically superior to women, transgender men and nonbinary people. Male supremacists justify and rationalize the social, political, economic and legal domination of women and anyone who does not adhere to a fixed gender binary.

Masculinity
Refers to the expression of gender and social ideas about what it means to "be a man."

- Hegemonic masculinity refers to the socially dominant and influential form of masculinity that prevails in a particular time and place.
- Toxic masculinity refers to a narrow definition of manhood and its expression that requires boys and men to be stoic, unemotional, strong providers who are willing to be violent.
- Alternative masculinity refers to expressions of manhood that develop in subcultures or to counter the mainstream or hegemonic ideas that prevail at any given time.
- Healthy masculinity refers to the idea that a range of masculine expressions are acceptable, including manhood as defined by emotional vulnerability, caregiving and interpersonal connection.

Misinformation and disinformation
Misinformation is unintentionally inaccurate information. Disinformation is purposefully inaccurate information that aims to mislead people.

Misogyny
The hostile strategies of enforcement that police the behavior of women, men and children who reject patriarchal expectations.

Patriarchy
A social, economic and political system that insists on a rigid, heterosexual, supposedly "natural" male/female binary, and that gives some men power and resources that allow them to dominate women.

Pseudoscience
Information that is not supported by science being mischaracterized as scientifically sound.

Racism
Prejudice that oppresses, undervalues and maligns groups of people based on race or ethnicity. Racism can occur at the interpersonal, community or institutional level, reducing individuals' and communities' access to health care, housing, education and other resources.

Radicalization
Any process that leads a person to hold extremist beliefs. These beliefs may or may not lead to overt violence. Just as there are many forms of extremism, there is no single pathway to radicalization. It is a complex process involving many personal and external influences.

Sexism
The set of attitudes and beliefs that defines women as inherently inferior to men and therefore justifiably subordinate because they are less capable than men.

- Hostile sexism situates women as inherently deceitful, manipulative, less qualified, intelligent and rational than men.
- Benevolent sexism situates women as inherently fragile and in need of protection from roles that interfere with their "natural" roles as mothers and homemakers, and from harsh jobs and environments for which they lack physical strength or constitutions.

Transgender
A person whose gender identity or expression is not aligned with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Understanding Male Supremacism & the Manosphere

Parents, caregivers, educators, mental health practitioners, coaches and all other trusted adults form the network of support that keeps young people safe, healthy and engaged with their community. As anti-feminist sentiments and misogynist content continue to spread on- and offline, it is important for all members of this network to be equipped with the knowledge to recognize and help young people resist male supremacist manipulation.

Male supremacism justifies and rationalizes patriarchal norms and values through the belief that "natural," biological, genetic differences between men and women should logically result in social, political, economic or legal hierarchies in which men are superior and dominate women.[9] For example, male supremacists sought to undermine Kamala Harris' qualifications for United States president by dismissing her as intellectually inferior but unfairly advantaged by diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.

These ideas do not only target women, nor do they rely only on men to uphold them. Male supremacy also establishes hierarchies of superiority and inferiority within men, positioning a certain kind of ideal "manly" man as superior to everyone else.

The Manosphere

At the center of the male supremacist ideology is the "manosphere," a collection of blogs, forums and websites whose members mobilize around misogyny and toxic masculinity. The dialogue within these online spaces has helped reshape how young men see and understand issues related to gender, sexual consent, perceived injustice and who is to blame for their personal problems and grievances. Conversations within the manosphere also harm boys and young men, preying on low self-esteem, mental health vulnerabilities and still-developing perceptions of self.

The manosphere links together a variety of male supremacist groups, described below, some of which openly espouse forced servitude, spousal rape or rollbacks on no-fault divorce laws.[10] Other male supremacist subcultures coalesce millions of online followers around self-proclaimed lifestyle influencers. These individuals prey on young people's insecurities to teach and oftentimes sell financial and fitness tips, in addition to manipulative dating

advice. Their level of popularity is hard to overstate: The misogynist influencer Andrew Tate, for example, was one of Google's most searched-for people in 2022.[11] Romanian law enforcement arrested Tate in 2022 and indicted him in 2023 on charges of rape, human trafficking and establishing a criminal gang to sexually exploit women.[12]

Manosphere groups: Many of the groups listed below use shifting terminology to dehumanize women and reinforce hierarchies amongst men. For example, incels use "alpha" and "Chad" interchangeably to describe men they believe are hoarding women and sex. Conversely, "betas" are deemed inferior men who have fewer romantic opportunities with women. "Sigmas" are similar to alphas but defined by a detached, standoffish attitude. This ever-changing language also reinforces a sense of belonging and camaraderie among group members.

- **Men's rights activists (MRAs)** believe they are fighting against a feminist conspiracy to oppress men. While they claim to advocate for men, their primary focus has been attacking women and feminism. Under the guise of gender equality, members of this movement rally around issues and institutions they perceive as discriminating against men, particularly the court system and legislation against sexual violence and harassment.

- **Men going their own way (MGTOWs)** is a separatist movement of heterosexual men who have chosen to remove themselves from the perceived toxicity of women.

- **Pickup artists (PUAs)** share predatory and coercive strategies aimed at manipulating women into sex and rate women based on their "sexual market value" (SMV), a subjective value of sexual attractiveness based on factors like physical appearance and age. Parts of the PUA community evolved directly into the violent misogynist incel world.

- **Misogynist incels** believe they are entitled to sex with attractive but undateable women (whom they call "Stacys"), but claim feminism and evil, selfish women have denied them this right. Misogynist incels dehumanize women while simultaneously positioning them as a possession to which men are entitled. According to SPLC analysis, misogynist incels have been responsible for 44 deaths in the United States since 2014.

- **Alpha males** are a more mainstream movement of male supremacists who repackage toxic masculinity as self-improvement strategies. They sell these through expensive courses and gamified life hacks that promise to increase one's masculine status.

- **The Black manosphere** seeks to uplift Black men by disparaging and undermining Black women. While contradictory, the Black manosphere reproduces the male and white supremacist aims of retaining power for a small group of people.[13]

Male Supremacist Beliefs: Entitlement, Grievances & Anti-Feminism

The groups within the manosphere and the broader male supremacist ideology rest on a sense of entitlement to women's bodies, service, time and attention, along with subsequent blame and grievance when those expectations are not met. Groups and followers commonly voice those beliefs in the following ways:

1. **Entitlement to women's bodies:** Male supremacy perpetuates the notion that women's bodies exist primarily for male pleasure and control. This entitlement is expressed in overt behaviors like sexual objectification, sexual harassment and coercion in romantic/sexual contexts. It also underpins laws and social policies that deny people who can get pregnant access to health care, or that restrict or shame women based on their appearance. Other policies include school or work dress codes that sexualize girls and women, and sports uniform regulations and mandates that prevent girls and women from wearing religious head coverings.

2. **Entitlement to women's work, service and labor:** Male supremacy reinforces traditional gender roles that expect women to perform domestic duties and emotional labor for men. Emotional labor – or managing your emotions in response to your partner's to maintain peace and satisfaction in a relationship – is an important and necessary aspect of partnerships; however, the bulk of this work often falls to women, rendering their emotional needs secondary to men's.[14] This entitlement extends to both home and workplace settings where men may undervalue or overlook the contributions of women, expecting them to serve and support male needs without recognition or equitable compensation.

3. **Entitlement to women's time and attention:** Men influenced by male supremacy often demand women's time and attention as a right. This can include expecting women to be constantly available for emotional support, social interactions or sexual relationships, and disregarding women's personal boundaries.

4. **Grievances and blame:** When girls and women resist or fail to meet these expectations, boys and men entrenched in these beliefs often feel a sense of grievance. Male supremacist actors seek to exploit and manipulate these grievances by blaming women for supposed attacks on masculinity that are part of a larger conspiracy to undermine men. This blame is often expressed through anger, retaliation and violence.

5. **Anti-feminism**: Feminism is blamed for being anti-man, for softening men, making them weak and unable to protect or provide for their families, being too reliant on modern conveniences, and for lacking absolute authority over their households. The movement for equal rights and representation is seen as part of a broader "war against men" in which workplace competition and achieving higher education degrees displaces men from their "natural" roles as providers and simultaneously prevents women from assuming their "natural" roles as mothers.

Beyond the Manosphere: Broader Implications

Many of the beliefs and entitlements that motivate male supremacists exist beyond the boundaries of the manosphere. For example, while it may seem counterintuitive that women support male supremacy, the logic of patriarchy requires the policing of women by other women. This *internalized sexism* has been foundational to male supremacist adjacent movements, like trad wives, short for traditional wives. Trad wives are women (predominately white) who uphold patriarchal, heteronormative social structures by submitting to the traditional and rigid gender expectations of homemaking and child-rearing. They have received an outsized amount of media attention due to the prominent social media accounts of several movement members. For some women tasked with balancing the demands of family and career, this lifestyle may seem appealing or even liberating. However, behind the sanitized images of motherhood and home cooking lies white supremacist beliefs about declining white birth rates, conspiracies about vaccines and birth control and policing of femininity that maligns LGBTQ+ individuals.

Beyond internalized sexism, the widely held tenets of male supremacy have significant impacts on girls' and women's daily lives. Students, particularly young men, are parroting talking points from influencers like Andrew Tate and creating AI-generated images of their female classmates undressed or engaged in sexual acts. Research has also consistently demonstrated a strong link between misogyny and violence, including both domestic and intimate partner violence and mass violence.[15] [16] This is especially true among white men who believe their race, gender or religion is under attack. Men who hold hostile misogynistic views are more likely to both support and engage in targeted violence against women, a trend we've seen evidenced in deadly attacks from Tallahassee to Uvalde to Isla Vista.[17]

Internalized sexism

Internalized sexism happens when girls and women replicate and impose learned beliefs that deem girls and women inferior on themselves and others.

Connections with the Anti-LGBTQ+ Movement

While male supremacy is a standalone extremist ideology, it also undergirds, motivates and intersects with other hateful, extremist ideologies, such as anti-LGBTQ+. Both male supremacy and anti-LGBTQ+ ideologies and adherents seek to reinforce rigid, traditional gender roles in a hierarchy that gives straight, cisgender, white men the most power and control.

Similar to the broader impact male supremacy has on the bodily autonomy, social mobility and general well-being of girls and women, those organizing around an anti-LGBTQ+ agenda oppose the rights, progress and freedoms of LGBTQ+ people. Premised on the same strict gender binary that male supremacists seek to reinforce, the anti-LGBTQ+ movement particularly targets those whose gender expression does not conform to strict, traditional expectations. However, more so than male supremacists, those in the anti-LGBTQ+ movement have maintained a coordinated network of hate groups. These groups spread dehumanizing narratives about LGBTQ+ people, thus laying a foundation for dangerous and discriminatory legislation.

Moral panic

Moral panic is widespread, unfounded fear and anxiety that someone or something poses a threat to societal values and safety. Moral panic often describes LGBTQ+ individuals, Black and African American people, those who have immigrated and others as a threat to society, further marginalizing such persons and their communities.

Transmisogyny, Male Supremacism & Fabricated Threats

With rising anti-transgender rhetoric and legislation stemming from harmful disinformation and *moral panic*, the basic rights of transgender people are under threat. Networks of anti-LGBTQ+ groups seek to marginalize LGBTQ+ people with pseudoscience and manipulative claims about public safety. Among the most prominent examples is the allegation that LGBTQ+ identities spread through social contagion. Moral panic has helped this hateful conspiracy theory gain traction as those in traditional social hierarchies view any break from two strict gender and sex roles as impure, dangerous or even evil. However, "rapid onset gender dysphoria," a term aimed at manipulating people into thinking that a person can become transgender through their social contact with other transgender individuals, has no scientific support.[18]

Further, at the crossroads of pseudoscience and male supremacy, anti-LGBTQ+ adherents seeking to maintain rigid gender expectations allege that gender-affirming health care is dangerous. Gender-affirming health care, as defined by the World Health Organization, "can include any single or combination of a number of social, psychological, behavioral or medical interventions designed to support and affirm an individual's gender identity."[19] Both the World Professional Association for Transgender Health and the United States Professional Association for Transgender Health have asserted that gender-affirming health care is a safe and necessary medical practice.[20]

Beyond pseudoscientific disinformation, anti-transgender groups and adherents adopt and manipulate male supremacist and sexist tropes about women's and girls' safety to spark fear and outrage. For example, one common narrative used against transgender equality is that transgender women pose a threat to cisgender women and girls. Propaganda around "protecting women and children" has been used to ban transgender people from using public restrooms or other spaces that align with their gender identity. However, the transphobia that motivates these bills has only endangered transgender women and cisgender women who others perceive as not feminine enough. These bills have been gaining momentum in recent years, despite an initial backlash to the nation's first proposed "bathroom ban" in North Carolina in 2016.[21]

Intersex*

Intersex is an umbrella term for differences in sex traits or reproductive anatomy. Intersex people are born with these differences or develop them in childhood. There are many possible differences in genitalia, hormones, internal anatomy or chromosomes, compared to the usual two ways that human bodies develop.

** An asterisk denotes that the term is hyperlinked to further resources.*

This same anti-transgender propaganda has also extended to women's sports. Proponents of anti-LGBTQ+ ideologies claim – without evidence – that transgender and *intersex* athletes competing in women's sports is "unfair," citing biological advantages. These claims are not only factually unproven, but also reinforce gender stereotypes and promote transphobia. Such claims have led to gender policing and significant harassment of transgender athletes as well as cisgender women athletes who are deemed not feminine enough in their appearance and thus accused of being transgender.

Some groups claiming to be pro-feminist, referred to as Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminists (TERFs), also argue that transgender women are "not real women." This is a tactic used to discredit transgender women and feminine-presenting people by reinforcing presumed biological differences. This reinforces the idea that individuals can be labeled according to their body parts in an attempt to police gender presentation. In reality, gender is complex and does not simply rely on biology or presentation. Being transgender is not new or a trend, and transgender people have existed across cultures for centuries.

Legislative Attacks on the Transgender Community

Such beliefs underpin and motivate harmful action. In 2023 alone, 188 bills were passed targeting gender-affirming health care across the country.[22] As a result, 25 states now ban best practice gender-affirming care for transgender youth.[23] Public school curricula that include respecting LGBTQ+ identity have been banned or severely restricted in 18 states, including eight states that prohibit any discussion of LGBTQ+ identity or issues in public schools.[24]

While the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association and other health authorities have pushed back on these bans, the pace and scope of the bills has only increased.[25] [26] This is largely due to coordinated efforts between several factions: anti-student inclusion groups such as Moms for Liberty; mental health practitioners pushing pseudoscientific anti-transgender claims; and state-level "family policy councils" operating in lockstep with national hate groups like the Alliance Defending Freedom and the Family Research Council.[27]

The weaponization of legislation pushes members of the LGBTQ+ community to the margins of society. This only increases their likelihood of experiencing violent crime and negative health outcomes, including anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation. Transgender people experience violent victimization – including rape and assault – at a rate more than four times that of cisgender people.[28] Transgender women of color are particularly vulnerable to physical violence, police violence and negative health outcomes.[29] Transgender youth also experience disproportionately high rates of bullying and attempted suicide coupled with diminished access to mental health care.[30]

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Intersections of Gender-Based Bigotry & Racism

Heterosexism*

Heterosexism is an ideological system that denies, denigrates and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship or community.

Ableism*

Ableism is a set of beliefs or practices that devalue and discriminate against people with physical, intellectual or psychiatric disabilities and often rests on the assumption that disabled people need to be "fixed" in one form or the other.

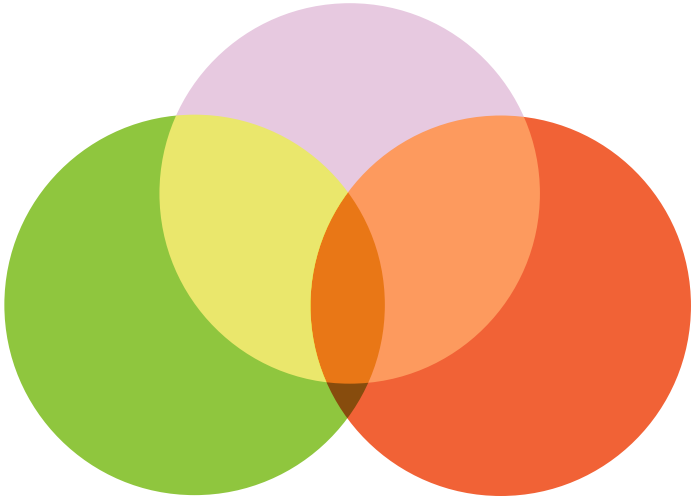
Both male supremacy and the anti-LGBTQ+ movement are standalone ideologies that motivate hate groups and individuals. But these ideologies also overlap and intersect with other forms of supremacist beliefs, including white supremacy, Christian supremacy and Western supremacy. Beyond organized supremacist groups and movements, these ideologies exist on a spectrum with the structural oppressions – such as racism, sexism, *heterosexism, ableism* and classism – that individuals and communities navigate daily.[31] [32] The way these structural oppressions collide based on an individual's social identities is called intersectionality.

Coined by professor Kimberlé Crenshaw, the term intersectionality is a framework to understand the layers of social injustice people experience when they are oppressed by multiple discriminatory and exclusionary structures.[33] For example, the combination of being a white, cisgender man gives a person more access to power and visibility. Whereas being a Black, cisgender woman is a combination of identities that subjects a person to more discriminatory and oppressive structures. The concept of *misogynoir* captures the dual experiences of racism and misogyny that Black women face, while the term *transmisogyny* refers to the multiple kinds of anti-transgender and anti-woman bigotry that transgender women experience.[34] *Transmisogynoir* is the racist, misogynist and anti-trans oppression that transgender women of color experience.[35] Naming these overlapping experiences of social injustice gives visibility to people's lived experiences, helping them and others establish more effective ways to intervene and solve such problems.

Intersections That Motivate Violence: The "Great Replacement" Conspiracy Theory

Conspiracy theories flourish in times of uncertainty, helping to fuel extremist ideologies and sexuality- and gender-based bigotry. They provide easy answers and simplistic scapegoats that appeal to a sense of having been wronged.[36] Those with feelings of personal alienation and anxiety, a belief that society is in peril, and who embrace hierarchical worldviews are more susceptible to conspiratorial ways of thinking.[37] [38]

One of the primary conspiracies motivating the hard right is the so-called "great replacement." This false conspiracy sits at the junction of antisemitism, anti-Black racism, anti-immigrant beliefs, male supremacy and anti-LGBTQ+ beliefs. Proponents of the great replacement conspiracy theory claim that Jewish elites and other enemies of the hard right are encouraging and orchestrating an influx of immigrants of color to displace and outnumber white



Hetero-normativity*

Heteronormativity describes how social institutions and policies reinforce the presumption that people are heterosexual and that gender and sex are natural binaries. Heteronormative culture privileges heterosexuality as normal and natural and fosters a climate where LGBTQ+ people are discriminated against.

populations and votes. These conspiracy theorists use dehumanizing disinformation to portray particularly non-Christian, immigrant men of color as predators threatening the purity of white women. Therefore, in addition to racism, xenophobia and religious bigotry, the great replacement conspiracy theory also upholds rigid, *heteronormative* gender hierarchies that position white men as protectors and white women as passive child bearers.

The great replacement conspiracy theory has been the impetus for mass, hate-fueled violence. Young, white, male gunmen have targeted Black churchgoers in Charleston, South Carolina; Latinx Walmart shoppers in El Paso, Texas; Jewish congregants in a Pittsburgh synagogue; and Black community members in Buffalo, New York. All of these gunmen, and many more in the United States and other countries, cited declining white birth rates and increasing immigration as justification for their violence.

Beyond mass violence, the beliefs underpinning the great replacement conspiracy theory have far-reaching impacts. Extremist fears about declining white birth rates contributed to the U.S. Supreme Court's overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, which guaranteed a person's right to abortion until the fetus becomes "viable," meaning it is potentially able to survive outside the womb. On the political right, this was heralded as a "historical victory for white life" and a "first step" in addressing immigration in the United States.[39] [40]

The harms stemming from this legislative attack on bodily autonomy are intersectional, as Black birthing people are already two to four times more likely than white birthing people to suffer maternal mortality and morbidity.[41] With 57% of Black women of reproductive age living in states with little to no access to abortion,[42] this disparity could increase Black maternal mortality by up to 38%.[43] But the impact is already being endured. Under Georgia's six-week abortion ban, which at the time of writing has been in effect since July 2022, at least two women – both Black – in the state have died from causes that maternal health experts have deemed preventable.[44]

At the same time that many people who can get pregnant are facing real health and safety risks, politicians, news outlets and others across the political right are deploying great replacement conspiracies to dehumanize people immigrating to the United States. In the speech that launched his 2016 presidential bid, Donald Trump made prejudiced claims that people immigrating from Mexico are "rapists" who are "bringing drugs [and] crime."[45] One week into his first term as president, Trump's "Muslim ban" suspended travel to the United States from seven predominantly Muslim countries.[46] Such prejudiced claims and hateful policy have always been grounded in propaganda about preserving white women's purity. President Trump's September 2024 claims that he will be women's "protector" as they have allegedly become "less safe on the streets" is only one recent example of the great replacement conspiracy theory in the mainstream.[47] In reality, every peer-reviewed study on crime statistics shows that immigrants do not commit higher rates than those born in the U.S.[48] Meanwhile, Trump has been found liable for sexual abuse and accused of sexual misconduct by at least 26 women.[49]

Gunmen... in the United States and other countries, cited declining birth rates and increasing immigration as justification for their violence.

Learning Hate: Online & Offline Pathways to Radicalization

Research demonstrates that exposure to extremist material does not always mean an individual will radicalize. However, these are some common ways young people can be exposed to bigotry based on gender, sex or sexuality.

Just a joke. Youth encounter hateful and supremacist ideas, including gendered ones, in a variety of ordinary and everyday places. They might engage in trading hateful memes or short-form videos through group chats, on social media or on meme-sharing sites like Discord, which caters to gamers. Anti-feminist and misogynistic memes are common but are often disguised as "just a joke" in ways that frame hateful ideas as countercultural to a boring, triggered mainstream who does not get the joke. This can desensitize, dehumanize, normalize and legitimize hate.

Gaming chats. The wildly popular and growing world of online gaming is also a space where youth are exposed to hateful ideas, including gendered ones.[50] In-game chats, for example, can be peppered with a constant stream of racist, homophobic and misogynistic messages and content. The experience of gaming together creates social bonds, a sense of belonging and group membership. As a result, racist, misogynist and homophobic ideas can be woven into an experience that fosters emotional and social connections with others. Similar patterns have been shown with fraternal bonding in sports locker rooms – but the virtual arena opens up this type of participation for a broader range of boys and young men, including those who are not athletic.[51]

Self-help influencers. Youth also encounter hateful ideas through self-help searches or encounters with influencers and content creators on platforms like Instagram, Tik Tok, X and YouTube. These individuals offer advice to improve life and success, often related to dating, physical appearance, finances or sexual prowess. While some of this content offers tangible help with challenges of isolation, anxiety, motivation or structure, other advice is packaged with blame directed at scapegoats – such as feminists, women or transgender people – who are deemed to be responsible for perceived grievances and problems.

Wellness and lifestyle influencers. Girls and young women may encounter trad wife influencers who encourage women to embrace roles as submissive homemakers and mothers. Oftentimes obscured behind a 1950s housewife facade, these messages can be packaged with beliefs about spiritual wellness, homesteading

advice or anti-vaccine and anti-birth control conspiracies. Some relationships built through these channels have led to human and sexual trafficking.[52]

Physical appearance and fitness. Self-improvement also sometimes bleeds into unhealthy fixation on physical appearance. Phenomena like "looksmaxxing" advocate for surgical and nonsurgical interventions to maximize masculine physical traits like a strong jawline. These fixations on appearance, rooted in the same kinds of beauty standards that can lead young women to develop eating disorders or to desire plastic surgery, can lead to disordered eating, obsessive fitness regimes and steroid use in boys and men. In other cases, self-improvement manifests in real-life spaces like mixed martial arts or so-called "active clubs," where a focus on domination, being fit, competitiveness, ruthlessness and strength shapes a worldview that is highly gendered.

Gendered consumption. In many of these instances, gender is packaged and sold as a *construct* – meaning that someone is profiting from the idea of gendered ideals, norms, behaviors and appearances. This can include gendered brands and colors for everything from diapers to firearms. Commercial products help reinforce our concepts of a gender binary and of "appropriate" feminine and masculine appearance, behaviors and choices in overt and subliminal ways. These everyday reinforcements also enable gender policing to happen more easily, such as when boys are bullied for wearing a "girly" color or drinking a beverage that is marketed to girls.

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Precursors & Warning Signs of Radicalization

There is no single formula that can predict the pathway that an individual could follow toward gender-based bigotry and violence. Instead, a cluster of risk factors interact in complex ways to increase the risk of violent behaviors. Understanding these risk factors can help explain how and why some people become more susceptible to extreme narratives, attitudes or propaganda.[53]

History of gender-based violence and other forms of abuse. Research shows that traumas occurring during childhood can increase susceptibility to radicalization; these traumas can include physical, sexual and emotional abuse as well as histories of experiencing or witnessing domestic violence.[54] Violent misogyny, stalking, harassment and abuse of women or the LGBTQ+ community is prevalent in reporting on mass shootings or terrorist attacks. In well over half of mass shootings, one study found, "the perpetrator either killed at least one partner or family member or had a history of [domestic violence]."[55] Research has demonstrated that support for violence against women and other misogynistic beliefs are strongly correlated with support for violent extremism.[56]

Behavioral and attitudinal indicators

Caregivers should be alert to changes in young people's behaviors and attitudes that can indicate exposure to or participation in harmful ideologies, support for violence or engagement with extremist content. Members of the extended network of trusted adults – educators, coaches, mentors, school bus drivers, religious leaders, et al. – are all crucial observers. This is especially true if the young person does not have effective support or is being exposed to extremist ideas at home. Expressed changes in attitudes might appear in speech, writing, drawings or behaviors. These include:

1. **Expressing sympathy for extreme or hateful views.** Online behaviors often reveal adoption of new views. Young people may change their online profiles to represent their newfound ideas or may become a follower of a "self-help" influencer who espouses misogyny and male supremacist ideas. The latter can increase the likelihood of encountering radicalizing content and extremist recruiters. Offline behaviors can also raise red flags. Publicly wearing clothing that contains hate speech, symbols or references strongly indicates that a young

person has begun identifying with extremist ideas. Sometimes, these signs are subtle, with symbols, iconography or colors used out of context but not in obviously hateful ways. For example, a shirt reading "I identify as an attack helicopter" likely indicates a young person has become susceptible to anti-LGBTQ+ narratives and ideologies as it dismisses transgender and nonbinary people's identities as foolish or absurd.

2. **Changes in language, narratives or speech patterns.** Listen closely to changes in speech or references that sound like young people are talking from a script. This can indicate that a young person is likely being exposed to harmful narratives and communities online. Youth might mention "cancel culture" or say that mainstream culture is "too woke" or sensitive to get the joke. You might also hear young people referring to the "natural" or "God-given" order of things, which can cloak ways of justifying unequal gender or racial hierarchies as being rooted in common sense. Boys and young men might use the terms "alpha" or "beta" male, slang words like "Chad," "simp," or "sigma," or refer to the "red pill." Youth might say things like, "There are no good women left," "Feminism is cancer" or "Where are the feminine women?" or complain that feminism makes it hard for men to find success. They might also claim men are subject to a "double standard" compared to women. Youth might also talk about "cultural Marxism," refer to school curriculum material that discusses LGBTQ+ identities as "porn" or say that teachers and librarians are "groomers."

3. **Belief in the need for violence.** A person who is radicalizing might believe violence is necessary to suppress movements or individuals advocating for women's, LGBTQ+ and others' personhood and rights. You might hear a young person say that "there is no political solution," call for societal collapse or refer to a second civil war. A radicalizing young person might also blame Black Lives Matter or LGBTQ+ pride for problems they see.

4. **Self-isolating and lack of belonging.** Isolation can be both a precursor for radicalization and an indicator that someone has begun radicalizing. A major driver toward extremist groups is a desire to be a part of something bigger than oneself. Youth who are highly isolated or lack a sense of belonging to groups outside their families are at higher risk of susceptibility to extremist groups that offer them purpose, meaning and belonging. Further, when a young person starts to self-isolate by disengaging from activities they once enjoyed or separating from established friends or family, caregivers should ask questions and stay supportive. Both experiences of loneliness and isolation can indicate trauma, depression or other risk factors associated with a greater susceptibility for radicalization.[57]

5. **Desire to restore a perceived loss of status.** Some young people may adopt an extremist ideology because doing so helps them cope with feeling excluded by or having lost status compared to other identity groups. This can be especially acute during periods of significant change or uncertainty, including family and life changes through divorce, illness, death, romantic break-ups, transitions to a new school, or during uncommon political or health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. Adopting extremist beliefs can lend false senses of superiority and individual significance as youth seek to impress extremist group leaders and gain elevated status within a group.[58] [59]

Strategies for Prevention & Resilience-Building

Just like there's no one pathway to radicalization, there is also no single method or tactic to build young people's resilience to manipulation. The most promising approaches are rooted in whole-of-community strategies that secure young people's overall well-being, build social engagement and inclusion, and work to counter harmful narratives and stereotypes. Equipping a diverse range of community members with the tools and information to develop these conversations and inclusive spaces while supporting young people through times of uncertainty, social upheaval and personal hardship are foundational to a public health approach to preventing radicalization. What follows are some strategies that any network of trusted adults can utilize to support each other and the young people in their lives.

For Parents & Caregivers

Start early. Young people can be set in their beliefs by age 10, so it is important to have age-appropriate conversations about sex, gender, race and ethnicity from a young age.[60] Ensure that these conversations take place in a space where the young person feels relaxed and safe to ask questions. Conversation guides and resources can help parents and caregivers engage young people around the historical foundations of contemporary discrimination and oppression. These conversations will help young people understand their own experiences and will help build empathy for those with differing lived experiences and identities.

Discuss and model internet safety. While parental controls can offer some measure of safety for young people online, it's important that young people also build the skills to maintain their own well-being in digital spaces. Young people should know not to share their personal information online, including their full name, address, phone number, social security number and school location. They should also know that photos can live online for a long time and understand that images they share on apps like Snapchat may end up in the public domain. Help young people build a regular practice of changing passwords every six months, setting social media accounts to private and checking with trusted adults before opening email attachments. Model positive internet usage by maintaining the same practice and helping young people explore online spaces that engage in healthy community building. Beginning this dialogue when young people first start using the internet will make it easier to address problems if they arise later.

Discuss peer-to-peer support. Peers of similar ages have the advantage of comparable life experiences and conditions, shared cultural knowledge and strong emotional ties. These relationships can be some of the most effective channels for challenging harmful beliefs. When peers become aware of each other's changing behaviors, language and beliefs, they can alert trusted adults to the young person's need for support. It is crucial that young people know who they can go to when a peer has become vulnerable to harmful beliefs and rhetoric.

For Educators, School Counselors & Administrators

Comprehensive sexual health education. Preventing misogynist, male supremacist and anti-LGBTQ+ beliefs and actions begins with developing an understanding of and respect for all people's gender identity, sexual orientation and bodily self-determination. Comprehensive, gender-expansive sexual health education that teaches the importance of consent and destigmatizes menstruation is foundational to instilling young people with this respect from an early age. A comprehensive sexual health education includes:

- **Discussing gender identity and sexual orientation.** When sexual health education provides deep exploration into gender identity, sexual orientation,

Online resources

For Parents & Caregivers

Explain intersectionality to kids with this simple metaphor, Parents Together:
parents-together.org/explain-intersectionality-to-kids-with-this-simple-metaphor/

Talking to children about the History of Slavery in the United States: A Resource for Parents and Caregivers, SPLC's Learning for Justice
learningforjustice.org/talking-to-children-about-the-history-of-slavery-in-the-united-statesildren-about-the-history-of-slavery-in-the-united-states-a-resource-for

Q&A: How to talk to your kids about misogyny in school, Pursuit
tinyurl.com/2s3sdddw

Gender & Sexuality Development, American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
aacap.org/AACAP/Member_Resources/SOGIIC/Gender_Sexuality_Development.aspx

For Educators, School Counselors & Administrators

Future of Sex Education
futureofsexed.org/#national-standards-and-implementation-tools

Advocates for Youth's Rights, Respect, Responsibility
3rs.org/3rs-curric-search/

Inclusive Sexual Health Education for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Youth, GLSEN
glsen.org/sexed

End Poverty. Period!, Women in Training, Inc.
womenintraining.org/

Consent Curriculum, Safe Before Anyone Else
safebae.org/360-schools/consent-curriculum/

Consent, Teaching Sexual Health
teachingsexualhealth.ca/teachers/sexual-health-education/information-by-topic/consent/

Contraceptive coercion, access and sex education, SIECUS
siecus.org/contraceptive-coercion-access-and-sex-education/

How to talk to your kids about internet pornography, The Clay Center for Young Healthy Minds
mghclaycenter.org/parenting-concerns/grade-school/talk-kids-internet-pornography/

Pronoun Guide, GLSEN
glsen.org/activity/pronouns-guide-glsen

Transgender Map
transgendermap.com/

In My Skin: Supporting Positive Racial Identity Development in Black Children, Embrace Race
embracerace.org/resources/in-my-skin-supporting-positive-racial-identity-development-in-black-children

Fundamentals of SEL, The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/

Solidarity as Social and Emotional Safety, SPLC's Learning for Justice
learningforjustice.org/magazine/solidarity-as-social-and-emotional-safety

What if I was Wrong? Educator's Guide: Activities for Preventing Violent Radicalization
numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/details/52327/3879568

Reading Diversity, SPLC's Learning for Justice
learningforjustice.org/magazine/publications/reading-diversity

Closing the Diversity Gap, SPLC's Learning for Justice
learningforjustice.org/magazine/fall-2018/closing-the-diversity-gap

Genders & Sexualities Alliance Network
gsanetwork.org/

We Need More Culturally Significant After-School Clubs, Children's Defense Fund
childrensdefense.org/blog/we-need-more-culturally-significant-after-school-clubs/

Let's Talk About It, SPLC's Learning for Justice
learningforjustice.org/magazine/spring-2020/lets-talk-about-it

Keep Her Safe: Centering Black Girls in School Safety, SPLC and NWLC
nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/f.NWLC_SPLC_SROReport.pdf

A Teacher's Guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000244676

What Educators Can Do to Help Dismantle the School-to-Prison Pipeline, National Education Association
nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/what-educators-can-do-help-dismantle-school-prison-pipeline

For Whole of Community

Coaching Boys into Men, Coaches Corner
coachescorner.org/

How to Address Toxic Masculinity with Boys, Next Gen Men
nextgenmen.ca/blog/how-to-address-toxic-masculinity-with-boys

The Good Men Project
goodmenproject.com/

CARE Centers, an SPLC & PERIL collaboration
perilresearch.com/projects/community-advisory-resource-and-education-care-centers/

Parents and Caregivers for Inclusive Education, SPLC's Learning for Justice
learningforjustice.org/magazine/fall-2023/parents-and-caregivers-for-inclusive-education

Centering Diverse Parents in the CRT Debate, SPLC's Learning for Justice
learningforjustice.org/magazine/fall-2022/centering-diverse-parents-in-the-crt-debate

For more resources, please visit splcenter.org/peril and perilresearch.com/resources

menstruation, STIs and gender affirming care for transgender youth, knowledge gaps that male supremacist and anti-LGBTQ+ extremists seek to exploit and manipulate are filled.

- **Understanding consent and coercion.** Conversations about active consent can begin at an early age by helping young people set the boundaries they prefer with hugs, handshakes, high-fives and other forms of contact. In age-appropriate ways, pleasure and sexual media literacy can be discussed to help prevent dating and sexual violence, and keep young people resilient to the potentially negative impacts of pornography, such as violence. Young people should also discuss different forms of coercive and violent relationships that limit access to reproductive health care, undermine bodily autonomy and have negative mental health outcomes for the individual being coerced.

- **Affirming young people's identities.** It is imperative that young people's identities are affirmed and respected. Affirmative measures include asking for and respecting a young person's pronouns, honoring a person's chosen name, and helping young people research and access the resources and support they may need to understand and make decisions for their own bodies, lives and well-being.

Social and emotional learning (SEL). SEL prepares young people with the skills to manage emotions while they develop their identities and learn strategies for empathizing with the experiences of others.[61] While it has been shown to improve young people's academic performances, SEL also enhances school climate and school functioning as well as the self-esteem and prosocial, civic behaviors of young people. SEL is not one-size-fits-all but, rather, should be adapted to the varying social and cultural settings of schools and be responsive to the needs of students and educators.

Use experiential learning. Prevention and resilience-building methods against manipulation by extremist propaganda can only be effective when students are engaged. Experiential learning has proven effective at keeping young people engaged and motivated within academic environments since it allows young people to connect with and critically evaluate real-world experiences.[62] Also, ensure that school curricula capture the

A continuum of care with educators, counselors, coaches, mentors and others can alleviate stress within the home and offer young people a variety of safe spaces to have tough conversations.

diversity of individuals whose achievements and contributions have shaped our society.

Develop affinity groups. Clubs such as Genders & Sexualities Alliances improve student health and well-being by protecting students from harassment and offering a safe place for LGBTQ+ youth to connect, share experiences and build friendships. Similarly, culture clubs can help improve school climates by fostering inclusive and cross-cultural dialogue. In communities where inclusive clubs and policies may be difficult to develop, affinity groups dedicated to specific hobbies, sports or other topics can help young people build community and serve as conduits for difficult conversations.

Resist school hardening measures. Common conceptions of school safety involve hiring school resource officers, installing metal detectors at school entrances and relying on zero-tolerance policies, which mandate punishment for specific incidents. However, such measures have been proven to have an outsized *negative* impact on students of color and students with disabilities.[63] [64] Instead, advocate for preventative measures that ensure social engagement, community support and center all students' well-being.

For Whole of Community

Reach out. If a young person seems isolated or begins to socially disengage, help them connect with a broader network of trusted adults. A continuum of care with educators, counselors, coaches, mentors and others can alleviate stress within the home and offer young people a variety of safe spaces to have tough conversations. In particular, it's critical that boys and young men have male figures in their lives who model healthy masculinity, engage in caregiving and with whom they can discuss difficult topics and emotions.

Stay informed and factual. Keep up with events in your community and stay educated on issues related to extremism. Information sharing with other community members and practitioners can deepen supportive networks and foster conversations about community well-being, which can help adults feel more empowered to engage with these topics. Discuss local and national news events with young people in age-appropriate ways. Help them find and assess credible news sources. Facilitating informed conversations grounded in facts will help young people develop a sense of agency while filling knowledge gaps that can be exploited by extremists.

Advocate. In coalition with other parents, caregivers and community members, advocate for school, sports league, after-school program, and local and state policies that will ensure the inclusion and well-being of all young people. Such advocacy can include working to eradicate dress codes that sexualize female students, pushing for policies that respect people's pronouns and making sure sports teams are gender-inclusive. The voices, perspectives and leadership of parents and caregivers of diverse racial and cultural identities as well as those of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations should be centered in these conversations and movements.

Responding to Hate

Even with strong prevention measures in place, hateful rhetoric and actions may still show up in the home, classroom and other environments. Therefore, it is important that all trusted adults are equipped with the tools and information to respond swiftly to male supremacist, misogynist, anti-LGBTQ+ and white supremacist rhetoric and actions.

For Parents & Caregivers

Don't ignore problematic statements or behavior. Parents, caregivers and educators may feel caught off guard and be uncertain about the right response when a young person says something harmful or discriminatory. But silence is often interpreted as indifference or even acceptance. Be careful to approach all problematic statements and behaviors without ridicule or shame, separating the young person's behavior from their identity. Shame can drive youth further into online communities that convert hurt feelings into a sense of betrayal or anger.

Uncover the source. Ask the young person open-ended, exploratory questions to help understand where these ideas and narratives might be coming from. It is impossible to prevent young people from encountering manipulative propaganda or hate-fueled rhetoric on the internet, but uncovering the source of their words and actions will help trusted adults begin developing a response and prevention plan. Questions like "What draws you to this kind of stuff?" and "What do you like about this person?" can help get the conversation started.

For Educators, School Counselors & Administrators

Take it seriously. Since male supremacist and anti-LGBTQ+ bigotry often show up as "edgy humor" in classroom settings, these harms are regularly dismissed with phrases like "boys will be boys" or "locker room talk" or by accusing targeted and harmed individuals of being "too sensitive." It is important to counter these norms by taking every incident seriously and responding to impacted individuals' needs swiftly.

Discuss and educate. Oftentimes, young people are unaware of how their rhetoric can perpetuate stereotypes and prejudice. Lacking such historical and social awareness makes young people increasingly vulnerable to manipulation by extremist narratives, but it also presents an opportunity. Parents, caregivers, educators, counselors and others can use a hateful incident to help educate young people about the historical and present-day iterations of injustice that motivate such language and actions. Such education lessons, however, should never put harmed, targeted or marginalized individuals in a position where they must sympathize with or debate bigoted beliefs.

Address compounding vulnerabilities. Social isolation, traumatic events and other personal experiences can compound a young person's vulnerability to manipulation by male supremacist, anti-LGBTQ+ and racial extremists. School counselors and mental health practitioners can take several steps to break through those vulnerabilities when working with youth who may hold extremist beliefs:

- **Build trust and rapport:** Establish a strong therapeutic alliance. Building trust is crucial, as clients may be suspicious or resistant to authority figures. A non-judgmental and empathetic approach can help create a safe space for dialogue, as these clients are already primed for harsh judgment and outright rejection.

- **Understand the ideologies:** Gain a basic understanding of the client's ideological beliefs without endorsing or debating them. This knowledge helps in addressing the underlying issues that contribute to their radicalization. Start with "Help me understand why you like this?" and "What is it about this content that you're drawn to?"

- **Address underlying issues:** Focus on the psychological and social factors that contribute to radicalization. These may include identity issues, a need for belonging, a history of trauma, dating/relationship struggles and socioeconomic stressors.

- **Develop skills and counternarratives:** Cognitive distortions are often reflected in the thinking and personal evaluation of clients who accept male supremacist ideas.[65] Emotion regulation, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) approaches to cognitive reframing can help reduce reliance on extremist ideologies to cope with stress and conflict.[66] [67]

- **Assess risk:** Conduct a thorough risk assessment to understand the extent of radicalization and the potential for violence.[68] Assess personal grievances, any history of trauma, extent of social isolation and exposure to extremist ideologies.

- **Consider ethical and legal issues:** Be aware of ethical and legal obligations, particularly around issues of confidentiality and the duty to report imminent threats of harm. Balancing client confidentiality with public safety is crucial.

Online Resources

For Parents & Caregivers

My Child Is Sharing Conspiracy Theories and Racist Memes. What Do I Say?, Western States Center
westernstatescenter.medium.com/my-child-is-sharing-conspiracy-theories-and-racist-memes-what-do-i-say-ea1c8916d064

Responding to Everyday Bigotry: Speak Up!, SPLC's Learning for Justice
learningforjustice.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/Speak-Up-2021.pdf

Building Resilience and Confronting Risk: A Parents & Caregivers Guide to Online Radicalization
splcenter.org/peril-guide-online-youth-radicalization

For Educators, School Counselors & Administrators

Educators' Supplement, SPLC & PERIL
splcenter.org/peril-educators

Responding to Hate and Bias at School, SPLC's Learning for Justice
learningforjustice.org/magazine/publications/responding-to-hate-and-bias-at-school

Counselors' Supplement, SPLC & PERIL
splcenter.org/peril-counselors

Model Local Education Agency Policies on Implementing Title IX, GLSEN
glsen.org/activity/model-local-education-agency-policies

No Racism in Schools #1865
instagram.com/no_racism_in_schools_1865/?hl=en

School Resources, International Institute for Restorative Practices
iirp.edu/school-resources/guides-for-implementation

Steps to Creating a Teacher-Powered School, Teacher-Powered Schools
teacherpowered.org/guide/resources/restorative-justice-working-guide-our-schools

6 Restorative Justice Practices to Implement in Your Classroom, University of San Diego
pce.sandiego.edu/restorative-justice-in-the-classroom/

Edjustice, National Education Association
nea.org/advocating-for-change/racial-social-justice

For Whole of Community

Don't Forget the Adults: How Schools and Districts Can Support Educator Mental Health, Education Week
edweek.org/teaching-learning/dont-forget-the-adults-how-schools-and-districts-can-support-educator-mental-health/2022/03

Coaches' & Mentors' Supplement, SPLC & PERIL
splcenter.org/peril-coaches-mentors

The U.S. Department of Justice Hate Crimes Reporting
justice.gov/hatecrimes/get-help-now

Rely on policies. It is imperative that policies reinforce inclusive environments and equip trusted adults with the necessary tools to identify, respond to and prevent harms. Title IX protections should be mobilized to protect the well-being of girls, young women and members of the LGBTQ+ community. Further, in addition to an anti-bullying policy, schools, sports leagues and other organized spaces should have anti-racism, anti-dehumanizing language, antisemitism and gender-inclusive policies. This necessitates consistent, shared definitions of bullying, harassment, racism, sexism, homophobia, discrimination and other terms that constitute unacceptable behavior. Further, particularly in school environments, there must be clear reporting channels among staff to help educators and administrators identify patterns of behavior and harm.

Use restorative justice. Harms caused by male supremacist, anti-LGBTQ+, white supremacist and other forms of extremist ideologies will never be eradicated through carceral- and punishment-based means. Instead, restorative practices can help strengthen relationships between young people and support a strong social fabric among the broader community. When engaging in restorative justice, it is important to remember that both the targeted individual and the individual who caused the harm must agree to the process. Further, the young person who was targeted should never be pressured to offer their forgiveness.

Follow-up. Responding to hateful incidents is an ongoing process for all involved individuals and communities. It is imperative to continue conversations with those harmed to ensure their changing needs are being met. All trusted adults involved in responding to a hateful incident should also collectively reflect on successes, challenges and adjustments to enhance future responses.

For Whole of Community

Listen to your own needs. Compassion fatigue can impact anyone. It is important to remember that you're only one individual in a broader network of caregivers, educators, mentors and other community members who can facilitate conversations and interventions with young people. It is also vital to recognize when a topic or issue may be too difficult for you to confront and to enlist and accept the support of others.

Contact law enforcement only when necessary. The presence of law enforcement in schools has been shown to have an outsized negative impact on many students, particularly young people of color. Further, incarceration and other securitized approaches have little to no positive effect on reducing radicalization and involvement with extremist groups. Before contacting law enforcement, ask those targeted or harmed by the hateful incident if they are comfortable with law enforcement responding to the incident. Given the high levels of anti-Black, anti-Latinx, anti-Indigenous, anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-disability discrimination from security officers in schools, many students may not feel safe in the presence of law enforcement or those serving in security-related roles. That said, if you believe an individual is planning to harm others, take the necessary steps to alert law enforcement.

Supporting Targeted Individuals & Communities

Responding to the needs of young people who have been targeted, harmed or otherwise impacted by the hateful rhetoric or actions of others is imperative. Their needs and concerns as well as those of the broader impacted community are the foundation of a public health approach to preventing radicalization.

For Parents & Caregivers

Listen and reflect. Give impacted young people the time and space they need to share about their experiences. Keep in mind that individuals who have disabilities are disproportionately affected by gender- and sexual-based violence, with one study showing that girls and women with disabilities are twice as likely to experience sexual violence in their lifetime.[69] Therefore, differing modes of communication and expression, such as talk, text or art should be considered. Ask open-ended questions that allow the impacted young person to provide details without using terms or labels that define their experiences. A feelings wheel could help the young person name their emotions and give parents and caregivers a better understanding of focus areas and next steps to address the harm and begin healing.

Follow their lead. Through open-ended questions and reflective dialogue, help the targeted individual decide which next steps best address their needs and will help them regain a sense of control and safety. Next steps could include filing a report with the school administration, the school district, the sports league or after-school program leadership. This will help individuals responsible for those spaces understand the child's or children's experiences and help integrate these trusted adults into the response while creating a paper trail for accountability.

Be intentional. The cyclical nature of media coverage of traumatic community harms can increase a young person's mental distress, especially when they share a social identity with the targeted individual or community.[70] Stay mindful of the amount of trauma-related media coverage young people are consuming and ensure that exposure to such coverage is accompanied with time to reflect, discuss and ask questions.

Harness the positive power of the internet. With 95% of young people ages 13 to 17 reporting at least some social media usage, and over one-third saying they use social media "almost constantly," it is clear that social media has become a foundational aspect of young people's lives.[71] Time spent online is not all bad. Online platforms can offer affirming spaces for LGBTQ+ youth to connect with role models and feel more comfortable exploring and expressing themselves.[72] In particular, for LGBTQ+ youth with intersectional identities, the internet offers spaces to safely explore their sexual orientation and gender identities.

For Educators, School Counselors & Administrators

Take it seriously. When hate- and bias-motivated incidents are not dealt with, the targeted young person's academic performance could decline, while social isolation and potentially suicidal behavior or ideation could increase. Therefore, it is imperative to take each incident seriously.

Develop clear, consistent reporting channels. To ensure young people have access to the support they need after experiencing a biased incident, schools should allow for various

methods and platforms for reporting an incident. This could include writing a note and slipping it under a trusted teacher's door, using an online submission platform or providing office hours with school counselors before or after the school day. Reporting channels among school staff and administrators should also be clear and consistent, so incident response can be swift and transparent and school administrators can identify patterns of harassment, bullying and harm.

Respond and adapt. Responsive measures identified by those targeted and harmed should be immediately implemented. Supportive and adaptive measures could include accepting absences without threatening detention or truancy, or removing the perpetrator from their class, team or club. Healing-centered engagement can strengthen these responses by focusing on the whole individual, rather than solely the trauma incurred.

Engage school counselors. When schools are adequately resourced and staffed, mental health counselors can provide in-depth perspectives on what kind of media a student is consuming, what a student is hearing at home, and what a student is picking up from their friends and broader social network. School-based mental health professionals are well positioned to co-create an intervention plan with the student's parent(s) or caregivers, teachers, and mental health professionals outside of the school. This will help ensure a continuity of care between the student's home life, classroom and therapy sessions.

For Whole of Community

Advocate for inclusive policies. From your position within your community and relationships with young people, advocate for policies that foster inclusion and equity, and

Online Resources

For Parents & Caregivers

The Feelings Wheel, Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective
beam.community/feelings-wheel/

Supporting a Survivor, Safe Before Anyone Else
safebae.org/resources/support-a-survivor/

Supporting Black LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health, The Trevor Project
thetrevorproject.org/resources/guide/supporting-black-lgbtq-youth-mental-health/

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)
rainn.org/

Supporting Survivors with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities, Pennsylvania Coalition to Advance Respect
pcar.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdfs/tab_2019_supporting_survivors_with_idd_508.pdf

Council on American Islamic Relations Incident Reporting Page
cair.com/report/

Stop AAPI Hate Incident Reporting Page
stopaapihate.org/report-hate/

For Educators, School Counselors & Administrators

How to Signal You are an Ally in a Hostile Environment, The Trevor Project
thetrevorproject.org/resources/guide/how-to-signal-you-are-an-ally-in-hostile-environment/

Building Resilience Against Manipulative Disinformation, SPLC's Learning for Justice
learningforjustice.org/magazine/fall-2023/building-resilience-against-manipulative-disinformation

The Future of Healing: Shifting from Trauma Informed Care to Healing Centered Engagement
ginwright.medium.com/the-future-of-healing-shifting-from-trauma-informed-care-to-healing-centered-engagement-634f557ce69c

For Whole of Community

Community Action Toolkit: A Guide to Advancing Sex Education in Your Community, SIECUS
siecus.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2021-Community-Action-Toolkit.pdf

The Ruth Project
ruthproj.org/

10 Policies for LGBTQI+ Inclusion, Athlete Ally
athleteally.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/10-Policies-for-LGBTQI-Inclusion.pdf

A Policy Guide for Social Inclusion, Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools
media.specialolympics.org/resources/community-building/youth-and-school/unified-champion-schools/A-Policy-Guide-for-Social-Inclusive-Schools.pdf

Building Networks & Addressing Harm: A Community Guide to Online Youth Radicalization, SPLC & PERIL
splcenter.org/peril-community-guide

10 Ways to Respond When a Hate Crime or Incident Occurs in Your Community, SPLC
splcenter.org/hopewatch/2024/10/25/10-responses-hate-crime-incident

Partnering Against Hate, Interfaith Alliance
interfaithalliance.org/partnering-against-hate/

Resources for Victims and Survivors of Gun Violence, Everytown for Gun Safety
everytownsupportfund.org/everytown-survivor-network/resources-for-victims-and-survivors-of-gun-violence/

Center for Native American Youth
cnay.org/

Survivors' Agenda
survivorsagenda.org/

that prevent sexualization, discrimination and exclusion. Within educational environments, this means advocating against dress codes that have harmful impacts on girls, young women, nonbinary and transgender students, and those that limit attire which symbolizes important aspects of people's religious and ethnic heritage. For after-school clubs, extracurricular activities and sports leagues, advocate for policies that ensure gender inclusion and abilities inclusion.

Connect. Help connect young people with individuals and groups who share their social identities or lived experiences. Young people who experience hate and discrimination are more likely to experience feelings of isolation, depression and anxiety. They may seek to hide or suppress the part of their identity that was targeted by hateful threats or denigration. Connecting them to trusted individuals, resources, groups and communities with whom they empathize can help build networks of support, bolstering a sense of pride and appreciation for their identities.

Conclusion

This guide is the third in a growing suite of resources co-created by SPLC and PERIL. When considered together, these guides bolster the support networks that surround and nurture young people. However, these guides cannot respond to every piece of radicalizing content or harm that young people will encounter.

Therefore, we encourage readers to explore the resources linked throughout this guide, to seek out additional support, education and training, and to remain engaged in their local communities. We also invite readers to follow the work of PERIL and SPLC to build resilience against manipulation orchestrated by hard right extremists at: splcenter.org/peril and perilresearch.com.

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