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ABSTRACT

When broadcast journalist Nicole Diekmann tweeted "Nazis out," she launched a large cultural discussion in the German Twittersphere—the hashtag #NazisRaus began to trend, prompting politicians, celebrities, and other journalists to partake. This paper begins by analyzing the developing discourses surrounding Diekmann's tweet via a two-fold qualitative content analysis, looking at both the @replies to her tweet and the emergent media coverage about the debate. The analyses yield that user commentary was predominantly positive, with many commending Diekmann for taking a stance against right-wing populism in Germany. Users debated the message itself, its social acceptability, and feasibility. Journalistic treatments of the #NazisRaus controversy was overall much more critical, with most journalist reprimanding Diekmann for engaging in activism as a fellow journalist, using examples of hate-speech to show what happens to journalists who dabble in activism. Building on these results, this paper then investigates the lessons of the #NazisRaus debate with a focus on the link between activist journalistic practice and its boundary work, arguing that the present political climate and growing right-wing culture might prompt journalists to engage in more activist public communication practices.

Journalist-Activist Boundary Work in Populist Times: The #NazisRaus Debate in German Media

On Tuesday, January 1st, 2019, a New Year's wish caused uproar in the German-speaking Twittersphere. Nicole Diekmann, broadcast journalist at the public-service television broadcast station ZDF (Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen) tweeted two words: "Nazis raus" (Nazis out). With this tweet on her personal account, Diekmann employed a well-known slogan, historically used to counter extremists' and right-wing protesters' demands to get "Ausländer raus" (foreigners out). As a broadcast journalist and public figure, Diekmann's New Year's "resolution" kicked off a sizeable wave of reactions—the hashtag #NazisRaus began to trend and various publics began to engage online and offline. Responses to Diekmann's "Nazis raus" tweet included a wide range of emotions and reactions; from virtual applause using the hand-clapping emoji, to GIFs of well-known actors winking in approval, to violent insults by right-wing sympathizers. Politicians, sports

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clubs, and celebrities alike joined the debate, including positive affirmation by German Minister of Foreign Afairs Minister Heiko Maas, former tennis star Boris Becker, as well as the official accounts of the soccer club Schalke04 and the Saxony Police Department.

With her "Nazis raus" tweet, Diekmann expressed her dissent against the radicalizing political climate and growing right-wing fellowship in Germany, proposing a New Year's resolution to "fix" the Nazi problem. As an active Twitter user, Diekmann's online communication style can be characterized as both sharp and witty. On Twitter, she first met the critiques with more sarcasm, responding to a user's follow-up question, "Who is a Nazi to you?" with, "anyone who doesn't vote green." Diekmann's tweets generated much hate speech by right-wing users and populist trolls. When the debate reached its height mid-week, Diekmann's tone became more serious and she announced that she would withdraw from Twitter for some time to cope with this experience.

In the aftermath of Diekmann's tweet, the #NazisRaus debate was also discussed in leading German news media outlets, including print and online papers such as the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *der Spiegel*, or *Focus Online*. News stories with titles such as "Tweet generates wave of solidarity," "Journalist target of a right-wing shitstorm," or "Well-intentioned but missed the mark" began to emerge. Some journalists took the debate as an opportunity to express solidarity with their colleague and condemn right-wing hate speech aimed at journalists. Most of her colleagues, however, questioned Diekmann's slogan use and denounced her activist proclamation as inappropriate. Several journalistic pieces specifically addressed the fact that journalists should not employ activist rhetoric on social media, even if on a personal account. In doing so, journalists across outlets actively demarcated activist commentary on social media from professional journalistic use and practice.

Diekmann's "Nazis raus" tweet can certainly be read as an activist moment that takes a stance against the rise of right-wing populism in Germany. Since the debate was discussed on social media and across news media with great intensity, the #NazisRaus phenomenon bears scholarly value for journalism practice and thus, merits inquiry. In order to understand the complexity of the #NazisRaus debate, this paper employs a two-fold qualitative content analysis—first focusing on the direct responses (@replies) by Twitter users to Diekmann's original tweet; second, focusing on the journalistic reporting about the debate in German news media. In asking an initial comparative question, the paper examines the main discursive elements of the debate across mediums and communicators:

RQ$_1$: How do the discourses surrounding Nicole Diekmann's activist-minded tweet "Nazis raus" vary between user commentary and journalistic coverage?

Drawing on the insights generating from the comparative qualitative content analysis, this paper then investigates the lessons of the #NazisRaus debate with a focus on the link between activist journalistic practice and its boundary work:

RQ$_2$: How does the #NazisRaus controversy inform ongoing boundary work on journalistic activism?

The qualitative content analysis yielded that the @ replies (i.e., user comments beneath the original tweet) were overwhelmingly positive, with critiques mostly focusing on the feasibility of the message to get "Nazis out." While there were some aggressive responses, the online debate erred on the side of support. In contrast, the journalistic coverage was much more critical—news pieces about the debate focused more on the negative user

commentary, using examples of hate speech to discourage journalists from taking an activist stance on Twitter. On the one hand, Diekmann's "Nazis raus" tweet pushed the boundaries of journalistic expression on social media for activist purposes, launching a debate about journalistic rules and norms. On the other hand, journalists covering the debate also performed boundary work as their media reporting carried a predominantly reprimanding tone. Journalists judged Diekmann on a personal level with respect to her role as a journalist, pointing out that this profession clashed with activist proclamations. The #NazisRaus case ultimately prompts us to think about the renegotiation of journalistic public communication practices in populist times, specifically on the—traditionally unconventional but maybe necessary—nexus of journalism and activism.

Tweeting Journalists in Populist Times

For journalists, the use of social media, and Twitter, in particular, is becoming somewhat of a professional standard. Hanusch (2017) notes that up to 80 percent of news professionals in Western societies hold Twitter accounts. For the German context in particular, Nuernbergk (2016) explains that journalists' interactions amongst one another are the most frequent pattern of interaction on Twitter, thus creating what he terms as a "journalismcentered bubble" (877). Journalist social media users often mark whether their accounts are private or official work accounts. For German journalists who use their social media accounts professionally, Twitter is a way to distribute and promote their authored news pieces (Obermeier, Hofbauer, and Reinemann 2018). Increasingly, media organizations encourage the blurring of professional and private Twitter accounts so that journalists' personal brand benefit their news organization's traffic (Brems et al. 2017). Journalists not only use Twitter to get ideas about relevant topics (Hermida 2010) but also to break news, offer commentary on current events, and analyze political developments (Metag and Rauchfleisch 2017).

In the present political climate, journalists in Germany have been having to cover rightwing motivated crime and raise awareness about violence against migrants. The last national election in 2017 marked a notable rise in votes for the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party, which takes an anti-migration stance and popularized right-wing ideology. The most recent statistic on crime by the Federal Criminal Police Office attests that racially motivated violence is surging in Germany (Bundeskriminalamt 2019). In the past year alone, several horrific acts of right-wing terrorism have launched political discussions offline and online.

Saxony-native Stephan Balliet, better known as the "Halle shooter," livestreamed his attacks on a Jewish synagogue in October of 2019, killing two and injuring two. In February 2020, Tobias Rathjen targeted migrant locations across Hanau, brutally assassinating nine people in his xenophobic rage. It is these acts of right-wing terrorism that ask German journalists to rethink their public communication and articulate bolder statements of dissent across platforms. German news media have been making notable efforts to publish critical pieces aimed at investigating the right-wing threat. The public broadcasting stations, ARD and ZDF have been airing special segments to call out right-wing violence and extremist political agendas. For instance, journalist Christian Bergmann shadowed anti-refugee activists involved in the right-wing shooting in Munich of 2015, and Simon Hurtz debunked

hoaxes surrounding the series of migrant-led New Year's Eve assaults in 2017 (Hartleb 2020).

On social media, journalists have been contributing to online discussions about the radicalizing political climate, both through cross-promotion of investigative pieces and in offering their own commentary. While a tweet, such as the one by Diekmann, certainly does not equate a full journalistic text, journalists use Twitter as sites of issue "ambience" to launch debates that are later discussed in more traditional news contexts (Hermida 2010). Diekmann's tweet caused the wave of reactions because it hit a nerve; it was timely and called out a pervasive political issue that permeates sociocultural spheres: far-right sympathizers, extremists and white supremacists, and self-proclaimed Nazis are growing in numbers and committing racist crimes.

Diekmann responded to the right-wing threat via the "Nazis raus" slogan in her tweet, giving personal insights into what she deemed a necessary political act. Hedman (2016) found that journalists employ personal transparency, "which includes personal opinions and details from journalist' private spheres" (3). This also comprises reactions to events or news as well as divulging private information about their convictions. Rogstad (2014) explains that political journalists on social media "show off their personalities" and publicly express their personal opinions in political commentary (689). As an ambient medium, Twitter affords affective discourse, which journalists can harness (see also Hermida 2010). In the present political climate, German journalists on Twitter engage with their audiences on right-wing issues, and with social networks as catalysts for misinformation and echo chamber effects, journalists might even take on a more interventionist role or adopt an activist stance. In contributing to the democratic process, German journalists have become bolder in denouncing right-wing violence on social media, which often leads to backlash.

Right-Wing Online Harassment of Journalists

In 2017, Preuß, Tetzlaff, and Zick's large-scale online survey of German journalists found that 67 percent perceive a rise in violent attacks, 42 percent have been targets of hate-speech, and 75 percent believe that the prime reason for online attacks to be their journalistic identity. Löfgern Nilsson and Örnebring (2016) found that intimidation and violent content are frequent responses to Swedish journalists on social media, while Rieger, Schmitt, and Frischlich (2018) articulate that German journalists are facing increasing exposure to hateful content in the comments sections below their interactive news pieces. The reasons behind right-wing attacks on social media are manifold, though Baugut and Neumann (2019) underscore that the attention generated through violent online attacks and hate-speech might be a way for extremists to show their devotion to the cause or establish their personal value to the community. From an intersectional perspective, women journalists face another layer of discrimination, with misogynistic hate-speech that often threatens physical violence, rape, or death. Obermeier, Hofbauer, and Reinemann (2018) found for the German context that female journalists are at higher risk of online attacks and need to cope with hate speech more frequently.

The contemporary political climate in Germany exacerbates the level of personal attacks on social media for journalists. Obermeier, Hofbauer, and Reinemann (2018)

argue that this issue relates back to the systemic dissatisfaction right-wing actors feel for the media in general. The far-right in Germany makes the defamation of critical journalists an essential part of their political program. In his 2019 article, journalist Matthias Kreienbrink laments that those colleagues who take a stance against extremism and for social justice and human rights are actively being discredited. Journalists are having to defend themselves, their work, and their profession, which might encourage a stronger assertion of political position than customary. Diekmann's "Nazis raus" tweet sits sit alongside a current debate among journalists on the unconventional, yet maybe necessary, link between journalism and activism.

Right-Wing Threat and the Journo-Activist

Recently, the topic of activism in and through journalism has found much resonance in German newspapers. *Die ZEIT* printed an interview with Glenn Greenwald, in which the whistleblower asserts that "all journalists are activists" (Klenk 2013, n.p.). In a roundtable at the Global Media Forum, German investigative journalist Georg Mascolo asserts that journalists "defend … democracy," which in the current political climate, is a "form of activism" in and of itself (Kaschel 2019, n.p.). Since most German journalists are active Twitter users (Nuernbergk 2016), they can also make use of the microblogging platform to comment on political developments in times of rising right-wing culture.

In paying particular attention to Twitter, Barnard (2018) calls the ways in which journalists respond in activist ways to crisis situations new "journo-activist" field. In studying journalistic Twitter uses during the Ferguson protests, he explains that journalists display more emotional tweeting behaviors and willingness to link up with activist users to "amplify" and "spread" activist messages "to broader audiences" (2259). Populist times might therefore encourage journalists to engage in more outspoken online behaviors. The degree to which they comment on sociocultural or political events is largely regulated by professional standards and their associated boundaries. When journalists carry out disputes about journalistic values, conventions, and practices, they actively participate in boundary work.

Journalistic Boundary Work in Digital Publics

Boundaries in journalism function to establish who belongs in the professional group, assert expectations about professional norms, and institute what makes good journalistic practice (Bennett, Gressett, and Haltom 1985; Gieryn 1999; Carlson and Lewis 2015). Carlson (2019) explains that boundaries in journalism are a social practice, and thus remain malleable. Zelizer (1993) has further theorized that journalists operate in interpretive communities, which are tied together, among others, through shared discourses and understandings of newsworthiness. Deuze (2005) calls this journalism's "occupational ideology," where groups of journalists actively co-construct the foundational values of their profession. In the Western context, objectivity, transparency, and a high level of professionalization are cornerstones of the news profession and journalists actively police these boundaries (Schudson and Anderson 2008). Gieryn (1999) theorizes that journalist engage in *expulsion* to remove non-compliant actors, *expansion* to accommodate new norms and practices, and *protection* to preserve their journalistic autonomy. For the

German context in particular, Lünenborg (2005) has pointed out the ongoing dissolution of boundaries with respect to factual information-based journalism and fictional or entertainment-based reporting.

Scholars have noted that new media logics as well as the digitalization of the profession have actively been shifting established norms and values, also allowing for the creation of new journalistic practices. Parmlee (2013) found that political journalists on Twitter mostly maintain their norms (such as objectivity) and practices (such as gatekeeping), though Molyneux (2015) adds that they also use the microblogging site to voice their own opinions. Social media uses by journalists alters the communication style and creates new conventions as a result. Kim et al. (2015) found that journalists perceive a heightened connection with the public through their interactions on Twitter, making interactivity a new key aspect of journalism in digital times, leaving the precise boundaries rather fuzzy. Carlson (2019) notes that boundaries not only change with new technologies but also with shifts in culture or politics. Notable developments in political climates can thus contribute to journalistic boundary work, which is where the #NazisRaus debate comes into play.

Method

Controversies on social media can be fruitful moments for inquiry yet can also be very difficult to capture. Scholars can look at the frequency of interaction with Tweets using API data, however, those numbers alone do not provide any insights about the discursive construction of social media debates, the publics involved, or the mediatization of the controversy at large. In order to understand the emergent discourses and public negotiation of the #NazisRaus debate, this paper employs a two-fold qualitative content analysis (Mayring 1991, 2000; Kuckartz 2018): the first examines the direct responses (@replies) of user commentary on Twitter; the second investigates the journalistic coverage about the debate in German news media.

Figure 1 displays the use of the hashtag #NazisRaus on Twitter during the first week of January 2019. The height of the debate was reached one day following the original tweet, when the hashtag #NazisRaus was used upwards of 13,000 times. Overall, Diekmann's "Nazis out" tweet generating a total amount of approximately 33,000 tweets over the course of a week. This number also includes direct responses to the original post.
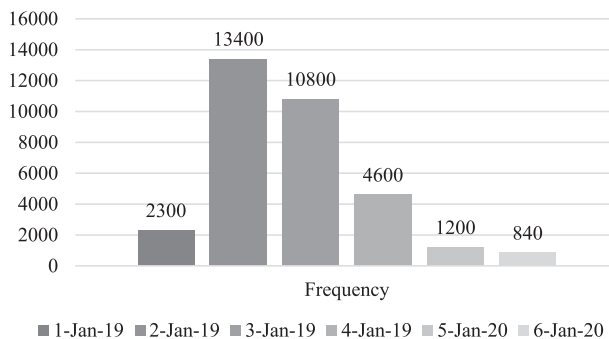
Figure 1. #NazisRaus hashtag use on Twitter during the first week of January 2019.

Diekmann's tweet thus yielded about 1.6 million unique impressions on Twitter between January 1 and January 6, 2019.

Data Gathering and Analysis

The sampling units and units of analysis of this study are determined by the timeframe (January 2019) and outlet/publication (Twitter, newspaper, online news site). For the tweets, the tool Keyhole was used to pull all @replies to Diekmann's original "Nazis raus" post from January 1 to January 8, 2019. Data collection began 48 hours after the original post, at the height of the debate, yielding a total of 238 direct responses to be coded. For the journalistic reporting, all German-language news pieces that covered the hashtag (#NazisRaus), Diekmann, or her tweet were included. A total of ten news outlets (print and online) ran stories on the controversy within the first two weeks of January 2019. These included leading German newspapers such as *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *tagesspiegel* as well as online news sources such as *die Welt*, *Deutschlandfunk*, *Spiegel Online* and *Focus Online*. All data material was imported into the qualitative research software MAXQDA; the tweets were uploaded as one document while the individual news stories were imported by direct link.

The data analysis procedure began by reading the entire text material (tweets and news reports) without any coding, which was done to get a general sense of the debate and its key narrative features. This was followed by two rounds of inductive coding for both data-sets—the tweets and the press coverage. In the second coding round, analytic codes were developed through the help of a codebook. Kuckartz (2018) underscores that the code-book is the ultimate center of a qualitative content analysis—it fleshes out the specific code definitions, provides coding rules all text material, and establishes anchor examples that are used to compare text segments. The creation of the codebook aided in the induc-tive development of analytic codes, which allowed for a higher abstraction of the mess-ages. For the @replies, the final codes included *support*, two forms of *solidarity* (message-based; person-based), two forms of *criticism* (term-based; feasibility-based), as well as *attack* (see Table 1).

For the media reports, the news articles were coded individually, line-by-line according to the specific codebook that was developed in the first round of open coding. The code-book identifies three main areas of focus with respect to the German press coverage of the debate: *problematization of the slogan, analysis of the tweets (negative vs. positive)*, and *Diekmann's identity as a journalist* (see Table 2).

Both codebooks were then used to analyze the entirety of both datasets by coding all text material a third time. The final analytical codes then served as a launching point to compare the #NazisRaus debate across social media and news media responses. Drawing on the insights generating from the comparative qualitative content analysis, this paper then investigates the lessons of the #NazisRaus debate with a focus on the link between activist journalistic practice and its boundary work.

Solidary Twitter Users, Critical Journalists

The direct Twitter replies to Diekmann's original tweet, "Nazis out" were predominantly positive. Most users who engaged with the tweet expressed some form of support or

Table 1. Codebook *for analysis of the tweets (translated to English).*

Code Name	Code Definition & Coding Rule	Anchor Example
Support	All statements that evaluate the content of the tweet as positive by expressing relatively vague affirmation or consent	• Thumbs up emoticon • That's right!
Solidarity	All statements of approval that go beyond simple agreement and positively assess the message by applying the content to other/broader contexts (*message*)	• Out of the Bundestag. Out of the European parliament. Out of power positions. Out! Nazis out!
	All utterances of approval that go beyond simple agreement and positively assess the sender of the message (*person*)	• Thanks for taking a stance. Publicly. #wearemore • Dear Ms. Diekmann, if you are ever in Cologne, I will serve you a Kölsch. That's just a small gesture of recognition but no compensation for all the trash written here. But you can't pay being proud, you can only voice it. For democracy!
Criticism	All statements that challenged the definition of "Nazi" (*term*)	• I would prefer the phrasing "Extremists out!" – no matter if right or left. • So who's a Nazi to you?
	All statements that challenged the feasibility or practicability of the message (*feasibility*)	• Your attitude is commendable in principle and your intention understandable but you demand "out" and so you need to ask yourself "where from" and "where to"? Who wants them? • I understand your wish, but it doesn't solve the problem? … then others will be stuck with our Nazi problem. It would be better do find a socio-democratic solution for this problem.
Attack	Hurtful, denouncing, or offensive utterances aimed at the sender	• Well I hope you are proud of yourself. But you're a journalist so you make fueling the fire a hobby. • Did your mommy and daddy tell you that you should post this? #Nazibubble #Filterbubble

solidarity, though most positive affirmation was simple and/or vague. Short affirmations, such as the thumbs-up emoji, statements such as "bravo," or a repetition of "Nazis out" dominated the discourse @replies. When expressions of support went beyond simple agreement and were elaborated into a personalized post that actually grapples with the message of the slogan in and of itself, they constituted a stronger expression of solidarity. Expressions of solidarity were found in the Twitter replies in two forms—one primarily relating to the message "Nazis out," the other primarily relating to the sender of the message (Nicole Diekmann) and her activist stance. Tweets focusing on the content of the slogan strongly shaped the debate, as many users responded to the original tweet with other leftist hasthags such as #fckNazis or #fckAfD. These common hashtags are references to the growing popularity of the right-wing AfD party.

Other direct replies included elaborated explanations about specific areas that Nazis should be dismissed from (parliament, city councils, etc.), or explained why Nazis make for bad politicians. Additionally, expressions of solidarity with the message also featured ironic hyperboles and satiric jokes that spun the slogan "Nazis out" into lively scenarios, fantasizing about specific ways to accomplish such a task. Other expressions of solidarity

**Table 2.** Codebook *for analysis of the media reports (translated to English).*

Code Name	Code Definition & Coding Rule	Anchor Example
Problematization of the slogan	All news segments that comment on its (historical) meaning or (current) use in protest culture	• Today, the "Nazis out" slogan picks up the verbal violence of the cries to get "foreigners out!" by turning it towards xenophobes. Who sows hate, shall reap hate is the logic behind it.
Analysis of the tweets	All news segments that focus on the positive messages on Twitter (solidarity)	• People from all walks of life got onto Twitter and supported Nicole Diekmann. Among them many politicians.
	All news segments that focus on the negative messages on Twitter (attack)	• Even after several days, the shitstorm is still going strong. One user writes: "You are very pretty. But not very smart. A pity for a woman like you." Another comments: "Who is a Nazi to you? Everyone who f***ed Diekmann."
Diekmann's identity as a journalist	All news segments that focus on Diekmann's profession, her role as a public person, and her identity as a journalist, or her mandate as a journalist	• Statements like this disqualify her from working in public broadcasting. • The quest for recognition and quick likes cannot outweigh her professional ethos—not only in journalism.

engaged the sender of the message herself, praising Diekmann for her bravery, encouraging her to keep fighting the good fight, or commending her for being a great journalist.

Countering themes of solidarity, many users criticized the post for both the use of the slogan "Nazis out" and the practicality of such a wish. The majority of critics below Diekmann's original tweet actually supported the message, however challenged its feasibility. Users questioned the operability of such a task with replies such as, "Would be desirable but sounds like it would take a long time," or, "Nazis would make poor immigrants in other countries, they'd just send them right back." A second dimension of this particular critique focused on the feasibility and potential location of exiled Nazis, prompting Diekmann to "think about where to? Who would want them?" or stating that it "deportation would take forever, German bureaucracy." It becomes clear that some users mirrored the sarcastic tone of Diekmann's original tweet, resorting to critiques that can also be interpreted as humorous.

A few users also directly criticized the slogan in and of itself, "correcting" it to "extremists out" or "racists out." Though these replies were coded as two sets of critiques, the content of the responses were still dominantly positive. The attacks, hate-speech, and threats were marginal in the direct replies to Diekmann's original post. A reason for that might be that data collection began 48 hours after the original posting time, which might explain that some tweets had been removed for violating the terms of use. To illustrate the discourses on Twitter in the direct replies to the original tweet, Figure 2 below visualizes the distribution of responses across the six final categories.

Some journalists also took part in the debate on Twitter. While there is no reliable data on how many of the respondents were journalists in total (as not everyone publicizes their profession or place of employment on their account), most of the journalist users that were
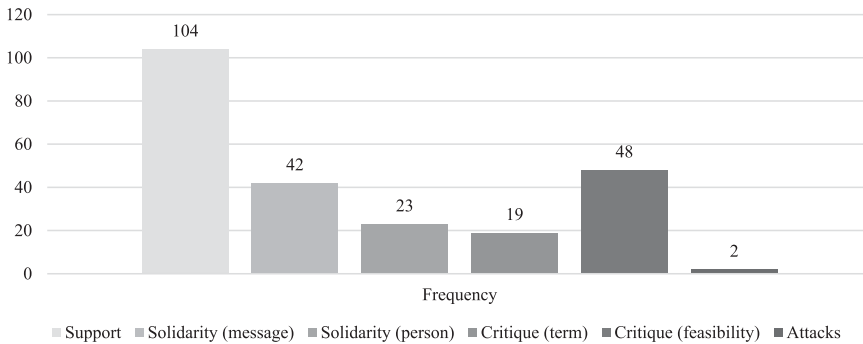
Figure 2. Coded Twitter replies to the original tweet.

identified (roughly 30) either showed support for Diekmann or her message. For those who publicly share their journalistic identity, we can say with relative certainty that they were not the ones authoring the news pieces about the debate. Thus, those journalists engaged with the "Nazir raus" debate in a more personal capacity without the intent to engage with it professionally.

The articles in German news media on Diekmann's "Nazis raus" tweet ranged from coverage in heritage newspapers such as the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* to more niche, online news publications such as *Cicero*. Similar to the sets of critiques presented in the direct replies to Diekmann's post on Twitter, journalists often took issue with the slogan itself, arguing that it sounds "desperate," is a cheap activist utterance, or a simple slogan for a very complex problem. All critiques that problematized the message of the tweet were – similar to the tweet replies – in support of the overall message, taking a clear stance against fascism and right-wing populism.

A more dominant characteristic of the media coverage surrounding the #NazisRaus debate is that tweets themselves were used as testimony to illustrate the stance of the article writer. All news pieces featured at least a screenshot of Diekmann's original post, many also publishing other responses of users who employed the #NazisRaus hashtag. Contrary to the Twitter analysis presented above, authors were quick to focus on the negative or violent tweets, thereby mediating an overall sense of antagonism in the Twittersphere. Reports indicated that Diekmann received "death threats," "violent right-wing attacks," and "hate-fueled comments."

It is noteworthy to point out that no journalist validated the attacks on Diekmann, even if they were critical towards her activist utterance. Every article published on the debate made a point to condemn right-wing online attacks as a pervasive issue of (online) culture in Germany. Positive readings of the debate were characterized by highlighting affirmative tweets, particularly underlining user comments from celebrities and politicians who employed the #NazisRaus hashtag in solidarity with Diekmann. Perhaps one of the most distinct characteristic of German media reporting on Diekmann and the #NazisRaus debate is that other journalists criticized her as a journalist. Many journalists found Diekmann's action as unfitting for a broadcast journalist, some accusing her for simply seeking "quick likes." Some authors criticized that Diekmann was "undermining" the appropriate usage of Twitter for media professionals, while others said that she was contributing to

the bad representation of journalists by launching such a debate. In writing journalistic texts about the #NazisRaus controversy, German journalists performed boundary work.

The Boundaries of Activist Tweeting

The #NazisRaus debate across German media provides salient insights into the renegotiation of journalistic values, conventions, and rules about online communication in populist times. Both Diekmann herself as the source of the "Nazis raus" tweet as well as the journalists who covered the controversy engaged in boundary work. The entire process of the debate—the creation of the Tweet, the online responses, the journalistic coverage—cumulates in what Carlson (2016) characterizes as *metajournalistic discourse*. Though Diekmann did not commit a punishable offense, such as plagiarism, she pushed the degree of acceptability among her peers in employing the activist slogan. Carlson calls this "challenging" the boundaries. Diekmann's fellow journalist writing about the debate and her person sought to align her with a more traditional journalistic voice, using this particular boundary to "put her into her place" as a media professional. Gieryn (1999) terms this *expulsion*, an important boundary practice employed by the journalistic community to dispel actions, values, sometimes even persons, for violating normative frameworks.

This practice matches with what Bennett, Gressett, and Haltom (1985) call *paradigm repair*, where media professionals mend individual practices or moments of boundary leakages by other journalists. To that end, Hanitzsch et al. (2010) examined the influences on journalists across seventeen countries and found that in journalistic circles, colleagues dominantly serve as a type of "reference group" for other journalists (16). A more recent comparative survey found that, for German journalists in particular, "peer criticism is expected rather than the rule," and an active debate culture frames the professional mediascape of German journalism (Fengler 2015, 258). Values such as media transparency, self-detachment, objectivity, and self-regulation rank high among German journalists. They are also more likely to support volunteer-based monitoring and civil society oversight structures. Taken together, these sets of values and professional convictions might help explain why Diekmann's tweet found resonance among her colleagues and why so many felt compelled to provide commentary about her message in their respective publications. The media coverage, overall, had a reprimanding tone, seeking to realign Diekmann with her journalist persona and reminding the German readership that journalists are reporters, not activists.

The journalistic reaction to Diekmann's tweet also raises questions about the professional boundaries with respect to Twitter. The dichotomy of private opinion and professional communication in journalism dovetails with what Bruns and Burgess (2012) articulate as the mixing of professional posts and private discussions. Hermida (2013) argues that the personalization of Twitter profiles for journalists is one of the key dilemmas in the negotiation of roles. It is this murkiness that encourages leakiness and boundary blurring when it comes to journalist's personal interactions on Twitter. A key feature for distinguishing is the profile description feature at the top of the profile and for Diekmann, she clearly identifies as a ZDF broadcast journalist. It seems that Diekmann's role conception in the context of this particular Tweet does not fit into the news-oriented tasks of journalism in Germany. Rather, as Domingo and Le Cam (2017) have explained,

Diekmann overlooked boundaries that distinguish journalist social media users from everyday users.

Notably, the #NazisRaus tweet was received as sarcastic, prompting some users to respond with humor themselves. Judging by Diekmann's reaction to her large wave of reactions on Twitter, which she first expressed through yet another sarcastic post, she was largely unaware of the boundary work debate she generated in news outlets around the country. Rogstad (2014) explains that journalists "show off their personalities through humour and personal updates" (689). For some, it can become a trademark of their public communication (Molyneux 2015). As an affective discourse element, Twitter's ambient set-up nurtures tweets that generate emotions (Hermida 2010). Journalists can employ humor and even snark, meshing their reporting roles with feedback-seeking or political commentating. Mourão, Diehl, and Vasudevan (2016) found that the majority of political journalist on Twitter employ humor in their posts, with satirical commentary used as a means of critique and to stir up debates. The authors further assert that "the use of humor [and sarcasm] on Twitter might represent another example of journalistic norms bending to the form and culture of the platform" (Mourão, Diehl, and Vasudevan 2016, 212).

In literature on boundary work, this process is referred to as *expansion* (Gieryn 1999). Since Diekmann tweeted on the first day of 2019, the timing set the frame of a New Year's "resolution," resulting in a satirical post that invited debate. Sarcasm, humor, or irony can be used by journalists to understand current events and respond to crisis situations. Journalists in Germany certainly contribute to debates, sometimes even launch them; however, they commonly do so through traditional news writing, avoiding overly sarcastic reporting styles. The current populist undercurrent in German politics and culture might open ways for journalists to engage in boundary work around the long-established dichotomy of journalism vs. activism.

Rethinking the Journalist-Activist Dichotomy in Populist Times

In their comparative large-scale analysis, Wettstein et al. (2018) studied journalistic roles in relation to populist communication, arguing that journalists can either serve as gatekeepers, interpreters, or communicators. Further, they note that journalists who are skeptical of right-wing politics are more likely to engage in "media advocacy for issues set on the agenda by populist actors" (479) and integrate "cynical or antiinstitutional undertones" (491). Poell and Rajagopalan (2015) argue that journalists on Twitter can make "ad hoc associations around issues of common concern" as an activist practice (730). With her "Nazis raus" tweet, Diekmann actively flexed the norms of journalistic expression on social media, pushing a boundary that—in the German context—clearly demarcates journalism from activism.

While Diekmann's "Nazis raus" does not completely fit with what Hedman and Djerf-Pierre (2013) term "enthusiastic activism," her tweet falls in line with what Olesen (2008) frames as an "activist-like agenda" for journalists (246). In that definition, the primary construction of the message was not based in journalistic news reporting but rather, aimed to call out a social inequality or political issue. When journalists step out of their neutral stance and voice dissent on controversial issues, they embrace what Lewis (2012) terms an "ethic of participation" that goes beyond traditional journalistic conventions.

Diekmann's participation in the discourse on right-wing culture in Germany was an indi-
vidual attempt to address "collective concerns, using the mix of motivation and affor-
dances of digital cultures and technologies" (Lewis 2012, 848). For Russell (2016),
Diekmann would be a "media vanguard" journalist who speaks bluntly about political
issues (17).

Weinert (2018) explains that journalists are more likely to join controversial debates in
populist times. The rise of right-wing actors in Germany has created a political climate that
continues to challenge journalists as they must find ways to process populist rhetoric and
actions. In articulating a set of strategies for practitioners, Pleil (2018) explains that media
professionals must be careful not make use of populist strategies, such as fear mongering
or threat perpetuation, as this makes them complicit in normalizing those patterns. He
further notes that private social media uses should seek to de-escalate, foster constructive
debates, and unveil propaganda or lies, while keeping the tone professional.

The #NazisRaus debate has further showed that news organizations and editors do not
have effective strategies for dealing with personal attacks and online harassment of their
employees. In Diekmann's case, this becomes quite clear when looking at the official state-
ment issues by the ZDF, the public broadcaster she works for. Here, the press spokesper-
son merely invokes that Diekmann's "Nazis raus" is protected by freedom of speech:

> In our view, Ms Diekmann's statements are protected by freedom of expression and do not, by
> any means, justify the threats to which our employee was subjected. Ms Diekmann's Twitter
> account is not operated by the broadcaster, however, in such circumstances we offer our
> employees support and advice from the company's side. (Berendsmeier 2019)

With this response, the broadcaster only references the conflict without engaging with it
on the content-level (Sponholz 2018), thus bypassing the opportunity to truly grapple with
the political issue the tweet sought to call out. Thus, the statement ignores the activist
dimension of Diekmann's tweet, an act of boundary work that Gieryn (1999) calls the *pro-
tection of autonomy*.

Lessons from the #NazisRaus Debate

The goal of this paper was to understand the emerging discourses of the #NazisRaus
debate across German media to make a contribution about journalistic activist practice.
Public broadcasting journalist Nicole Diekmann generated a sizeable online debate on
Twitter on New Years's Day of 2019. Media professionals at various news organizations
across the country then picked up the controversy, analyzing it through critical commen-
tary. As an activist-minded Tweet by a journalist, Diekmann's "Nazis raus" statement stimu-
lated discussions about the message's social acceptability and feasibility, while prompting
both hate-speech and expressions of solidarity.

Overall, the qualitative content analysis of the @replies to Diekmann's original tweet
yielded that user commentary erred on the side of support. While this highlights the posi-
tive take-away from the #NazisRaus debate in the German Twittersphere, the results do
not, by any means, atone for the horrid personal threats Diekmann received in the after-
math of her tweet. Hate speech geared at journalists is a pervasive issue, one that has been
nurtured in the contemporary political climate. Attacks often centered Diekmann as a
person, her identity as both a journalist *and* a woman made her a prime target for

right-wing actors, which underscores to the intersectional vulnerability of female media professionals in contemporary digital media cultures.

In their journalistic pieces across German print and online outlets, media professionals were predominantly critical. Journalists problematized the "Nazis raus" slogan, using evidence of negative @replies on Twitter to support their critical stance. Further, journalists commented on Diekmann's identity as a journalist, including how her activist-minded tweet clashes with her professional role and mandate. In doing so, German journalists performed boundary work—they engaged in alignment with a more traditional journalistic voice, reminded Diekmann that she was not an activist, and articulated that journalists use Twitter in a professional capacity. While journalists disapproved Diekmann's Twitter activism, no author validated the hate-speech, and every article published on the debate made a point to condemn online attacks.

However, by focusing on reprimanding, showing boundaries, and critiquing activist practice, journalists missed an opportunity to engage with the underlying problem Diekmann's tweet called out—the rise of populism and right-wing culture in Germany. Journalist were unable to overcome the satirical form of the tweet, focusing on deconstructing the "Nazis raus" slogan and showing Diekmann her boundaries, while the actual cultural value generated through the debate remained largely unreflected. This begs the question whether the boundary work performed here was done for the good of the journalistic profession, or for the sake of cementing the journalist-activist dichotomy. Hermida (2012) encourages scholars to call into question established conventions in the digital media and networked context. Journalists increasingly work in social media context, which are designed as "social/participatory media spaces" (Lewis 2012, 850). In times of crisis, boundaries change, and the populist threat will likely continue to shift journalistic social media uses and journalists' roles in democracies under threat. The #NazisRaus case ultimately prompts us to think about the renegotiation of journalistic public communication practices in populist times, specifically on the—traditionally unconventional but maybe necessary—nexus of journalism and activism.

A key limitation of this inquiry is that one might argue that social media texts and journalistic text are different textual genres. This is valid as Twitter users do not have the same space available to articulate their thoughts. Journalists wrote on average 400 words about the #NazisRaus debate and also waited a few days to publish their thoughts. Nonetheless, a comparative analysis of the generated discourses across the two mediums and central communicators was still able to provide vital insights into the discursive construction of the debate and the central responses it generated. Another limitation is the scope of this particular online debate. While relatively widely discussed in the German-speaking media world, the debate largely remained in classed social circles. Especially in Germany, Twitter is often seen as a high-brow social medium that primarily attracts well-educated users and journalists looking for news content or issue ambience. Klaus (2001) articulates that Twitter constitutes a rather "simple layer of public sphere," creating publics that identify themes of public interest without necessarily engaging with them critically or long-term.

The #NazisRaus hashtag has, however, trended twice more since Diekmann's original tweet. First in October of 2019, when Diekmann received the Oppenheimer medal issued by the Jewish community, where she was lauded for her activism and outstanding efforts in science and communication against xenophobia and migrant stigma. The

hashtag trended again when the German Fridays for Future activist Louisa Neubauer tweeted "Nazis raus" on New Year's Day of 2020.

For critical scholars working in the activist trajectory of media and communication studies, it is crucial that cultural moments of dissent and advocacy be illuminated with the same attention as global initiatives. Diekmann's "Nazis out" tweet is an important reminder that journalists can take a public stance and engage in activist public communication. The debate also prompts us to recall that journalism and activism are cultural processes—they evolve, take on new forms, and give rise to unexpected stakeholders. More scholarship in this area is needed to study the connection between activism and journalism—and with democracy under threat across the globe, we should be seeing more of it.

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