## Just Research on Radicalization and White Supremacy

**Intro** [00:00:01] RTI International's Justice Practice Area presents Just Science.

**Intro** [00:00:09] Welcome to Just Science, a podcast for justice professionals and anyone interested in learning more about forensic science, innovative technology, current research, and actionable strategies to improve the criminal justice system. In episode two of our domestic radicalization season, Just Science sat down with Dr. Matthew DeMichele, director of the center for Criminal Legal Systems Research at RTI International, to discuss his research focused on former members of white supremacist groups. Domestic violent extremists use violence to further their social or political goals, and thereby pose a significant threat to the American public. To better understand these groups, Dr. DeMichele's research examines the factors associated with individual vulnerability to radicalization. Listen along as Dr. DeMichele describes important research practices for working with former extremists. Findings about how and why radicalization occurs and the future of deradicalizing individuals from extremist groups. This episode is funded by RTI International's Justice Practice Area. Some content in this podcast may be considered sensitive. It may evoke emotional responses or may not be appropriate for younger audiences. Here's your host, Michael Planty.

**Michael Planty** [00:01:11] Hello and welcome to Just Science. I'm your host, Mike Planty, with the Justice Practice Area at RTI International. Our topic today is focused on domestic extremist organizations, specifically white supremacy organizations in the movement. Organized white supremacy in the United States is a complex social movement, one that is not well understood. The FBI's most recent statistics show a rise in hate crime targeting people's race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religion, and these are the crimes reported to police. The increase in persistent nature of hate crime raises important questions about the pathways to association and engagement in these beliefs and behavior. Today, we are specifically interested in understanding the pathways to hate. What are those factors and conditions that lead a person to engage in white supremacy, and what approaches are there for prevention and disengagement? We are excited to speak with Dr. Matthew DeMichele. Welcome to the podcast, Matthew.

**Matthew DeMichele** [00:02:00] Thanks Mike.

**Michael Planty** [00:02:01] DeMichele is a senior research sociologist at RTI Justice Practice Area. He's a director of the center for Criminal Legal Systems Research, and he's conducted criminal justice research on correctional populations, risk prediction, terrorism prevention, extremist pathways, and program evaluation and methods. He has worked with local, state and federal agencies to conduct research to address complex policy issues. To kick us off. Matthew, tell us about what led you to focus on this issue of white supremacy and extremism?

**Matthew DeMichele** [00:02:28] Yeah. Thanks, Mike, for that introduction and appreciate the opportunity to be on the podcast. You know, my interest in this area began kind of, you know, fledgling many, many, many years ago and early 2000 when I started working with the Department of Homeland Security, conducting joint jurisdictional trainings of probation officers and prosecutors. So we actually went around the country and we trained hundreds of individuals back then from the same county, probation officers and their relevant district attorneys and prosecutors from US jurisdictions on kind of the signs and indicators and awareness of, extremist groups, in many ways, a very basic sort of training in kind of some of the trainings that came out of DHS back then or in the for the aftermath of, you know,

many years after the Oklahoma City bombing, where about 170 Americans were killed by a white supremacist, a white nationalist group, and then, you know, definitely many years after 911 in 2001. And so those were really some defining moments, I think, in the terrorism and extremism space, where I was working at an organization and what we were doing a lot of training and technical assistance for probation officers. What we found was probation officers and prosecutors and law enforcement from the same jurisdictions. One, we're kind of unaware of a lot of the signs and indicators of extremism. And two, weren't, you know, kind of speaking the same language across this jurisdiction. And then the National Institute of Justice, after 2012, they were given a mandate to start studying extremism and terrorism. You know, some years later, in about 2014, RTI applied to do a study, you know, looking to study what are known as formers. And formers are individuals that were once affiliated with various types of extremist organizations in the United States. And the groups that, you know, this solicitation from the National Institute of Justice called on were looking at domestic violent extremist with a specific emphasis on white supremacy. And so to do that contacted a lot of departments of corrections across the country, where I had some contacts with some researchers and, even directors of DOCs, because we know how racially segregated prisons are and the relationship between prison and, you know, Aryan Brotherhood and some other, you know their affiliate groups. But I was kind of, you know, given the cold shoulder a little bit, there really wasn't a ton of interest in having outside researchers coming into the prison to demonstrate that they have this form of, you know, racial extremists in their facilities. And so really, there was a lot of, serendipity in that I, you know, reached out to the Southern Poverty Law Center, Anti-Defamation League, and Simon Wiesenthal Center. And, you know, it was from there that they put me in touch of a fledgling group called Life After Hate, an organization that was created by, and in many ways has run for many years by former members of neo-Nazi and white supremacist groups in the United States. And they were set up to help individuals navigate the challenges and struggles that people face as they're trying to exit these movements. And so what they created at Life After Hate is what's known as exit USA and exit USA parallels other exit programs across the world. And these are essentially, you know, nonprofit organizations that try to, you know, work with these individuals that are actually these movements, whether skinhead movements, KKK, you know, anti-government militia movements, etc., you know, help those individuals to navigate both the mental health and psychological ramifications of being a member of those, but then also the real physical, financial and structural sort of issues around getting a job, maintaining a job, you know, maybe dealing with some tattoo removal. Many of these folks have, you know, facial tattoos and other kind of, you know, white supremacist related tattoos as well. So really helping folks to kind of navigate contemporary society, if you will, is to trying to exit those movements. So we were lucky that our project got funded through the National Institute of Justice and myself, along with two other sociologists, we conducted life history interviews with almost 50 individuals. We did these interviews across just over 30 states. They were all in the U.S. We did the interviews, either one interviewer or two interviewers, just depending on the nature of the interview. And we engaged with these individuals for the entire day. And so we conducted the interviews and wherever they were willing and able to meet with us to talk about kind of their trajectory, a pathway into, white supremacist violent extremism, their involvement in it while they were mobilized, and then the process of exit from it. And so it was really a very intriguing study on kind of dealing with or understanding the real lived experiences of these individuals that had been radicalized, the kind of the struggles and successes that they had as they began to exit.

**Michael Planty** [00:06:40] It must be a certain level of trust you have to gain with these individuals not only to meet with them, especially when they're trying to exit. They don't want to be affiliated. Can you talk a little bit about how you gain trust in, you know,

presenting the study to them? And then in, in terms of what did they expect to get out of this?

**Matthew DeMichele** [00:06:55] It's a tough group to study. You know, these are anytime you're studying kind of hidden populations. It's struggling. There's no phone book. You know yellow pages if you will, to take from us. So what we did was we utilized Life After Hate to provide us with kind of initial context. From those individuals, we use those as was called seeds. And then we did what's called snowballing. So we might interview a person and then we'd say, hey, do you know anybody else that would be interested you were affiliated with that is now exited that you feel comfortable contacting? We utilized that strategy for the most part. We also were able to use, you know, some social media contacts and kind of look through that. There's a handful of individuals that are very public with their story and they have been, you know, contacted by Life After Hate. So we're able to kind of request like, can we talk with this individual and that individual. But really the snowballing was our main process for, you know, getting linked up with, with the interviewees, you know, the trust part goes both ways, right? So we had to establish a trust with the individuals to meet with us, that we were legitimate, that we weren't law enforcement, that we weren't intelligence agencies, that we weren't going to turn over our information to law enforcement and intelligence. And that was a struggle in that, you know, as social scientists that as you know, at RTI, we have a human subjects over it. So that vetted our project, made sure that we notified everyone that the National Institute of Justice and Research on the part of justice that funded the study. That always caused a little bit of concern for folks. So we just kind of walk them through exactly who we were, the nature of our conversations, their ability to end them at any moment, that everything was voluntary. They weren't coerced to stay or to answer any of our questions. He could tell us they didn't want to answer the question that they wanted to. I think the topic of what did they get out of the interview. And I think as we get into the substance of what we learned from these folks and the kind of, you know, semi ethnographic experience we had, like really being with them for this time. I think a lot of folks, not everyone, but a lot of the individuals, I think they found it cathartic. They found it helpful to share their story. These are very emotional stories. I think one thing of our findings that we do that maybe some other studies known as we do, overlay them with kind of the real lived emotions that people felt, not just the hate, but the shame, the regret, the process towards a new life. And so I think they found it cathartic for one. I think too many people felt like they were giving back to try to help others exit that they recognize how bad this movement has been for their life and their experiences in the movement. That was for the folks we're talking with. It was a very proved to be a negative experience once they got out and they to help other individuals not go through that as well.

**Michael Planty** [00:09:26] So in terms of the methods you use, you talk about life history. Just tell us a little bit about that method in what you do.

**Matthew DeMichele** [00:09:32] One person would be contacting somebody that was a former white supremacist, let's say in a skinhead movement or something out and say, hey, you want to come out, sit down with you for the whole day and do an interview? And, depending on that person's life, you would get different levels of suspicion. And so, what we try to do was build rapport. And so very simply introduce ourselves. Definitely some lighthearted chit chat before we got rolling. But then we would, you know, really start all the interviews with. Could you tell us about your first memory of where you live? And so, we would start, you know, folks really telling us about their childhood. I would ask you, you know, what's the first home you remember living in as a child? And it could be the story is this is where you grew up your whole life. Maybe you start to weave a story of multiple

movings and different things like that. But either way, it kind of set that path in that trajectory to help us kind of navigate that space. And I think the second interview I was doing out in Southern California, after about two hours of the interview, the individual, the gentleman, he says, hold on, let me text my wife and let her know everything's okay. He's like, she keeps texting me, you know. And I said, oh, she concerned that I was law enforcement. He said, no, we were really I was mostly concerned because you don't have any tattoos. And so, I got worried that maybe you were in the movement and trying to seek, retribution. You know, one of their main concerns, the interviewers, isn't really law enforcement, but it's folks from the group maybe trying to do their part, and that he knew since he had exited that the new movement was to, you know, kind of look clean cut, you know, like khakis sport shirts, no tattoos and stuff like that. Tried to integrate in. And so really just over time during the interview, through the conversation, you kind of build that trust in that rapport, you know, with individuals and every individual's a little bit differently. But like I said, I mean, all the interviews lasted no less than 7 or 8 hours, and we produced thousands of pages of transcripts.

**Michael Planty** [00:11:14] Yeah. And we're going to get into some of that in a minute. But before we do that, let's level set with some basic terminology. When we talk about extremism, radicalization and white supremacy, how do you classify and organize those terms?

**Matthew DeMichele** [00:11:25] Very often we've created so many terms to describe, you know, what we're talking about, you know, with these groups that I think it can be a little, you know, mind boggling for people. But I will say so, the idea of radicalization is really a process that one goes about from being, you know, essentially not having ideological ideas, whether they're from an Islamic standpoint, a left leaning or environmentalist terrorist, if you will, or the white supremacist, white nationalist variant. But it's really this process that individuals go through as they move along, becoming more acceptant of the use of violence to achieve social, political, economic and religious goals. And that latter part is really what really attaches us to extremism and terrorism. So essentially, there's no extremism law. There are domestic violence, extremist definitions. Now, the FBI and terrorist definitions that essentially really get at the idea of people that are willing to use violence and coercion to bring about social and political change with, like the number one purpose for violent extremists and terrorists really being to sow discord, to create confusion and disagreement amongst the public and to create fear. Really, there's a lot of folks who talk about terrorism as at its heart a form of communication. You know, because the last thing that a terrorist group wants is to do a secret terrorist activity. You know, so very often these folks will call in published materials beforehand, release manifestos, release videos. They really want to call notoriety to the fact that they're doing, to signal to other activists to either to engage in that movement as well. And I think one last term, you know, we want to talk about white supremacy, because I think it is a term that I think has, you know, morphed and evolved over time. But essentially the way we were looking at it is this overlapping or intersecting network of kind of ideologies and perspectives that really, you know, place white at the top of this racial hierarchy and really have a negative view towards all non-whites and lump Jewish individuals in this category, non-whites as well, and are willing to use violence and other kind of anti-democratic means to achieve their goals.

**Michael Planty** [00:13:30] Say a little bit about the organization. Do you have the spectrum of lone wolf with these ideologies in it to really organize groups? Is it the full spectrum out there?

**Matthew DeMichele** [00:13:38] Yeah, so we actually didn't have any lone wolf members in our study, and we did that specifically. So lone wolves are going to be just at they're essentially believed to be individuals that are kind of radicalized on their own and operate on their own. So, we had a requirement to be in our study was that you had to have been a member of an extremist organization in the United States at some point. And so, all of our folks were affiliated.

**Michael Planty** [00:14:02] Now, related to understanding how one gets involved in these groups. You talked with formers about their pathways in life course. One significant factor says surface was around Aces, right. Adverse childhood experiences. Tell us about that research.

**Matthew DeMichele** [00:14:15] Like much of life, involves some serendipity, right? I mean, does involve having access to somebody that's in the loop. But we have so small contingent of individuals that have family members that were already radicalized and, you know, they were a hammer skin or in the KKK or something like that. And so, there was kind of this natural pathway that way but then we had some others that, you know, really it was kind of a matter of happenstance of where they were located. And somebody would say that they actually had a lot of parent parental neglect, had some abuse in their family, they were very vulnerable. Both of those are these adverse childhood experiences that make somebody vulnerable, right? That makes somebody lonely and make somebody essentially feel bad about themselves and, you know, want to be careful want to think of themselves as important as we all do. And it just happened to be that they had somebody on the next block or next door to them in some cases. And then I would say another connection that we found through some recruitment is at least with the folks that we interviewed. In these interviews, I should say happened between about 2015 to 2018 that, you know, they all had recruits these groups. You know, the folks that we talked with or individuals about, like street level skinhead gangs familiar with them, a prison, white supremacist related gangs, KKK, some militia, some anti authority folks. I will say all of these kind of intersect. No doubt there's some rivalries, but there's a lot of overlap between these folks. But with that said, these recruiters would tell stories to share with us. How did they actually target individuals? For instance, I can tell a story about one recruiter that he described, a situation where he would very often park not far from high schools, and as the high schools were getting out, he would look for the kids in the back, the kids who were kind of hanging out by themselves, the loners, they, you know, kind of looked like misfits as the way he would describe them, essentially. And he would approach them with like a flier saying, hey, you look lonely or bored or whatever. Just want to let you know we're having a party this weekend. Come out to my place. There's going to be, you know, beer, music and stuff like that there, and trying to be enticing to these young kind of teenage males to recruit them. These individuals very often would then get that soft cell, but they would be individuals that possessed these sort of, you know, vulnerabilities from these kind of negative childhood experiences that, you know, essentially put them at high risk. The adverse childhood experiences involve essentially two scales that measure kind of childhood maltreatment. So, things like, you know, did you suffer emotional, physical or social abuse as a child from very high levels of the sexual abuse was very high in our population of 40 some folks, you know, and then also emotional neglect, physical neglect. And then the other main, you know, topic or household dysfunction, substance abuse by a parent caregiver at home that's using drugs regularly, the caregiver with diagnosable. We kind of really try to tease out the mental illness bit, the diagnosable, you know, mental health problem, maybe a caregiver loss, caregiver incarceration and then also witnessing of domestic violence in the house. And what we found is that of all of these ten sorts of childhood traumas, if you will, that about two thirds of our folks had at least four or more of

them. And that's really high. The general population, that's about 16%. So, I mean, it was a, you know, very high number and level of trauma. What we posit is that it doesn't it's not some, you know, necessary or sufficient cause automatically puts money on a path to radicalization, but it does provide kind of a foundation upon which these organizations, these recruiters, can kind of scaffold up this opportunity to recruit those individuals by helping to replace those traumas with possibly some other forms of excitement to make them feel important in their life. So, we just argue that these traumas, these aces, essentially make somebody vulnerable to receive these kind of, you know, extremist passages, if you will.

**Michael Planty** [00:17:55] And that grooming, as you described, right, is really not an immediate process, but it happened over several months or weeks, right? And would that escalate in terms of their exposure to the ideas or just by being at those parties, being in those that location? Slowly the person would be exposed to more and more of these ideas. Is that how it worked?

**Matthew DeMichele** [00:18:13] This would be, very. But yeah, in general that's the case. I mean, I will say that it's kind of like threading the needle and talking about these organizations, these organizations, they have structure, they have norms, they have rules. We should say that they're not, you know, highly efficient, high performing organizations. Clearly, right? I mean, there's a lot of dysfunction, you know, in a lot of ways. And so not perfectly planned out. But, yeah, I think the idea was they get folks in there, they would very often there would be alcohol and they would kind of give them kind of a sense of camaraderie. And very quickly, I think over time they would start seeing swastikas, Confederate flags, hearing a lot of, you know, anti-Jewish anti race, you know, comments, and things like that. And that might begin in sort of a joking manner, if you will. And this, I think it's happening online today with memes and different types of language that's being thrown around. And people go on just joking. And then over time, people would become more and more comfortable with this sort of ideology. And then that grooming became really hearing stories about these folks as they were getting involved to really have a thirst to, you know, in quotes, educate themselves on the movement. They all become history buffs once they get introduced to the idea of Nazis in World War Two, right? And so, a lot of history channel, a lot of talk about how great Hitler was. I mean, I think I had stories from some folks that got, radicalized in prison. They would part of their pledge, you know, reading these different books and being able to at least articulate some of the key tenets, if you will.

**Michael Planty** [00:19:40] Were they're also like a trigger or events that happen to individuals that we help put an example on and say, hey, you know, this group is bad because you see what happened to Joe over here? You know, he got attacked or whatever, where they're these other more local examples.

**Matthew DeMichele** [00:19:55] We can think about turning points, if you will, in a couple of different ways. I will say for the movement, for your listeners that I can remember back to, you know, the mid 90s with Waco, the Koresh, incident. The Ruby Ridge, you know, with the weavers and then, you know, building into the Oklahoma City bombing. I mean, the white supremacist militia, anti-government movement was really kind of galvanizing around Ruby Ridge in Waco, if you will, and then crescendo with, you know, Oklahoma City bombing and those events maintained really kind of centralizing forces, you know, for this group. I mean, they were things that they still talked about. But then I think, you know, more deeply if you're talking about at the individual level, what we did here was we did hear about different turning points and individuals lives. And these turning points, you

know, could seem like something like totally disconnected for an individual. But they become these very impactful things and these small kind of turning points, you know, talk to a gentleman that actually had been, sexually assaulted as a child. And this really carried with him the sense of loss, the sense of reduced sense of self, this disempowerment. And it happened to be by a person of color had attacked him, as a child. He turned that into this hatred for other people of color and homosexuals and, you know, became ganged up with a skinhead street crew. And they did a lot of a lot of street level violence. And it took him many, many years to kind of reflect on that to, you know, sort of let go of that turning point of this isolated incident didn't really have anything to do with these other people. But I think what we have talked about is really this kind of sense of empowerment other people call quest for significance, if you will, this idea that you take these kind of vulnerable souls, you know, they have this trauma, they don't fit in, they don't have friends, they're not important in their head. And this gives them a way to fit in and kind of fill those gaps.

**Michael Planty** [00:21:45] What is the connection and the differences between violence and racist violence, right? And how does this manifest when somebody does become a part of this group? What are those triggers in terms of the violent events?

**Matthew DeMichele** [00:21:56] You know, we move past this idea that the acts that these people are involved in, it's not just violence, but what they were involved in was racially motivated violence. And it could be very often, probably today would be classified as hate crimes. When these were taking place, those didn't exist. But again, I can give you a handful of examples. I mean, these would play out in ways of, you know, very intentional and focused forms of violence that are targeted to really, again, elicit fear amongst the community. Molotov cocktails, vandalizing vehicles, slashing tires, physically attacking individuals. As young males, a lot of these guys were in their late teens, early 20s. They would pose as male escorts on the street. And if gentlemen would stop to pick them up, their guys would jump out and attack, you know, those forms of violence. And I think that extremist forms of violence that I think today can be classified as hate crimes. And I think one story that really has always stuck with me is a gentleman telling this story. Grew up in kind of a southeast area. It was active in the southeast. They would typically or routinely go and hide in the parking lot of where there was a bar that had mostly African American clientele, and they would hide in various places. And when people came, they would jump out and beat them with baseball bats. They were, you know, apprehended one evening. And there, you know, very clearly in a group, I mean, he tells the story that they're wearing these jean jackets, swastikas and all this insignia. And what I inquired him was I asked him, you know, how the police acted, how the system act. And he was kind of confused by that. So, what did they ask you about? Why you're wearing swastikas? Why are in the same jacket like you all are in this racist street gang, if you will? And he said that he hadn't really that, but not one person throughout the whole process asked them anything about that. It's not a secret that that they're affiliated, you know, and that was a key takeaway, I think, from a practical kind of pragmatic stance and just these real missed opportunities. We could talk about some in the educational system before this happens. But at this point, this has happened then and just how stark that would be if, if the roles were reversed, an African American group of gentlemen attacking white individuals and how different that would have been.

**Michael Planty** [00:24:06] And what are those reasons one exits? And you talked about missed opportunity of the role of individuals in society in terms of identifying folks that are affiliated. But what are those characteristics or conditions for disengagement?

**Matthew DeMichele** [00:24:18] Disengagement is really the physical disengagement from the movement. And it's very often we saw this with burn out, what we call disillusionment. But, you know, some folks tell stories. They have baby. I mean, some of it's kind of simple stuff. They didn't have time, you know, they had to get a job. But others got tired of the group. They got tired of the personal dynamic for some individuals, that the group wasn't doing enough, that the group wasn't it tough enough, that they weren't disciplined enough, that they weren't moving towards these goals of this race war strong enough so there were a kind of a host of these kind of ways in which people got disillusioned and disengaged are just kind of disappearing. And for some of them, they could just stop being in the group and nobody, you know, followed up with them. But that's disengagement is the physical part. In some ways. I don't know, this is all difficult, but in some ways. The easier part. The other part is the de-radicalization, which really gets at this cognitive shift. Really? Do people change their views? Do they move away from seeing, you know, all Jewish people as part of this, you know, Zionist occupied government of Jewish people trying to take over the government to getting away from that and seeing, you know, more equality across races and different ethnicities and who people are. And that's the de-radicalization part, and that's the part that we heard mixed stories. You would think that disengagement would always precede de-radicalization, but we heard mixed things. But then you talk with them and you kind of you go back and then you find out they go, oh, well, three years before I left, this thing happened. And, you know, maybe we attacked somebody. They felt bad about it, you know, when they told a story about her daughter having a life threatening illness while she was in the movement, and a doctor that saved her life. And this was a gentleman of color and that totally, you know, changed her viewpoint, these kind of interactions. But it took her years to get out. And this is something that I think the Department of Justice and NIJ and researchers are really trying to understand, you know, the complexity around human behavior in that some people, even this lady, for instance, who we talked about, that she had this positive experience with this particular surgeon that saved her child's life. She documented a series of negative experiences with others in the movement. But yet she would, you know, leave and then go back and then kept doing this. And it took years, you know, for this individual to exit. And that's where our paper Addicted to Hate really comes from, is really kind of talking about these kind of non intentional sorts of cognitive processes that are pulling people back.

**Michael Planty** [00:26:46] Yeah, those are the routines, those behaviors similar to addiction where it's just all of a sudden you go back to these really basic responses that have been imprinted. Is there any evidence that younger folks that are groomed and radicalized at a younger age have a harder time leaving later in life? Or is it just the intensity of it? It's just really you get a trigger and then all of a sudden you're you back to these basic behaviors that have been practiced for so long.

**Matthew DeMichele** [00:27:08] I'm not aware of any research that kind of shows differences across ages. In some ways, we heard kind of both things. You know, the group we interviewed were highly criminogenic. I forget on the number on average of arrests and incarcerations. But, you know, for your listeners, I should say that as an interviewer, when you interview multiple people and you ask how many times you've been arrested and a routine response is, well, what do you mean by arrest? It means somebody's been arrested a lot because they're disentangling between do you mean when I had a parole violation or when I, you know, when I got rolled up for something else but didn't get convicted? You know, they're really parsing it out. I mean, we interview folks again. I mean, you know, neo-Nazi skinheads, prison gang members, you know, folks, street gangs that support the white supremacist prison gangs. Right? I mean, there's a whole cadre of gangs on the street that support Aryan Brotherhood, Texas Brotherhood in 211.

You know, all these different groups exist. There's guys on the street that support them as well. So just kind of driving home that we have a very criminogenic group. You know, during that study.

**Michael Planty** [00:28:07] What are the promising prevention or intervention strategies? So someone likes to get out what type of support, what type of intervention have you found to be promising?

**Matthew DeMichele** [00:28:15] Yeah. So, I'd say today the landscape, while still relatively fledgling, has fundamentally changed. You know, the Department of Homeland Security has a whole, terrorism prevention funding landscape that's out there that's supporting a whole cadre of groups to help people across the ideological spectrum, either exit through like Exit USA. Your Parents for Peace is another group. There's a handful of others that will directly take clients that are struggling to, you know, these movements and to help kind of link them up with mental health services, substance abuse treatment, you know, job works, you know, things like that to try to assist. I don't know that the research is out of place. Now, we can say there's some causal inference to say those programs are causing change leading to these perfect outcomes. But I think that there whole cadre of programs out there that are doing good things for people that need support. And again, DHS is one group, Health and Human Services is another. They got a whole funding cycle as well. There's some others as well, through the Department of ED and DHS that are trying to work with school administrators and teachers and not just on see something, say something, but really trying to understand, you know, our and how our kids being radicalized through social media platforms or at least content spread on these platforms through gaming technology. There's a lot of communication that's going on gaming. There's some companies that are working on counter messaging techniques. Can we put out, not correct messages, but can folks put out counter messages to what they're looking for and redirect individuals to this alternative content if you will.

**Michael Planty** [00:29:46] So what are the major gaps? Do we know our knowledge base around white supremacy future research you named a couple just a minute ago. What other things?

**Matthew DeMichele** [00:29:54] I think that what we have done and created in the research space is we've created very powerful databases, very powerful tools, you know, global database on terrorism. And, you know, across the handful of really impressive universities and scholars that are developing these databases and dashboards to track longitudinal militarism. You know, groups developed all kinds of research briefs and, you know, glossy reports that are relatively short, intended for practitioner audiences and developing individual based, you know, web-based education trainings. And I think those are all great, probably necessary. But I don't know that they're sufficient for moving us to a place where we're actually able to disrupt and deter and really intervene in this, this radicalization extremism process. So, I've moved to a place where I think that, you know, more research and in-depth research on program intervention is needed. But we also need to kind of start to think about what we do have and how can we connect the dots. I mean, the National Institute of Justice has funded 50 or 60 different, you know, research projects over, you know, since 2012, 11, 12 years. Great research there. Like, can we connect the dots and get this information to the hands of, you know, our practitioner community to really strengthen partnerships across federal government, state government, local governments and really link those individuals up with the services that are important in their communities. What about victim advocates and victim's rights? I mean, those are very important. What role can formers play? How can formers be involved in this activity?

Right? What can they tell us? And can we bring prosecutors, law enforcement, correctional entities to the table to agree on what are the definitions for terrorism? What definition are you using it for you? And then when they send them to prison, how do prison administrators know that, you know, that they've got somebody that's been, you know, clipped up in a group? You know, I think across the spectrum in the same with, you know, law enforcement that are engaged in various types of threat assessments and communities. Are they communicating with probation? Who are they communicating with, their whole community level resources, and are they aware of what is available to them? So, I kind of come away from, you know, thinking what we need is we need more rigor and we need better design. So, we need this into a place where, you know, maybe we still need more of that. But what I feel like we're doing is we've developed research for researchers, and what we need to start doing is developing research for practitioners. What is it practitioner community needs, and how can we be helpful? You know that basic level of I think awareness is still important in generating ways to kind of bring these multiple voices to the table together, come up with these whole of society, whole community types of responses, I think it’s the next level. It's really integrated research and practice.

**Michael Planty** [00:32:36] Well, great. Well, that's all we have time for today. I want to thank our guest today, Dr. Matthew DeMichele. Excellent conversation, very informative. Thank you so much for your time today in sitting down with Just Science to discuss white supremacy in our efforts to better understand the possible approaches to prevention and disengagement and intervention.

**Matthew DeMichele** [00:32:52] Thanks, Mike.

**Michael Planty** [00:32:52] I also like to thank you, the listener, for tuning in today. If you have enjoyed today's conversation, be sure to like and follow Just Science on your podcast platform of choice. I am Mike Planty. This has been another episode of Just Science.

**Outro** [00:33:05] Next week, Just Science sits down with Sarah Cook and Ariane Noar to discuss targeted violence and terrorism prevention. Opinions or points of views expressed in this podcast, represent a consensus of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of its funding.