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**ABSTRACT**

This study, based on in-depth interviews with U.S.-based journalists (n=18), explores the increasingly fraught circumstances in journalistic reporting on white supremacists. We examine how journalists think about the First Amendment vis-à-vis their coverage of hate groups. Through the lens of media ecology, and First Amendment principles and theories, we argue ultimately that journalists who cover hate groups use the First Amendment to identify their place in the journalistic environment.

**KEYWORDS**

FIRST AMENDMENT

HATE GROUPS

HATE SPEECH

MEDIA ECOLOGY

JOURNALISM ECOLOGY

ROLE ENACTMENT

**Biographical Information:**

Dr. Greg Perreault (Ph.D., University of Missouri) is a multimedia journalism professor at Appalachian State University. He is a media sociologist who examines how journalism narrates difference. He does this through exploration of norms and practices in journalism and the values that shape content in emerging technologies in journalism.

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Dr. Jonathan Peters (Ph.D., University of Missouri) is a media law professor at the University of Georgia. He researches, first, how Internet companies make decisions about the content they host and the speech they intermediate, along with the role that First Amendment principles play in those decisions. Second, he studies how recent economic, political, and technological changes have renewed and complicated efforts to regulate the modern practice of journalism through the main sources of American law.

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Dr. Brett Johnson (Ph.D., University of Minnesota) is a media law professor at the University of Missouri. He researches the social impacts of the rapidly-changing legal and technological regimes governing online communication. Johnson’s research is grounded in a strong appreciation for First Amendment theory, which allows him to assess the fluid and oft-conflicting interplay between the law and social norms.

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Leslie Klien (M.A., University of Missouri) is a doctoral researcher at the University of Georgia.