What should we do about hate groups recruiting young people?

Samuel Corum / Anadolu Agency/Getty Images file

Supporting Questions

1. What is the problem posed by hate groups?
2. Why are hate groups recruiting young people?
3. What are the effects of the proliferation and outreach of hate groups?
4. What are some potential solutions to the problem posed by hate groups recruiting young people?

What should we do about hate groups recruiting young people?

C3 Standards	D2.Civ.12.9-12. Analyze how people use and challenge local, state, national, and international laws to address a variety of public issues
Staging the Compelling Question	Students will use a SIT protocol as they listen to the stories of Caleb Cain and Chistian Picciolini. Students will share their response to a small group.

Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3	Supporting Question 4
What is the problem posed by hate groups?	Why are hate groups recruiting young people?	What are the effects of the proliferation and outreach of hate groups?	What are some potential solutions to the problem posed by hate groups recruiting young people?
Formative Performance Task	**Formative Performance Task**	**Formative Performance Task**	**Formative Performance Task**
Use a Close reading protocol to **assess** what the problem is posed by hate groups.	Use the jigsaw strategy to **analyze** why hate groups recruit young people.	Use source dependent questions to **analyze** the effects of hate groups recruitment of young people.	**Address** potential solutions to the problems posed by hate groups recruiting young people.
Featured Sources	**Featured Sources**	**Featured Sources**	**Featured Source**
Source A: Hate group definition from the Anti-Defamation League **Source B:** Excerpt of the Congressional testimony of Dr. Cynthia Miller-Idriss	**Source C**: "Tempting Hate" Podcast selection. **Source D**: ADL - How do hate groups form?	**Source E:** ADL- H.E.A.T. Map **Source F:** "Tempting Hate" Podcast selection	**Source G** Propaganda, Extremism and Online Recruitment Tactics from the ADL **Source H** State by State Hate Laws **Source I-** "Tempting Hate" Podcast selection

Summative Performance Task	**ARGUMENT:** What should we do about hate groups recruiting young people? Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay) that evaluates how we address this problem using specific claims and relevant evidence from sources while acknowledging competing views.
	EXTENSION. Use the ADL's HEAT map to explore acts of hate in your region. What kinds of acts are happening? What groups are operating in your region? Why might they be operating here?
Taking Informed Action	**UNDERSTAND** - Research ways individuals and groups are standing up to hate groups. **-ASSESS-** What strategies are effective in combating these hate groups? **ACT** - Choose a way to stand up to these hate groups that fits your context.

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Overview

Inquiry Description

This inquiry leads students through an investigation of the challenges posed by hate groups to young people as a lens for understanding the problems posed by xenophobia more broadly. It is part of a series of lessons commissioned by the Democracy Project at the University of Virginia centered around the podcast *Democracy in Danger.* While violent extremism can be found across an ideological spectrum (left and right), hate groups are typically referenced as right wing. In this case, we are defining hate groups as *"an organization whose goals and activities are primarily or substantially based on a shared antipathy towards people of one or more other different races, religions, ethnicities/nationalities/national origins, genders, and/or sexual identities."* [1] Some of the sources in this inquiry will use the term "right wing" in reference to these groups. We are not intentionally ignoring left wing extremism, however this inquiry focuses on hate groups which have largely been referenced as right wing.

Note: This inquiry is expected to take three or four 50-minute class periods. The inquiry time frame could expand if teachers think their students need additional instructional experiences (e.g., supporting questions, formative performance tasks, featured sources, writing). Teachers are encouraged to adapt the inquiry to meet the needs and interests of their students. This inquiry lends itself to differentiation and modeling of historical thinking skills while assisting students in reading the variety of sources.

Structure of the Inquiry

In addressing the compelling question, students will react to the testimonies of two people who were drawn in my hate groups. After that students will assess the problem that hate groups pose for young people, analyze the causes and effects that the proliferation and outreach of hate groups pose, address potential solutions to the problem and then ultimately act on one of those potential solutions in a meaningful way.

Staging the Compelling Question

In staging the compelling question, students will listen to the testimonies of Caleb Cain and Christian Picciolini and record their reactions using the SIT protocol.

1. Explain to students that you will be playing them two testimonies of two former young people draw in by hate groups and they will record their reactions using the SIT protocol
    a. What surprised you?
    b. What interested you?
    c. What troubled you?
2. Play the story of Caleb Cain from the beginning to the 6:46 mark.
3. Play the story of Christian Picciolinni from the beginning to the 3:28 mark.

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[1] https://www.adl.org/resources/glossary-terms/hate-group

4. Have students discuss their responses with each other in small groups
5. .In a whole group discussion, lead students through a discussion of what these cases have in common. Have students articulate why hate groups recruiting young people might present a "danger to our democracy." Explain in this inquiry, that students are going to study this challenge and then propose some ways in which we can do something about this problem?

Supporting Question 1

The first supporting question asks students to address the question "What is the problem posed by hate groups" by utilizing a Close Reading protocol for the two featured sources.

Teachers may implement this task with the following procedures articulated by Facing History and Ourselves Teachers should adjust these procedures to fit their context. This process can be used for one or both sources.

1. **Read Aloud Text**
   You or a confident student reader can read the text aloud. Students should follow along with the reading. Ask students to circle unfamiliar words as they listen. After the read-aloud, as students share these words with the class, decide which words to define immediately to limit confusion and which definitions you want students to uncover through careful reading.
2. **Students Read Silently**
   Ask students to read silently and note specific words or phrases that jump out at them for any number of reasons: because they are interesting, familiar, strange, confusing, funny, troubling, difficult, etc. Share some of these as a class. Particular questions to ask students at this stage of the reading are:
   a. What can you already infer about the author of this text?
   b. How is the text structured?
   c. Does this structure make it easy or difficult to make meaning?
   d. Does this structure tell us anything about the author's style or purpose?
3. **Students Answer Text-Dependent Questions**
   In small groups, have students read the text in chunks and answer a set of text-dependent questions. Text-dependent questions are those that can be answered based only on careful analysis of the text itself.
4. **Students Create a Visual Image**
   In small groups, have students create a visual image on paper that captures the essence of the text. You may also want students to include a three-word or one-sentence summary of each section of text. Groups can be assigned either the entire text or sections of text for this portion of the close read.
5. **Students Participate in a Gallery Walk**
   Ask students to do a gallery walk of the images that have been created.
6. **Transition to Discussion**
   At this point, we recommend organizing a class discussion so that students can make connections beyond the text. This discussion can be informal or can use the format of the Socratic Seminar or Save the Last Word for Me strategies.

The following sources were selected to …

- **Featured Source A** is the definition of Hate group provided by the Anti-Defamation League.
- Featured Source B is an excerpt(see below) of the Congressional testimony of Dr. Cynthia Miller-Idriss at the The Committee on Foreign Affairs' Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa, and International Terrorism and the Committee on Homeland Security's Subcommittee on Intelligence and Counterterrorism

Supporting Question 2

The second supporting question asks students to address the question "Why are hate groups recruiting young people" using parts of the Democracy in Danger podcast, the Congressional Testimony of Dr. Cynthia Miller-Idriss, and an article from the Anti-Defamation League.

Students will use the jigsaw strategy to collaboratively work together to answer text dependent questions.

Teachers may implement this task with the following procedures copied from [Facing History and Ourselves.](#)

Procedure

1. **Prepare the Activity**
   For this activity, you are going to form groups based on the source that they are assigned to analyze. There are three sources so you need at least three groups. If you have a class of 27 students, it is recommended that you create 9 groups (3 groups working on source C, 3 groups working on source D, and 3 groups working on Source E).
2. **Students Work in Expert Groups**
   In this step, small groups of students ("experts") are responsible for reviewing their assigned source. "Expert" groups work best when students have clear expectations about the type of information they are supposed to present to their peers by completing their section of the question matrix. . It is important that all group members understand the material they are responsible for presenting. To avoid having students present inaccurate or misleading information, teachers can review and approve of content before this information is shared with students in the other groups.
3. **Students Meet in Teaching Groups**
   After "expert" groups have a solid understanding of the material they will be presenting, assign students to "teaching" groups. "Teaching" groups are typically composed of one or two members from each expert group. Experts take turns presenting information. While students are presenting, the other students should be listening and completing the rest of their question matrix.
4. **Students Synthesize and Reflect**
   Teaching groups should discuss what is the most compelling source and reasoning for why hate groups are recruiting young people.

The following sources were selected to …

- **Featured Source C is a selection from "Tempting Hate" from the Democracy in Danger Podcast. Beginning to 4:20** ▶ **Political Extremism, Clip 1**
- **Featured Source D is an [article from the ADL on How Hate Groups Form.](#)**

Supporting Question 3

The third supporting question asks students to address the question "*What are the effects of the proliferation and outreach of hate groups?*

The formative task is to complete this "[Do the Map" activity](#) in which students will analyze trends in the map and

corroborate that information with evidence from the other two sources.

The following sources were selected to …

- **Featured Source E** is the [ADL H.E.A.T. map](#)
- **Featured Source F is a selection from "Tempting Hate" from the Democracy in Danger Podcast.**
  - ▶ **Political Extremism, Clip 2**

Supporting Question 4

The fourth supporting question asks students to address the question "*What are some potential solutions to the problem posed by hate groups recruiting young people*"

1. The formative task is to read through the sources to identify as many potential solutions to address problems posed by hate groups. Students can work individually to respond to this prompt stated above.Students should record the solution with a short explanation of how this solution could address the problem.

 Teacher's role
As students share their ideas, teachers should keep notes. The goal is for students to share text-based evidence effectively and accurately. The following categories can guide you, the teacher, as you listen to your students' discussion. Listen for these elements:

- Factual and interpretive accuracy: offering evidence that is correct and interpretations that are plausible
- Persuasiveness of evidence: including evidence that is relevant and strong in terms of helping to prove the claim
- Sourcing of evidence: noting what the source is and its credibility and/or bias
- Corroboration of evidence: recognizing how different documents work together to support a claim
- Contextualization of evidence: placing the evidence into its appropriate historical context
2. Debrief as a class as you weave in feedback. Affirm their insights. Highlight strong reasoning and text-based arguments. Choose one or two misconceptions about the content to address. Point out areas where students may want to reevaluate the ways they are connecting past and present.
3. If there is time, have students respond to the following journal prompt- "What should we do about hate groups recruiting young people?"

The following sources were selected-

- **Source GI** [Propaganda, Extremism and Online Recruitment Tactics from the ADL](#)
- **Source H** [State by State Hate Laws](#) **FBI**
- **Featured Source I is a selection from "Tempting Hate" from the Democracy in Danger Podcast.**

Summative Performance Task

At this point in the inquiry, students have assessed the problem posed by hate groups, analyzed the causes and effects of their proliferation, and addressed some potential solutions to this danger to our democracy. To demonstrate the breadth of their understandings and their abilities to use evidence from multiple sources to support their claims,

students will respond to the prompt "What should we do about hate groups recruiting young people"

To extend their arguments, students will use the ADL's HEAT map to assess hate group activity in their region and research a group or two that are engaging in hate activities.

Students have the opportunity to Take Informed Action by raising awareness of this activity in their community.

Appendix A: Sources

Source A: Definition of Hate Group from the Anti-Defamation League

Hate Group

An organization whose goals and activities are primarily or substantially based on a shared antipathy towards people of one or more other different races, religions, ethnicities/nationalities/national origins, genders, and/or sexual identities. The mere presence of bigoted members in a group or organization is typically not enough to qualify it as a hate group; the group itself must have some hate-based orientation/purpose.

Source B: Congressional testimony of Dr. Cynthia Miller-Idriss at the The Committee on Foreign Affairs' Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa, and International Terrorism and the Committee on Homeland Security's Subcommittee on Intelligence and Counterterrorism session entitled "MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF WHITE NATIONALIST TERRORISM AT HOME AND ABROAD"

My name is Cynthia Miller-Idriss, and I am Professor of Education and Sociology at the American University here in Washington, D.C. I am also Director of Outreach and Senior Fellow at the Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right (CARR) in the United Kingdom. I have been studying the dynamics of global white supremacist extremism for over twenty years. I have written two books focused on Germany (Blood and Culture and The Extreme Gone Mainstream). My remarks today on the global rise of white supremacist extremism draw on those years of empirical research in Germany as well as from my new book, Hate in the Homeland, which focuses primarily on the U.S.[1].

... Today's focus is on white nationalist terrorism, which I view as a subset of the broader phenomenon of white supremacist extremism. I will use both terms interchangeably to refer to an ideology that calls for lethal and mass violence as a solution to a supposed existential threat posed to whites from demographic change and immigration. White supremacist extremism is currently at a record high, in terms of recognized hate organizations, number of violent attacks, and the spread of its propaganda. The pace of all these dangers is probably increasing. I urge this Congress to take seriously this clear and pressing danger to the safety of the American public and the harmony of our nation.

 White supremacist extremism is currently the most lethal form of extremism in the U.S. White supremacist extremists were responsible for at least 50 deaths in 2018—the fourthdeadliest year since 1970 in terms of domestic extremist deaths—with the majority of those deaths linked to white supremacy specifically.[2] There have been over 100 deaths in the U.S. and Canada at the hands of white supremacist extremists since 2014.[3] White supremacist extremism has grown dramatically in terms of its organization. The number of hate groups in the U.S. is currently at a record high. White nationalist groups alone increased by 50% in 2018, increasing from 100 to 148.[4]

 The pace of white nationalist terror attacks is also rapidly increasing. In the four weeks after the El Paso shooting that killed 22 people, 40 individuals were arrested for plotting mass shootings, a dozen of which were definitively linked to white supremacist ideology.[5] Even before El Paso, domestic terrorism incidents were outpacing numbers from previous years. FBI Director Christopher Wray testified in July 2019 that his agency had made about 100 arrests related to domestic terrorism in the first three-quarters of the 2019 fiscal year, noting that a majority of those arrests were related to white supremacy.[6]

 The U.S. has also seen a significant rise in white supremacist propaganda, recruiting, and activism. The Anti-Defamation League reported a rise in white supremacist recruiting over the first five months of 2019, along with a steady rise in propaganda tactics and increasing hate crimes.[7] This comes on the heels of a 182% increase in white supremacist propaganda incidents from 2017 to 2018, when 1,187 cases were reported.[8] This propaganda is not limited to any single group. The hundreds of documented instances of white supremacist and white nationalist propaganda documented in 2018 came from at least ten separate national 'alt-right,' white supremacist and neo-Nazi groups.[9]

Will Hitchcock [00:00:03] Hello, I'm Will Hitchcock.

Siva Vaidhyanathan [00:00:04] And I'm Siva Vaidhyanathan.

Will Hitchcock [00:00:06] And from the University of Virginia's Deliberative Media Lab, this is Democracy in Danger.

Siva Vaidhyanathan [00:00:13] As our listeners know, Will and I both live and work in Charlottesville, Virginia. A small, mostly quiet college town. But three years ago, in August 2017, our city became the scene of a shocking and deadly torrent of far right violence. It was a day that none of us will ever forget. Organizers called that August March a Unite the Right rally. And that name is a clue that at least the leaders of these extremist groups think of themselves as part of a movement with a shared ideology. But how are these groups built? How did they recruit new members? What sort of threat they posed to our safety and to our democracy?

Will Hitchcock [00:00:54] Yeah, those are big questions. And to help us drill down into this toxic underworld of the far right. We have with us today Cynthia Miller-Idriss. She's a professor of education and sociology at American University. She has a new book called Hate in the Homeland, and it explores just how far right extremists find each other and, especially, how they draw in young people and socialize them into these many hate groups and movements that have sprung up in the U.S., but also in other countries. Cynthia, great to have you on Democracy in Danger.

Cynthia Miller-Idriss [00:01:27] Thank you for having me. It's great to be here.

Will Hitchcock [00:01:29] So in your new book, you write that after these events in Charlottesville in August 2017, the U.S. surprisingly saw a spike in extremist violence. The following year, in 2018, right wing extremists killed about 50 people and in 2019, over 40. And it seems from what you've reported, that the number of hate groups in America is at an all time high. Why now? What is fueling this growth?

Cynthia Miller-Idriss [00:01:58] Well, I would say it's sort of a toxic mix of factors that combine to create a kind of perfect storm for extremist recruitment and radicalization. I think one is the kind of esthetic mainstreaming that you just talked about that we saw in Charlottesville that has helped to kind of normalize what is really hateful rhetoric by putting it into a package that doesn't look like what most Americans hold in their heads in terms of, you know, thinking someone who is a racist skinhead, you know, has a swastika tattoo or a shaved head and combat boots and is stomping around in the backwoods at a heavy metal right wing concert. When you have a kind of normalization of what it looks like and repackaging of hateful and white supremacist extremist ideas into a form that looks more like the teenager next door than the Aryan Brotherhood prison gang member, it is much harder for people to understand those ideas in the same way. And I think that's one of the factors that has led to young people being attracted to it and feeling like this is an easier reflection of their beliefs. But it's not a full commitment in the way of shaving ahead and a bomber jacket and donning combat boots once was. But of course, it's not you know, it wouldn't it wouldn't be attractive if the ideas didn't also resonate. And I think we're seeing simultaneously a mainstreaming and normalization of the rhetoric around anti-immigration elected leaders using hateful rhetoric, a very polarizing election climate in 2016, and a legitimation of white nationalist kind of sentiments from the Trump campaign and then later from other elected officials as well on the local level and state level. And so we had this kind of combination of factors combined with global growth. And I think that's a really important thing to note, is this isn't just an American phenomenon. In fact, you know, we may be driving some of the so-called alt-right and the modernization of the movement here, but a lot of the inspiration comes from Europe. There's a lot of copycat kind of inspiration from things like the Christchurch terrorist attack that mobilized a global network and global dialog around this. And so it's it's certainly not just an American problem.

Source E: Anti-Defamation League Hate Crimes Heat Map

The Anti-Defamation League has created a WebMap that tracks **H**ate, **E**xtremism, **A**nti-Semitism, and **T**errrorism incidents at the local and state levels. This activity tasks you with interacting with the map gain an understanding of the extent and nature of the crimes at the local, regional, and national scales.

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Source F: [Democracy in Danger S1E8 Tempting Hate](#)

Will Hitchcock [00:07:34] Cynthia, you talked about the idea of esthetic mainstreaming kind of making the far right. Look, whatever - look attractive, look normal, look mainstream. Walk us through how the recruitment process works. So if you want to attract college kids to your group, you know, typically you go to a college and you hand out fliers and you set up tables and you talk to the kids and you get out a clipboard. But that's not how the far right is recruiting potential members, is it? What's. How does it actually work? Walk us through that process.

Cynthia Miller-Idriss [00:08:06] Well, one of the great ironies actually of the of the recruitment process over the last several years is that paper fliers actually have had a comeback. You know, the Anti Defamation League has tracked record breaking numbers of actual paper propaganda, paper fliers, being hung around the country, hundreds of incidents just over the last year, heavily targeting college campuses. Besides that, a lot of directed recruitment happens online. We have a lot of white supremacist engagement in online gaming platforms. Someone from a very violent extremist group who is leaving reported that they were working on recruiting young people, kids as young as eight off of online gaming platforms, directing them to encrypted chat rooms. And then, you know, working to undermine their sense of their parents authority before they introduce white supremacist propaganda. But they'd say things like, hey, you know, you don't have to listen to your parents. And so this a very manipulative strategy of working to over long periods of time, kind of groom young people into the belief system. So there are very deliberate and targeted ways. But actually, I think the way that most extremist recruitment is happening for young people today is not directed from the top down. It is through the toxic kind of online ecosystem that people encounter extreme content as they kind of peruse videos or read materials and then follow those recommendation systems.

Will Hitchcock [00:09:38] Cynthia, you've had someone in your research group who had been recruited by the far right and then emerged from from that world to tell the story. What role is he played in your work and what insights has he brought to the to the picture?

Cynthia Miller-Idriss [00:09:54] Yeah, we work full time with Caleb Kane is former altright. And has been an indispensable part of our team. Among other things in running kind of youth cultural advisory board for us that helps us vet ideas for interventions. Listeners may know his story from a New York Times story about his descent, as he called it, into the alt-right rabbit hole that he created a viral video about that really shed a lot of light on how those YouTube algorithms can sort of inadvertently direct people toward ever more extreme content. There have been some tweaks to those algorithms that are trying to change that. I know there's a lot of social media efforts to disrupt those algorithms and change the way that that pattern happens. But I think a lot of people, you know, are drawn into this by searching for something online, you know, maybe about depression or, you know, Googling something, looking something up in a search engine, landing on white supremacist content because it shows up in the search results or watching a video that then recommends another video that is more extreme. And then gradually encountering this and feeling like they've uncovered something. They've discovered the truth with a capital T. that explains all the things that they don't understand or didn't understand before. It wraps up all the uncertainty in their lives into a neat little package of us versus them, black and white, of very clear responses to whatever is going on in your life and gives you a scapegoat to blame.

Source G: ADL Strategies

Source H: State by State Hate Crime Laws

Since 1990, The Hate Crime Statistics Act (HCSA) has required the Justice Department to collect statistics and report annually on hate crimes directed against individuals because of race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, gender or gender identity.

Source I: Democracy in Danger S1E8 Tempting Hate

Will Hitchcock [00:22:03] Cynthia, you've terrified us and you've given us insight into a very dark and disturbing world. But in your work at your center, I'm sure that you've thought a lot about measures that citizens can take, voters can take, users of social media can take to try to contain or at least diminish the impact of these extremist far right movements. What are some of them?

Cynthia Miller-Idriss [00:22:24] Yeah, it may surprise you both and your listeners to learn that I'm actually an optimist by nature. And even in this moment, I mean, I think I study and spend a lot of time looking and listening to toxic things. But I spend my days working with a team of incredible people who are testing out of the box ideas to create empirical evidence to show kind of the public and policymakers what works to disrupt and interrupt radicalization pathways. Already, I think one of the things we're learning is that it is much easier to prevent radicalization than it is to de-radicalize someone. And I think a lot of the work that had been done in terrorism and extremism was focused on what's called counter radicalization or countering violent extremism, which in my opinion really comes far too late. Right? By the time someone's already down a pathway holding onto those extremist beliefs and ideologies and conspiracy theories, it's very difficult to turn them back. But what you can do is prevent people from getting there to begin with. And one of the most effective approaches, as we know from lab research, that we're now testing in the field is called inoculation interventions, where you really show people how online manipulation works or how the content of propaganda is trying to persuade them before they encounter it. So it speaks to a lot of kind of media literacy work that needs to be done with people in middle school, even in high school, in digital communications classes, so that they understand. What does it look like when you see scapegoating? What does it look like when online manipulation happens? How is someone trying to persuade you? How can you tell that they're trying to persuade you? And the last thing I would say is if you start looking at the places where extremism happens, not just thinking of this as something that happens cognitively alone in people's heads, but start looking at where they encounter propaganda, where do they first run into these ideas? Then it opens up a whole new set of ways to think about interventions. So if they're encountering and in mixed martial arts gym, let's try to work with mixed martial arts trainers. If they're encountering on college campuses, let's make sure college faculty and counselors and, you know, people understand how this is happening. And so I think if you take that approach, we're starting to find a lot of people with whom we can work to create interventions than we might have thought about before. So ultimately, I am optimistic, but I think we have to be putting the resources into the really prevention and even pre prevention side rather than just the countering radicalization end.

Appendix B: Handouts

Source A and B Text Dependent Questions

1. What are the key characteristics of a hate group?

2. What makes Cynthia MIller-Idriss qualified to talk about hate groups?

3. How does Cynthia Miller-Idriss define "white supremacist extremism?"

4. What evidence does Cynthia Miller-Idriss cite to explain why extremist white supremacist groups posed a threat to the United States?

Question Matrix for Supporting Questions

Tempting Hate Questions	
What is fueling the growth of hate groups in the United States?	
Why might young people be attracted to the message of these hate groups?	
ADL: How do hate groups form	
What role does social media and the internet play in how groups form?	
What are some common ways that hate groups form?	
Why are young people susceptible to hate group recruitment?	
Congressional Testimony	
Why are young people attracted to hate group ideology?	
What role does social media play in the recruitment of hate groups?	