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FULL PAPER

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How German journalists perceive the consequences for
themselves and how they cope with it

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Wie Journalisten in Deutschland die Auswirkungen auf
sich selbst wahrnehmen und wie sie damit umgehen

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Abstract: Journalists around the world have increasingly become a target of hate speech in recent years. This is also true for Germany. Since journalists fulfil a public duty in democratic societies, there is reason for concern. As previous research shows, hateful verbal attacks may not only lead to negative emotions and cognitions, but also impair journalistic work. Therefore, this study is concerned with the perceived consequences of hate speech against journalists and the coping strategies used. Results from our quantitative online survey show that a considerable number of German journalists is targeted personally by hate speech. A majority of journalists sees this as a growing problem and assumes that hate speech negatively affects the sentiment towards journalists in society. Moreover, hate speech against journalists can cause negative emotions such as worries and anger, but also strengthens the feeling of confirmation in journalistic work. In line with that, journalists rather use coping strategies to deal with the negative emotions and thoughts triggered by hate speech than applying means to prevent further incidents of hate speech. However, feeling angry, threatened, and confirmed in journalistic work in reaction to hate speech contributes to the latter problem-focused coping.

Keywords: Journalists, hate speech, consequences, coping, perceived influence

Zusammenfassung: In den letzten Jahren sind Journalisten in vielen Ländern zunehmend zum Ziel von Hate Speech geworden, so auch in Deutschland. Nicht zuletzt, da Journalisten in Demokratien eine öffentliche Aufgabe erfüllen, birgt dies Grund zur Sorge. Denn wie bisherige Untersuchungen zeigen, könnten hasserfüllte Äußerungen nicht nur negative Emotionen und Gedanken auslösen, sondern auch die journalistische Arbeit beeinträchtigen. In dieser Studie untersuchen wir somit, welche Auswirkungen von Hate Speech Journalisten wahrnehmen und wie sie damit umgehen. Die Ergebnisse unserer quantitativen Online-Befragung demonstrieren, dass ein beträchtlicher Anteil der Journalisten in Deutschland persönlich von Hate Speech betroffen ist. Ein Großteil der Befragten sieht dies als wachsendes Problem und nimmt an, dass Hate Speech das Meinungsklima gegenüber Journalisten in der Gesellschaft verschlechtert. Zudem wird evident, dass Hate Speech gegen Journalisten negative Emotionen wie Besorgnis und Ärger auslösen kann, aber auch dazu führen mag, dass sich Journalisten in ihrer Arbeit bestätigt fühlen. Somit versuchen

Journalisten eher, die negativen Emotionen und Gedanken in Reaktion auf Hate Speech zu bewältigen als zukünftige Vorfälle von Hate Speech zu verhindern. Fühlen sich Journalisten durch Hate Speech allerdings verärgert, bedroht oder bestätigt in ihrer journalistischen Arbeit, trägt dies dazu bei, dass sie versuchen etwas gegen Hate Speech zu unternehmen.

Schlagwörter: Journalisten, Hate Speech, Auswirkungen, Coping, wahrgenommener Einfluss

1. Introduction

Journalists have always had their share of criticism and negative reactions from the public in democracies, be it from politicians, representatives of powerful interests, or ordinary members of the audience. However, criticism directed at journalists seems to have reached a new dimension in recent years previously unknown to liberal democracies (Gardiner et al., 2016; Ziegele, Springer, Jost, & Wright, 2017). Organizations like Freedom House and Reporters without Borders (RwB) point to the fact that the freedom of the press has come under increasing pressure especially in otherwise democratic societies like Poland, Hungary, or even the US. Especially, hateful verbal attacks against journalists are one of the signs of a changing climate for the media and journalistic work (Freedom House, 2018a; RwB, 2016).

This is true for Germany as well: Journalists reporting about demonstrations have been victims to threats of violence or assaults repeatedly and the free media have been denounced as *Lying Press* even by representatives of political parties like the right-wing populist *Alternative for Germany* (Freedom House, 2018b; RwB, 2016). Moreover, journalists and their work have become the targets of hateful statements, specifically in social networks and commentary columns on news websites (Ziegele et al., 2017; also see Ziegele, Jost, Bormann, & Heinbach, in this Special Issue). Journalists and observers have categorized an at least considerable portion of these attacks not as legitimate criticism, but as "hate speech" which can be defined as "express[ing] hatred or degrading attitudes toward a collective" (Hawdon, Oksanen, & Räsänen, 2017, p. 254). In a survey conducted in 2016, for example, around 40 percent of the journalists in Germany claimed to have been affected themselves by hate speech in the same year. Two thirds also noted a strong increase in hate speech against journalists over the previous 12 months (Preuß, Tetzlaff, & Zick, 2017).

Since a free press is a cornerstone of a functioning democracy, hate speech directed at journalists might be problematic because it carries the potential of negative effects on journalists themselves and, in turn, on journalistic work. First, hate speech might impede the ability of journalists to fulfil their duties as it potentially puts them under stark emotional pressure, induces stress and fear, for instance, when they themselves or their families are threatened. Also, this could lead to a reduction in well-being or job satisfaction (Leets, 2002). Second, hate speech could affect journalists' work since they might assume negative effects on their audience. Indeed, some studies have shown that both online user comments and the way they are moderated by journalists can, for instance, influence recipients' assessments of the quality of reporting (Prochazka, Weber, & Schweiger, 2016; Ziegele & Jost, 2016). Negative effects of hate speech on the reputation of indi-

vidual journalists and the general climate of opinion towards journalists seem plausible, too (Binns, 2017; Zerback & Fawzi, 2017). Third, hate speech might carry conflict into newsrooms when opinions diverge on how to deal with hateful attacks and when solidarity among colleagues is not given. Consequently, hate speech could intimidate journalists to such an extent that they would frame certain topics differently or avoid reporting on certain conflict-prone topics at all (Binns, 2017; Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring, 2016). This can be understood as a constraint to the freedom of the press, since instead of the societal relevance of an issue the aversion of hate speech would influence newsroom decisions (EFJ, 2017). Lastly, hate speech might negatively affect journalists' perception of their audience, lead to an *It's Us against Them*-posture and put an increasing distance between journalists and certain groups. As a result, the relationship to the audience could suffer what, in turn, might have negative consequences for revenues, audiences' feeling of being represented in the media, and trust in journalistic media.

Thus, for a variety of reasons, hate speech may have negative personal consequences for journalists themselves what could even impair their journalistic work. Hence, these considerations especially draw the attention to personal consequences of hate speech for journalists in Germany and their way of dealing with such incidents (also see Ziegele et al., 2017). Although hate speech and attacks against journalists have been the subject of intense public debate in recent years (see, for instance, Fries, 2018; Hülsen, 2018), there has been rarely systematic insight into its impact on journalists (but see Chen et al., 2018; Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring, 2016; Preuß et al., 2017). Also, we know very little about potential coping strategies journalists use to deal with hate speech. Thus, drawing on psychological literature on the effects of and coping strategies with potentially traumatizing incidents such as hate speech, we investigate what personal consequences of hate speech journalists in Germany perceive and what strategies they use to deal with (the consequences of) hate speech. To this end, we conducted an online survey of journalists in Germany.

2. Hate speech against journalists

Although hate speech has been a topic of public debate and academic research for some time, due to its increasing presence in online environments there has been a growing interest in its forms, causes and consequences. Generally, acts of hate speech can be defined as statements that attack, intimidate or denigrate others "because of their religion, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, or some other characteristic that defines a group" (Hawdon et al., 2017, p. 254; also see Erjavec & Kovačič, 2012). It can be distinguished from other forms of abusive or antisocial communication like cyberbullying insofar as (a) hate speech is usually regarded to be directed to individuals based on their belonging to a certain group or based on their fulfillment of a certain role and (b) victims and offenders usually do not know each other personally (Tokunaga, 2010). We consider verbal attacks against journalists a form of hate speech, because we assume that they are exposed to hate speech due to their journalistic role, i.e. be-

cause of their work as journalists, the journalistic content they produce or their opinions conveyed in commentary. In fact, in a recent study by Preuß et al. (2017) 85 percent of the journalists surveyed who had experienced a verbal attack over the last year primarily attributed those to their journalistic work (also see Gardiner et al., 2016).

Hate speech *against journalists* has not been a major issue of public or scholarly debate in Germany for long. This has fundamentally changed in recent years when verbal and even physical attacks on journalists and the media seemed to increase both online and offline (Freedom House, 2018b). Starting with widespread criticism of the coverage of the Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014, attacks against the *Lying Press* became a major issue at demonstrations of the right-wing *Pegida* movement since late 2014, and were echoed in particular by the right-wing populist party *Alternative for Germany*. The so-called refugee crisis in 2015 then fuelled another wave of criticism against the mainstream media that were attacked because of their presumably too optimistic portrayal of refugees and later for their coverage of crimes by refugees (Lilienthal & Neverla, 2017; also see Chen et al., 2018). In the course of that, German journalists have been repeatedly target to threats of violence or assaults as well as hateful utterances especially via social networking sites (Freedom House, 2018b; RwB, 2016).

However, there is little evidence about how widespread the phenomenon actually is in Germany, how many journalists are personally affected by or experience hate speech in their newsrooms, and how the intensity of hate speech against journalists has developed over the last years. As an exception, a recent study found that two thirds of German journalists surveyed in late 2016 perceived that hateful reactions against journalistic content had increased over the last year in general. In contrast, only 27 percent stated that attacks against them personally had increased. In addition, 42 percent said that over the last year they had been attacked once (16%), several times (22%) or even regularly (4%, Preuß et al., 2017). These findings show that it seems important to distinguish between experiences of being personally attacked by hate speech and more general perceptions of hate speech against journalists. However, previous studies do rarely take into account perceptions of attacks on the news organizations journalists work for. Since prior research has shown that their news organizations are the most important points of reference for journalists, we ask:

RQ1a: How often do journalists come across hate speech directed at themselves, their news organization, and journalists in general?

In addition, the study by Preuß et al. (2017) asked for changes over the last 12 months only. This includes important events like the attacks on women in Cologne on New Year's Eve 2015/2016, which sparked a wave of verbal attacks on journalists, who were criticized for being too slow and detached in their reporting of the event. However, it excludes most of the important developments prior to that, which have been discussed as major reasons for the rise of hate speech towards journalists. We therefore ask:

RQ1b: Do journalists perceive a change in the intensity of hate speech in recent years?

Finally, journalists might presume negative consequences of public hate speech on their audience. For instance, there is some evidence that incivil user comments can negatively influence recipients' assessment of the quality of journalistic content (Prochazka et al., 2016; Springer & Kümpel, 2018). Subsequently, journalists suspect these comments to affect their work negatively, for instance, by scaring off informants (Singer & Ashman, 2009). However, so far it is unclear whether journalists themselves suspect that hate speech can influence the opinion of their audience as well. It is also conceivable that journalists might apply these incidents as a proxy for the opinion of the majority of citizens and, hence, even assume that the opinion climate in society regarding journalists has deteriorated in line with the denigrating utterances against journalists in the hate speech (Zerback & Fawzi, 2017). Therefore, we ask:

RQ1c: Do journalists perceive an influence of hate speech against journalists on the opinion of their audience or on the opinion towards journalists in society in general?

3. (Perceived) Personal consequences of hate speech against journalists

Regarding hate speech against journalists, preliminary findings suggest quite devastating consequences for the journalists affected (Chen et al., 2018; Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring, 2016; Preuß et al., 2017). In accordance, since hate speech has the potential to undermine perceived human dignity, such incidents even are characterized as potentially traumatizing events (Leets, 2002; Nielsen, 2002). As such, the consequences of hate speech incidents can follow similar patterns like those of other traumatic events and, hence, trigger specific affective, cognitive, and behavioural reactions (Bard & Sangrey, 1986; Frieze, Hymer, & Greenberg, 1987). As per the Crisis Reaction Model prominent in victimology research (Bard & Sangrey, 1986; Leets, 2002), these consequences appear in three stages: Shortly after the incident (impact-disorganization), negative emotional reactions (such as anger, denial or a feeling of vulnerability) can occur. In the second stage (recoil), targets experience conflicting emotions or cognitive reactions such as swings from worries to anger or from blaming oneself for the incident to blaming others. The third stage marks reorganization, since individuals are trying to cope with the event, for instance, by adjusting their attitudes and behaviors in order to avoid further victimization or to deal with the traumatic experience in everyday life.

Findings on the consequences of hate speech reflect these considerations. First, there is evidence regarding emotional reactions to hate speech. In line with appraisal theories, emotions can be seen as reactions to cognitive evaluations of stimuli that are experienced as subjective feeling and come along with a motivational component (Lazarus, 1991; Scherer, 2005). Most variants of appraisal theories assume that people judge stimuli according to certain criteria and that the combination of these criteria causes specific emotions (Roseman, 2001). For instance, anger arises when individuals perceive a stimulus to be uncertain, obstruc-

tive to their goals, caused by a certain actor, and susceptible to their influence. Worries follow a stimulus perceived as uncertain and goal incongruent that, on the contrary, cannot be influenced (Kühne, Weber, & Sommer, 2015). In line with the Crisis Reaction Model, for one studies show that hate speech can cause negative emotions such as worries and anger. Moreover, targets can feel both intimidated and threatened as a consequence (Delgado & Stefancic, 2004; Nielsen, 2002). For another, studies focusing on other types of potentially traumatic events in a professional context such as workplace bullying demonstrate accordingly that these incidents, for instance, increase negative emotions such as worries and can lower mental well-being due to experiencing heightened strain or sleep problems (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012). Although (workplace) bullying is different from hate speech with regard to various characteristics (Tokunaga, 2010), these findings might have implications for consequences of hate speech in a journalistic work setting. Second, there are some results on cognitive consequences triggered by hate speech. Studies reveal that these incidents can boost negative thoughts and beliefs such as a decrease in self-esteem (Delgado & Stefancic, 2004; Leets, 2002; Nielsen, 2002). Also, studies focusing on workplace bullying demonstrate that such events can decrease job satisfaction and boost the intention to quit (Hoel, Cooper, & Zapf, 2002; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012).

Preliminary results on the emotional consequences of hate speech against journalists firstly suggest that hateful comments can lead journalists to worry or feel angry about the incidents, and negatively affect their mental wellbeing due to experiencing strain (Binns, 2017; Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring, 2016; Preuß et al., 2017). Also, journalists could feel intimidated by hate speech, for instance, when it contains threats of violence against themselves or their families (Preuß et al., 2017; RwB, 2016). Secondly, concerning effects of hate speech on journalists' thoughts and beliefs, on the one hand, some journalists are insecure how to handle the incidents and report to be impaired in their self-esteem. Other journalists rather look for explanations as to why these verbal attacks are happening, what can in turn cognitively burden them and some even think about quitting their job (Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring, 2016; Preuß et al., 2017). Moreover, it could be assumed that in reaction to hate speech journalists might blame the audience for these hateful attacks to happen what could, in turn, negatively affect their opinion about their audiences. However, journalists might also put the blame on themselves and, hence, experience doubts about working as a journalist (also see Leets, 2002; Preuß et al., 2017). On the other hand, as research on discrimination shows, abusive incidents may be positively related to the feeling of belonging to one's social identity group to function as protection against renewed victimization (Flanders, 2015; Torres & Ong, 2010). Hence, journalists being a target of hate speech might develop a stronger feeling of in-group belonging and, in turn, rather feel strengthened in their journalistic identity. Since there is only little systematic research on the personal emotional and cognitive consequences of hate speech on journalists in Germany, we ask:

> *RQ2a: What personal consequences of hate speech do the journalists concerned perceive in themselves?*

4. (Perceived influences on) Personal coping with hate speech against journalists

In reaction to stressful or even potentially traumatic events such as hate speech (Leets, 2002; also see Matsuda, 1989), individuals often demonstrate attitudinal or behavioural adaptions in order to deal with the incidents in everyday life (Bard & Sangrey, 1986; Leets, 2002). According to coping theory, to do so people apply different so-called coping strategies, where emotion-focused and problem-focused coping appear to be the most prominent (Benight, 2012; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Applying emotion-focused coping individuals primarily search for a way to overcome the negative emotional and cognitive reactions. This includes, for instance, attempts to distance oneself from the incident by focusing on other tasks or reaching out for peer support. Another approach is to blame oneself for the incident in order to explain it and, hence, overcome it cognitively. In contrast, individuals utilizing problem-focused coping strategies actively approach the problem itself and try to solve it. Hence, they attempt to do something about the causes of the event or to change their own attitudes or behaviour in order to avoid further victimization (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Leets, 2002; Nielsen, 2002). Also, problem-focused strategies are more likely to be used when people feel that they can make a change, whereas emotion-focused coping mainly occur when situations seem unchangeable (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980).

In line with that, studies on coping with hate speech show for one that targets often apply emotion-focused by ignoring the incident in order not to provoke the perpetrator even more and rather search for support, for instance, by family and friends (Leets, 2002; Nielsen, 2002). For another, research on journalistic coping with stressful or traumatic work-related experiences such as reporting on devastating events also demonstrates the use of emotion-focused strategies is most likely. For instance, journalists try to suppress thoughts about the events, distract themselves, and seek social support in conversations with colleagues (Buchanan & Keats, 2011; Fedler, 2004; Novak & Davidson, 2013). The scarce evidence regarding journalistic coping against hate speech also hints that journalists talk to colleagues about it, report the incidents or seek professional help (Chen et al., 2018; Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring, 2016; Preuß et al., 2017). Hence, we ask:

RQ2b: What personal coping strategies do journalists use to deal with hate speech directed at themselves?

Coping strategies might support journalists to deal with destructive consequences of hate speech and, ultimately enable them to perform their public duty. Therefore, it is important to investigate the association between the personal repercussions in reaction to hate speech and the use of coping strategies, if not to better support journalists in dealing with hate speech. First, one could assume that professional characteristics affect journalists' coping. For instance, journalists' position in the newsroom might influence how they deal with hate speech. On the one hand, since journalists in a non-leading role are more often visible as authors in news coverage, they may more frequently be the target of personal hate speech than journalists in leading positions (also see Chen & Pain, 2017; Domingo, 2008; Springer & Kümpel, 2018). Thus, they might more often use coping strate-

gies that deal with the immediate emotional and cognitive consequences. On the other hand, if journalists in leading positions are less likely to be the target of hate speech, these singular cases could have a much stronger emotional and cognitive impact on them, which is why it is also plausible to presume that they are applying emotion-focused coping strategies more frequently. Moreover, since hate speech against journalists might appear online in large part, for instance, in the comment sections below articles, journalists working for online media might be more experienced in dealing with hate speech (Binns, 2017; Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring, 2016; Preuß et al., 2017). Hence, they could have developed more problem-focused coping strategies and, for instance, more often take legal action against these utterances. Therefore, we ask:

> *RQ3a: How do journalists' professional position and working for online newsrooms affect what personal coping strategies journalists use to deal with hate speech directed at themselves?*

Regarding personal experiences, journalists who are more frequently exposed to hate speech could for one more often apply emotion-focused coping strategies, since they have learned that there often is nothing they can do about the occurrence of hate speech. For another, they may have already found more means better to prevent incidents of hate speech as well (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Preuß et al., 2017). Hence, we ask:

> *RQ3b: How does the frequency of being exposed to hate speech affect what personal coping strategies journalists use to deal with hate speech directed at themselves?*

Furthermore, it can be assumed that experiencing harmful emotional and cognitive reactions to hate speech such as a feeling of intimidation, worries and less well-being, but also the tendency to blame oneself for being targeted by the incident and, hence, doubting the decision to work as a journalist (Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring, 2016) might lead journalists to apply emotion-focused coping. On the contrary, feeling angry or confirmed in their journalistic work could motivate journalists to take action against the verbal attack or the perpetrator (Chen et al., 2018; also see Fischer & Roseman, 2007; Young, Tiedens, Jung, & Tsai, 2011). Thus, we inquire:

> *RQ3c: How do the perceived personal consequences of hate speech affect what personal coping strategies journalists use to deal with hate speech directed at themselves?*

Lastly, both the perception that hate speech influences the opinion of their audience and that it worsens the climate of opinion against journalists could enhance journalists' attempts to apply problem-focused coping strategies and, hence, to attenuate the occurrence of hate speech in the future. However, journalists could also assume that they can do little to counter the climate of opinion among the population regarding journalists. This, in turn, may induce them to do something about these possibly unpleasant conjectures and, hence, apply emotion-focused coping (also see Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). Due to the scarcity of evidence, however, we ask:

     RQ3d: How do journalists' perceived influence of hate speech on the opinions of their audience or on the opinion towards journalists in society in general affect what personal coping strategies journalists use to deal with hate speech directed at themselves?

5. Method

5.1 Sampling and participants

To answer these research questions, we conducted a quantitative online survey of journalists in Germany.[1] Our primary goal was to generate a heterogenic sample. For this purpose, we utilized the *Zimpel Online* directory that provides about 110,000 weekly updated contacts to journalists or newsrooms in Germany respectively. In order to draw a random sample of journalists we first deleted contacts of persons listed who do not work for a journalistic publication or do not do journalistic work (Steindl, Lauerer, & Hanitzsch, 2017; Weischenberg, Malik, & Scholl, 2006). To further reduce the number of names, we sorted the remaining contacts alphabetically and randomly selected 500 contacts per first letter of the surname if possible. Duplicates as well as erroneous address data were removed. After this procedure, 6,470 contacts remained in the sample. From November to December 2016, we invited these journalists via email to take part in the survey. A total of 497 journalists participated in the survey (34% female, average age: 49 years, *SD* = 10.59), which corresponds to a response rate of eight percent. Although such a response rate is rather common in online surveys of journalists (Preuß et al., 2017; for an overview see Jandura, 2011), it is important to check how the characteristics of the sample relate to the population of German journalists.

In fact, a comparison to a recent large-scale representative survey shows that our sample is quite similar to the totality of journalists in several essential characteristics (Steindl et al., 2017). For example, 74 percent of the journalists in our sample hold a university degree and have been working as journalists for an average of 23 years (*SD* = 13.31). In the survey by Steindl et al. (2017) 76 percent hold a university degree and have 20 years of experience as a journalist (*SD* = 10.33; WJS, 2018). However, a slight deviation from the general population of journalists is apparent in the share of female respondents. Surprisingly, it is slightly lower in our sample than in the survey by Steindl et al. (2017) (40% vs. 34%). This has to be considered when interpreting our findings, because there is some indication that female journalists receive hate speech more frequently in response to their work (Binns, 2017; Gradiner et al., 2016; but see Preuß et al., 2017). This would mean that we should rather underestimate the proportion of journalists receiving personal hate speech, for one. For another, this speaks against the broad assumption that journalists more affected by hate speech might have been generally more likely to participate in our survey.

5.2 Measures

Besides sociodemographic characteristics, our questionnaire comprised four main sections: We measured (1) how often journalists are exposed to hate speech directed at themselves, their news organization or journalists in general; (2) how they assess the societal consequences of hate speech against journalists; (3) what kind of personal consequences of hate speech they perceive, and (4) what personal coping strategies they apply.

First, participants were asked to indicate how often they come across hate speech directed at themselves personally ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 1.67$), at fellow colleagues from their news organization ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.81$) and German journalists in general in their everyday work ($M = 5.38$, $SD = 1.46$).[2] Since we were most interested in capturing the subjective dimension of journalists' confrontation with hate speech, we opted against applying a frequency scale using absolute time specifications (e.g., daily, once a month) and instead used a softer, more subjective 7-point scale ranging from 1 = "never" to 7 = "very frequently." Also, participants were asked to assess to what extent in their view the amount of hateful comments directed at themselves personally ($M = 4.99$, $SD = 1.12$) and at German journalists in general had changed in recent years ($M = 5.94$, $SD = 1.14$, 7-point scales, 1 = "strongly decreased" to 7 = "strongly increased").

Second, we were interested in how journalists assessed potential effects of hate speech on their audience as well as society in general. Hence, journalists had to indicate how strongly they agree to the statements "hate speech may influence the opinions of the audience" ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 1.53$) and "hate speech will lead to a worsening of sentiments towards journalists" ($M = 5.56$, $SD = 1.50$, 7-point scales, 1 = "does not apply at all" to 7 = "fully applies").

Third, we asked for the perceived personal consequences of hate speech on journalists themselves using seven items. Hence, participants had to indicate to what extent hate speech causes negative emotions namely "anger" ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 2.05$), "worries" ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 2.06$), and "a threat of being assaulted" ($M = 2.10$, $SD = 1.48$). Moreover, we inquired to what extent participants notice "a reduction in well-being" following hate speech ($M = 2.31$, $SD = 1.65$, for the purpose of item reduction this item was presented with the examples "stress" and "sleeping disorders"). Also, they were asked to what degree they experience negative thoughts and beliefs in reaction to hate speech such as blaming others and themselves: "doubts about the audience" ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 1.98$) and "doubts about working as a journalist" ($M = 1.81$, $SD = 1.37$). Lastly, participants had to indicate to what extent hate speech leads them to feeling a strengthening in their professional identity as a journalist by rating their agreement to the item "a confirmation of your journalistic work" ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 2.05$, 7-point scales, 1 = "does not apply at all" to 7 = "fully applies").

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2   In order to assure that participants understood hate speech as how we define it, we presented a short definition: "any verbal expression of hatred against journalists, editors and the media in general, who, in the context of their journalistic work, are slandered, degraded, intimidated or threatened."

Fourth, we asked for coping strategies utilized by journalists with seven items. Emotion-focused coping was measured with the items "discussing hate speech with colleagues" ($M = 4.85$, $SD = 1.91$) and with "friends and family" ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 2.05$), "drawing attention to other things" ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 2.04$), and "holding myself responsible for receiving hate speech" ($M = 1.70$, $SD = 1.11$). Problem-focused coping was surveyed with the items "searching for information on how to deal with hate speech" ($M = 2.35$, $SD = 1.77$), "taking legal action against hate speech" ($M = 2.27$, $SD = 1.64$), and "seeking psychological support" ($M = 1.23$, $SD = .87$, 7-point scales, 1 = "never" to 7 = "very frequently").

6. Results

6.1 Perceived confrontation of German journalists with hate speech

Our first research question asks how often journalists come across hate speech directed at themselves personally, their colleagues working for the same news organization and German journalists in general (*RQ1a*). Our results show that about one-fifth of the journalists surveyed (17%) say that they were confronted often or very often with hate speech directed at them personally, whereas 72 percent are (almost) never confronted with personal hate speech. In comparison to personal hate speech, the number of journalists coming across hate directed at their colleagues of the same news organization is higher. More than a quarter of respondents (28%) say that they read or hear this kind of hate speech (very) often, whereas 53 percent say they (almost) never do. Finally, when asking about hate speech towards journalists in general, almost four in five journalists say that they come upon this kind if hate speech (very) frequently. Only 11 percent say that this hardly ever happens (*RQ1a*).

Also, we were interested whether journalists assume that the amount of hate speech directed at themselves and journalists in general has changed over the last years (*RQ1b*). Concerning hate speech personally directed at them, 58 percent of journalists report a (strong) increase, whereas 40 percent see no change. In comparison, nearly all of the journalists surveyed (91%) share the perception that the number of hateful comments against journalists in general has (strongly) increased in Germany in recent years. Only seven percent do not presume that things have changed (*RQ1b*). Moreover, many journalists assume that hate speech against journalists is not without consequence regarding their audience and society in general (*RQ1c*): Around three-quarters (79%) think that hate speech directed at journalists will lead to a worsening of sentiments towards journalists in society in general, but only about a quarter (27%) (fully) agrees that hate speech against journalists may influence the opinions of their audience (*RQ1c*).

6.2 Perceived personal consequences of hate speech

In order to investigate the impact of hate speech on the individual journalists' emotional reactions as well as their work-related thoughts and beliefs (*RQ2a*) we calculated a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). In this analysis, we

used the frequency of being confronted with personal hate speech as independent variable (scale points 1-3 = "(almost) never," scale point 4 = "at times," scale points 5-7 = "(very) frequently"). Hence, we considered journalists stating that they are exposed to hate speech never or seldom as a baseline to compare them to their colleagues who are targeted more often. Indeed, the analysis yields a significant positive effect of the frequency of confrontation with personal hate speech on journalists' individual reactions, Wilk's λ = .897, F (14, 578) = 2.315, p = .004, η^2_{part} = .053. Hence, journalists more frequently confronted with personal hate speech experience more pronounced (negative) personal consequences.

In additional univariate analyses we compared journalists that were "(almost) never" (scale points 1-3), "at times" (scale point 4), and "very frequently" (scale points 5-7) confronted with personal hate speech (Table 1). These analyses indicate that being targeted with personal hate speech more frequently neither increases doubts about journalistic work, F (2, 295) = .029, p = .971, η^2_{part} = .000, or worries, F (2, 295) = 2.220, p = .110, η^2_{part} = .015, nor affects their mental well-being negatively, F (2, 295) = .212, p = .809, η^2_{part} = .001. A different picture emerges, however, for the remaining personal consequences. Journalists more often confronted with personal hate speech tend to experience a higher thread of being physically assaulted, F (2, 295) = 7.797, p = .001, η^2_{part} = .050, they are more likely to have doubts about their audience, F (2, 295) = 3.703, p = .026, η^2_{part} = .024, and feel more anger when being attacked, F (2, 295) = 3.659, p = .027, η^2_{part} = .024. At the same time, they feel more confirmed in their journalistic work in response to personal hate speech, F (2, 295) = 6.841, p = .001, η^2_{part} = .044.

Table 1. Perceived personal consequences of hate speech depending on the frequency of hate speech against journalists themselves (*RQ2a*)

	Hate speech against journalists themselves			
	(almost) never (*n* = 189)	at times (*n* = 47)	(very) frequently (*n* = 62)	Total (*n* = 298)
Doubts about the audience [1]	3.88[a] (2.05)	4.68[b] (1.80)	4.32[a,b] (1.74)	4.10 (1.97)
Anger	3.71[a] (2.09)	4.51[b] (1.96)	4.23[a,b] (1.96)	3.94 (2.06)
Worries[1]	3.70[a] (2.18)	4.32[a] (1.81)	4.13[a] (1.94)	3.89 (2.08)
Confirmation in journalistic work	3.51[a] (2.06)	4.49[b] (1.86)	4.34[b] (1.97)	3.84 (2.05)
Reduction in well-being (e.g., stress, sleeping disorders)	2.19[a] (1.68)	2.36[a] (1.74)	2.19[a] (1.45)	2.22 (1.64)
Threat of being assaulted[1]	1.78[a] (1.34)	2.15[a,b] (1.23)	2.58[b] (1.69)	2.01 (1.44)
Doubts about working as a journalist	1.76[a] (1.31)	1.81[a] (1.21)	1.76[a] (1.51)	1.77 (1.39)

Notes. Frequency of hate speech against journalists themselves: 7-point scale, scale points 1-3 = "(almost) never" and 5-7 = "(very) frequently" combined. Perceived personal consequences ("What do hate messages addressed to you typically trigger in you personally?"): 1 = "does not apply at all" to 7 = "fully applies," averages with different identifiers differ significantly (*p* < .05, Bonferroni-corrected) according to Bonferroni post-hoc test or [1] Games-Howell Post Hoc test (no parity of variance).

6.3 Personal coping strategies against hate speech

To find out what coping strategies journalists utilize to deal with hate speech (*RQ2b*) we, again, calculated a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) using the frequency of journalists' personal confrontation with hate speech as independent variable. The analysis demonstrates a significant effect of the frequency of confrontation with hate speech, Wilk's λ = .910, F (14, 532) = 1.842, p = .030, η^2_{part} = .046. Hence, journalists confronted with personal hate speech more often generally apply coping strategies more frequently.

In another set of additional univariate analyses we again compared journalists that were "(almost) never" (scale points 1-3), "at times" (4) and "very frequently" (5-7) confronted with personal hate speech (Table 2).

Table 2. Personal **coping strategies** depending on the frequency of hate speech against journalists themselves (*RQ2b*)

	Hate speech against journalists themselves			
	(almost) never (*n* = 168)	at times (*n* = 46)	(very) frequently (*n* = 59)	Total (*n* = 273)
Emotion-focused coping				
Discussing hate speech with colleagues[1]	4.51[a] (2.12)	5.02[a,b] (1.50)	5.34[b] (1.54)	4.77 (1.95)
Discussing hate speech with friends and family	3.79[a] (2.13)	4.36[a,b] (1.81)	4.69[b] (1.95)	4.08 (2.07)
Distraction from hate speech[1]	3.74[a] (2.07)	4.60[b] (1.79)	4.54[b] (1.83)	4.05 (2.01)
Making oneself responsible for receiving hate speech	1.73[a] (1.20)	1.67[a] (.91)	1.59[a] (.91)	1.69 (1.10)
Problem-focused coping				
Searching for information on how to deal with hate speech[1]	2.14[a] (1.60)	2.84[a] (1.97)	2.42[a] (1.83)	2.32 (1.73)
Taking legal action against hate speech[1]	2.06[a] (1.52)	2.62[a] (1.68)	2.63[a] (1.78)	2.27 (1.62)
Seeking psychological support	1.20[a] (.83)	1.33[a] (.88)	1.24[a] (.90)	1.23 (.85)

Notes. Frequency of hate speech against journalists themselves: 7-point scale, scale points 1-3 = "(almost) never" and 5-7 = "(very) frequently" combined. Personal coping strategies ("What thoughts and behaviours do you observe when you are particularly burdened by a message of hatred?"): 1 = "never" to 7 = "very frequently," averages with different identifiers differ significantly (p < .05, Bonferroni-corrected) according to Bonferroni post-hoc test or [1] Games-Howell Post Hoc test (no parity of variance).

In order to deal with hate speech, journalists especially use emotion-focused coping strategies. This is shown by the fact that journalists most often agree that they suppress reactions to hate speech by distracting themselves, F (2, 272) = 5.730, p = .004, η^2_{part} = .040, and to seek peer support in discussions with colleagues, F (2, 272) = 4.561, p = .011, η^2_{part} = .032, or friends and family, F (2, 272) = 4.811, p = .009, η^2_{part} = .034. Journalists (very) often confronted with hate speech personally apply these strategies more frequently. Generally, however, journalists do not tend to blame themselves for receiving hate speech, F (2, 272) = .358, p = .699,

η^2_{part} = .003. Regarding problem-focused coping strategies, journalists state to only rarely search for information on how to deal with hate speech, F (2, 272) = 3.162, p = .044, η^2_{part} = .023, take legal action against it, F (2, 272) = 4.034, p = .019, η^2_{part} = .029, or seek psychological support, F (2, 272) = .405, p = .667, η^2_{part} = .003. Also, journalists who are (very) frequently exposed to hate speech do not more strongly agree to use these coping strategies.

6.4 Impact of personal experiences with hate speech on personal coping against hate speech

Our third set of research questions asks how personal experiences with hate speech are associated with the personal coping strategies used to deal with it. In order to answer these questions, we calculated linear ordinary least squares regression models (forced entry). Controlling for demographics, we entered variables regarding the professional characteristics (*RQ3a*), the frequency of exposure to (*RQ3b*), the perceived personal consequences of hate speech (*RQ3c*), and the perceived influence of hate speech on the audience as well as public opinion (*RQ3d*) as predictors. As dependent variables, we used the items covering personal coping strategies against hate speech. Before that, however, we carried out an exploratory factor analysis to check whether the two theoretically derived forms of personal coping strategies showed up in the data. In doing so, we extracted two factors (Table 3): The first one captures emotion-focused coping strategies (α = .698), whereas the second one reflects problem-focused coping strategies (α = .627). Both factors extracted were included as dependent variables (mean value indices) in the OLS regression models.

Table 3. Exploratory factor analysis for personal coping strategies against hate speech

Items	Factor loadings		Commu-nalities
	Emotion-focused coping	Problem-focused coping	
Discussing hate speech with colleagues	.832	.087	.738
Discussing hate speech with friends and family	.792	.127	.695
Distraction from hate speech	.615	.110	.426
Making oneself responsible for receiving hate speech	.581	-.163	.315
Searching for information on how to deal with hate speech	.099	.821	.726
Seeking psychological support	-.045	.756	.556
Taking legal action against hate speech	.013	.705	.501
Eigenvalue	2.277	2.050	

Notes. n = 328, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure (KMO) = .700, Bartlett's test of sphericity: *Chi²* (21) = 538.028, *p* < .001, rotation method: oblimin (Kaiser-normalization), variance explained: 56.537%.

Regarding demographics and professional characteristics (*RQ3a*) results show that neither age, β = -.087, *p* = .092, education, β = -.005, *p* = .915, or a leading position, β = .032, *p* = .516, affect how frequently journalists apply emotion-focused or problem-focused coping (age: β = .058, *p* = .301, education: β = -.053, *p* = .323, leading position: β = -.021, *p* = .696). However, female journalists more often use both emotion-focused, β = .205, *p* < .001, and problem-focused coping strategies, β = .200, *p* = .001, in order to deal with hate speech (Table 4). Also in regard of *RQ3a*, although working for online media does not affect emotion-focused coping, β = -.002, *p* = .970, it increases the appliance of problem-focused coping strategies, β = .123, *p* = .024. With regard to *RQ3b*, that is concerned with the relation between the frequency of hate speech aimed at journalists themselves and the use of personal coping-strategies the models show that the frequency of personal exposure to hate speech is positively associated to utilizing emotion-focused coping strategies only, β = .117, *p* = .030. However, it does not affect the use of problem-focused coping, β = .026, *p* = .651.

RQ3c dealt with the association of perceived personal consequences of hate speech and the use of coping strategies. Regarding emotion-focused coping, worrying, β = .184, *p* = .003, and experiencing less well-being, β = .175, *p* = .003, in reaction to hate speech are positively related. Also, journalists feeling confirmed in their work as a consequence to hate speech more often use emotion-focused coping strategies, β = .180, *p* = .001. However, feeling angry, β = .025, *p* = .713, and threatened with physical violence, β = .019, *p* = .740, as well as blaming the audience, β = .050, *p* = .420, and doubting working as a journalist, β = .081, *p* = .149, are not associated with emotion-focused coping. Concerning problem-focused coping, worrying, β = -.011, *p* = .869, blaming the audience, β = -.122, *p* = .071, and doubting working as a journalist, β < .001, *p* = .995, are not significantly related. On the contrary, feeling angry, β = .174, *p* = .017, a threat to physical violence, β = .164, *p* = .008, feeling confirmed in their work, β = .186, *p* = .002, as well as experiencing less well-being, β = .180, *p* = .005, increase the frequency of applying problem-focused coping.

Lastly, concerning *RQ3d*, perceiving hate speech to have an influence on the opinion of their own audience does neither affect the application of emotion-focused, β = -.053, *p* = .370, nor problem-focused coping, β = -.045, *p* = .475. Yet, presuming hate speech to negatively influence the sentiment against journalists in society only marginally significantly enhances emotion-focused, β = .107, *p* = .072, and does not affect problem-focused coping, β = .077, *p* = .229.

Table 4. Impact of personal experiences with hate speech on personal coping strategies against hate speech (*RQ3a to RQ3d*)

Predictors	Emotion-focused coping	Problem-focused coping
Sociodemographics		
Sex (0 = *male*, 1 = *female*)	.205***	.200***
Age (*in years*)	-.087+	.058
University degree (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*)	-.005	-.053
Journalistic position (0 = *non leading*, 1 = *leading*)	.032	-.021
Type of medium (0 = *offline*, 1 = *online*)	-.002	.123*
R²	**.128***	**.097***
Contact with hate speech		
Frequency of hate speech against journalists themselves	.117*	.026
R²	**.052***	**.025**
Perceived personal consequences of hate speech		
Doubts about the audience	.050	-.122+
Anger	.025	.174*
Worries	.184**	-.011
Confirmation in journalistic work	.180**	.186**
Reduction in well-being	.175**	.180**
Threat of being assaulted	.019	.164**
Doubts about working as a journalist	.081	.000
R²	**.180***	**.144***
Perceived societal consequences of hate speech		
Impact on audience	-.053	-.045
Worsening of sentiment towards journalists	.107+	.077
R²	**.008**	**.004**
Intercept	**1.698****	**.174**
Total *R²*	**.368**	**.270**
Total *R²*_{Adjust}	**.322**	**.229**

Notes. standardized regression coefficients, $^+ p < .10$, $^* p < .05$, $^{**} p < .01$, $^{***} p < .001$, emotion-focused coping: $n = 284$, Durbin-Watson = 2.010, VIF ≤ 1.918, problem-focused coping: $n = 282$, Durbin-Watson = 2.034, VIF ≤ 1.904.

7. General discussion

7.1 Discussion of the results

Our results show that a considerable number of German journalists is personally targeted by hate speech and that this is perceived as a growing problem in the journalistic community. Although we used a different scale, this is very much in line with the results by Preuß et al. (2017). However, journalists surveyed perceive that the hate speech they come across more frequently addresses journalists in general than themselves. These differences make sense for two reasons: First, the chance of coming across hate speech towards different groups of journalists most

likely varies with the size of these groups (or the level of abstraction). Personal hate speech is directed at one person only, whereas hate speech directed at German journalists in general refers to a much larger group, increasing the likelihood of coming across it. Second, hate speech targeted at a specific journalist may be less frequent since haters are not so much interested in attacking individual journalists but rather *the Media*, *the Lying Press* or specific outlets that are regarded part of *the system*. However, future empirical studies would have to back up these assumptions by content analyses of hateful comments (Kobilke, 2017).

Until then, we cannot rule out the possibility that these differences in the perceived frequency of hate speech are shaped by perception biases. For instance, journalists could be subject to an optimistic bias and, hence, tend to perceive to be at a lesser risk to experience negative events themselves compared to others (Klein & Helweg-Larsen, 2002). In order to preserve this optimistic self-perception, journalists may underestimate the frequency with which they are confronted with personal hate speech on the one hand. On the other hand, they may overestimate the frequency of hate speech directed at journalists in general. Also, these findings might be influenced by selective exposure to (or perception of) hate speech. Thus, individuals are prone to perceive negative events more readily and weight them more heavily (*negativity bias*, Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001). Hence, personal hate speech should make an especially lasting impression on journalists, which may suggest that they should even overestimate their own victimization compared to others. On the contrary, to avoid potentially harmful consequences journalists might rather refrain from reading hate speech directed at themselves.

Consequently, perceiving hate speech to be more often directed at journalists in general than at oneself could lessen its negative impact on individual journalists, since they might refrain from feeling self-culpable for receiving hate speech. Moreover, this perception could diminish the influence of hate speech on their journalistic content, since they anticipate their journalistic content rather to trigger hate speech directed at journalists in general and not at themselves. However, provided that journalists have a rather strong feeling of in-group belonging, hate speech directed at journalists in general may affect them as equally and, in turn, may result in a similar impact on their journalistic content. Hence, even if only a small proportion of journalists is (regularly) target to personal hate speech, just one single incident could possibly cause (even more) severe harm to the individual journalists.

Also, most journalists ascribe a potentially derogating influence of hate speech against journalists on the public sentiment towards journalists, whereas as smaller share expects hate speech to have persuasive effects on the opinion of their audience. Although the items for "society in general" and journalists "own audience" were not identical, this result is pretty much in line with the findings on the third person perception (Davison, 1983). Journalists seem to assume stronger (negative) effects of hate speech on the more distant social entity namely the general society, when compared to their own audience that might be socially closer to them (Perloff, 2009). However, a stricter test using identical items would be needed to rule out the possibility that the large differences between those items are caused by the

different wording of the items. Moreover, since we were mainly interested in a presumed influence of hate speech on the opinion of the audience, the nature of this persuasive impact is yet to be examined. For instance, journalists could assume hate speech leads to a more negative opinion about themselves or even to a decreasing the assessment of journalistic performance and, hence, a loss of trust in the journalistic media on part of the audience (also see Prochazka et al., 2016).

Moreover, hate speech can have quite destructive consequences for individual journalists. Indeed, journalists in general do not perceive hate speech to raise doubts about their work as a journalist or reduce their mental well-being. However, the more frequently journalists are targeted by hate speech the more they experience negative emotional and cognitive reactions such as feeling threatened to be physically assaulted, feeling angry, and blaming their audience on the one hand (Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring, 2016; Preuß et al., 2017). Interestingly, journalists of the middle group (confronted "at times") report the highest levels of doubt and anger when compared to their colleagues experiencing hate speech more or less often. This could indicate that journalists who are the target of hate speech most often might already have gotten to terms with it and found ways to cope with it effectively. It seems that this kind of adaption process has not yet been finished for journalists being attacked only occasionally. They may struggle more with those attacks, *because* they are less frequent. On the other hand, journalists that are confronted with hate speech more often also feel more confirmed in their work, what could also be seen as a means to protect oneself from a negative influence by these abusive incidents.

To deal with hate speech, journalists rather apply emotion-focused coping strategies. Hence, they mostly agree to seek social support in colleagues and family and try to distract themselves from the incidents (Preuß et al., 2017). This finding is in line with evidence on coping with other traumatic events stating that social support can alleviate the experience of distress (Benight, 2012; Norris & Kaniasty, 1996). Problem-focused coping, such as taking legal action or searching information on how to deal with hate speech receives less approval. Seeking psychological support, however, does not seem to be common at all among journalists. This predominance of emotion-focused coping may hint that journalists experience their chances of preventing hate speech to be limited. Therefore, due to their confined believe to be able to overcome hate speech by adaptive actions (*self-efficacy*, Benight & Bandura, 2004) they rather try to find ways to cope with the negative emotions triggered by hate speech. Hence, it might be worthwhile to explicitly measure journalists' perceived self-efficacy in coping with hate speech in the future to explain the dominant use of emotion-focused coping (Benight, 2012; Luszczynska, Benight, & Cieslak, 2009; Smith, Felix, Benight, & Jones, 2017).

With regard to the connections between personal experiences with hate speech and coping strategies used small to moderate associations emerge. First, regarding demographic and professional characteristics, female journalists more often apply both emotion- and problem-focused coping strategies. This is in line with initial results that women might be more often target of hate speech and/or experience stark negative consequences (also see Chen et al., 2018). Also, journalists working for online media more often apply problem-focused coping. That might be be-

cause online newsrooms are confronted with hate speech more frequently and, hence, have developed more effective means to do something about it. Second, concerning the perceived personal consequences of hate speech a twofold pattern emerges. For one, the more journalists feel worried and experience less mental well-being in reaction to hate speech, the more they apply emotion-focused coping. Also, there is a positive association between feeling confirmed in the journalistic work and the use of emotion-focused coping. However, since we cannot make any statements about causality based on our data journalists could also feel confirmed in their work due to emotion-focused coping such as receiving social support. For another, feeling angry and threatened to be assaulted as well as experiencing a confirmation in journalistic work, journalists more often try and deal with the problem of hate speech itself. Feeling a reduction in well-being as a result to hate speech also contributes to that. Hence, it seems that different patterns of emotional and cognitive reactions to hate speech can lead to diverse attempts to deal with these incidents: If journalists rather perceive personal consequences that are more connected with experiencing uncertainty, such as worries or a loss in mental well-being, they focus their coping especially on their negative emotions and thoughts. However, if they perceive consequences that are known to motivate individuals to move against stressors (Frijda, Kuipers, & ter Schure, 1989), such as anger, feeling threatened or a confirmation in their journalistic identity, they rather seem to have a *Now More than Ever*-attitude and try to (prepare themselves to) do something about hate speech. Lastly, assuming a negative impact of hate speech on the climate of opinion about journalists in society or their audience's opinion is not associated with their use to coping strategies whatsoever.

7.2 Limitations and directions for future research

These results are restricted by several limitations. First, although we drew a random sample from a comprehensive address directory of journalists in Germany it cannot be considered fully representative of the population of German journalists. Although regarding the key demographics our sample mostly resembles the structures of the German journalistic field (Steindl et al., 2017), women are slightly underrepresented in our data. Also, the relatively low response rate of eight percent has to be taken into account when interpreting the findings. Especially in the light of the sensitive topic of consequences of and coping with hate speech, journalists with certain characteristics or experiences with hate could have systematically refrained to take part in the survey. Second, our survey-data based on self-reports of journalists are susceptible to be biased by social desirability. Since consequences of hate speech are a sensitive topic, we cannot fully rule out that participants assess these impacts – also unconsciously – to be less pronounced than they materialize in their daily work. Third, our study was aiming to demonstrate the situation of journalists in Germany regarding the consequences of and coping with hate speech against journalists. That leads to a limitation of the results to the German journalistic field.

Our results also provide points of reference for further research. First, since we mainly focused on hate speech directed at journalists themselves, future studies

could look at the consequences of certain types of hate speech against journalists, for instance, hate speech against journalistic content based on the origin or gender of the respective journalist. Also, in a next step one could aim to conduct sequential analyses (e.g., mediation analyses) in order to investigate indirect effects of factors shaping the consequences of hate speech or the use of coping strategies. Second, as we looked at personal consequences of hate speech and coping for a start, further research could also take into account the potential effects of hate speech on journalistic content (Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring, 2016). To do so, it would be worthwhile to look at the perceived consequences of hate speech for journalistic content as well as to conduct content analyses of the journalistic work. Third, in addition to focusing on the consequences of hate speech and coping with these hateful utterances, one could look at the factors that make a victimization of journalists as targets of hate speech more likely. It would also be valuable to examine how counterarguing against or the way of moderating hate speech against journalists by fellow colleagues or recipients (also see Leonhard, Rueß, Obermaier, & Reinemann; Schieb & Preuss; Ziegele et al., in this Special Issue) affects both personal consequences of the incident for journalists and the perceived climate of opinion towards journalists on the part of recipients reading along. Fourth, since hate speech against journalists is a phenomenon appearing in several countries, conducting internationally comparative research on the occurrence, causes and consequences of hate speech against journalists might be fruitful.

Summed up, the study demonstrates that a not negligible share of journalists in Germany is affected by hate speech against journalists, and the trend is perceived to be upwards compared to the last years. This can be problematic since hate speech can result in personal consequences such as negative emotions and cognitions. Although journalists report to apply (mostly emotion-focused) coping strategies, these means are likely to curtail only some of the negative consequences of hate speech for the targeted journalists. Also, the means of support mostly can be considered as an attempt to weaken the symptoms of hate speech against journalists but do not offer a solution for the cause. Hence, we hope that this study raises some awareness for the harm that can be done by uttering hate speech against journalists and that it contributes to thought being given to ways of supporting journalists to dealing with it more effectively.

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