

## The Evolution of Online Hate: How Decades of Tactical and Technological Innovation Created a Hate Epidemic

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**Abstract :** Right-wing social movements are a dominant force in American politics, as evidenced by the January 6th Insurrection, the prevalence of extremist conspiracy theories, and a nationwide surge in hate crime. Despite an abundance of scholarship on contemporary right-wing extremism, there is little scholarship that explains their rise. This paper examines how the white power movement developed through tactical innovation and strategic use of increasingly powerful digital technologies. Using qualitative content analysis of archived digital bulletin boards and websites, we examine right-wing extremists' digital communication during three consequential time periods of tactical and technological innovation: pre-internet (1980s), web 1.0 (1990s), and web 2.0 (2000s). Our analysis suggests that right-wing activists innovatively exploited the features and affordances of digital technologies and their knowledge of free speech rights to spread supremacist collective identity and ideology. Beyond our empirical contribution, we offer policy advice that school administrators can employ to limit hate.

**Keywords :** leaderless resistance, technological affordances, anti-defamation league, white power movement, tactical

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