MEDIA FRAMING OF POLITICAL SCANDALS
Theoretical framework and empirical evidence

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Media coverage of political scandals

There is evidence that media coverage of political scandals—defined as “intense public communication about a real or imagined defect that is by consensus condemned, and that meets universal indignation or outrage” (Esser & Hartung 2004: 1041)—has increased during the last decades. Several long-term studies across the world indicate that the share of media reports about norm violations of political actors has become larger over time (see, e.g., Allern et al. 2012; Kepplinger 1996; Kumlin & Esaiasson 2012; but see Basinger et al. 2014; Morris & Clawson 2005; Nyblade & Reed 2008 for less clear-cut results). However, the cause for this trend is unclear. Whereas some argue that politicians nowadays get in trouble more often (e.g., Esser 1999), not least because society has become more complex due to differentiation processes as norms may vary in different social systems and sometimes become more strict (see, e.g., the #MeToo movement), increasing the likelihood of transgression (Hondrich 2002), others doubt that norm violations of politicians have become more frequent (see, e.g., Tumber & Waisbord 2004; Waisbord 1994). Instead, they claim that the media is responsible for the observed shift (e.g., Hallin & Mancini 2004, 278). Besides the commercialization of the media, that is an increasing necessity to adjust news production to strict cost–benefit calculations (which in the end means to align the media content to the needs and preferences of the public in order to attract the audience; see Kalb 1998; Thompson 2000; Tumber 2004), the main reason for the increasing media attention to political norm transgressions is seen in changing selection criteria and an altered professional role of journalists (van Dalen, de Vreese & Albaek 2012). In particular, modern journalists consider themselves as Cerberus—controlling politics, but with limited respect and a high level of dominance and cynicism, and setting the political agenda (Brants & van Praag 2006). If they sense there might be a potential political norm transgression, they behave “like sharks in a feeding frenzy” (Sabato 1991, 1).

The professional role of journalists today includes the task of framing the news, that is to “shape the interpretation of issues and events” (Kenski 2003, 250). In practice, on the one hand, this means that they develop a “central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events” and suggest “what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue” (Gamson & Modigliani 1987, 143). On the other hand, by framing information the media pay attention to particular content while ignoring other aspects (Tankard 2001; see also...
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Entman, 1993); “some things are included in the frame, if we think of it as a picture frame, while other content is cropped out, not included” (Conners 2014, 233). That is, political scandals are not “prepackaged for public consumption” (Allern et al. 2012: 17); rather journalists have to construct and frame a norm transgression as something scandalous (see also Entman 2012; Kepplinger, Geiss & Siebert 2012; Strömbäck 2008).

Although political scandals are a frequent event in contemporary politics, surprisingly little work has been done to link framing theory with research on norm violations. To strengthen the tie between these two strands of research, we describe the main idea of framing as well as the core problems of this approach. Furthermore, we provide an overview of the research on media framing of political scandals. After that we suggest an approach on how to assess two general frames often used in scandal coverage: the attack frame and the defense frame. Moreover, we provide an empirical application of our approach with German data. Finally, we sum up our key findings and suggest directions for further research.

Framing theory and its application to scandal research

Framing—a core concept to understand the content of mass media and its effects (for introductions see, e.g., de Vreese & Lecheler 2012; Scheufele & Iyengar 2017)—on the one hand describes the process of (verbal or visual) news presentation (“frame-building”) and internal and external factors underlying this process (see, e.g., de Vreese & Lecheler 2012). On the other hand, framing also explains how the news influences knowledge, attitudes, or decision-making as well as the emotional responses of audience members (“frame-setting”; see Scheufele 1999, 115–116). Two general forms of framing—equivalence (Kahneman & Tversky 1984) as well as emphasis (Scheufele & Iyengar 2017, 622)—can be differentiated. Equivalence framing means that an otherwise identical issue is presented in a positive (gain-frame) or negative way (loss-frame). Emphasis framing means that certain aspects of an issue are saliently depicted in a communicating text, while other aspects are neglected. As most studies in mass communication and journalism deal with rather complex descriptions of social and/or political scenarios they have usually focused on emphasis frames (e.g., Entman 1993, 2012; Nelson, Clawson & Oxley 1997; Scheufele & Iyengar 2017).

However, the specific application of framing in communication research is of limited coherence. The lack of clarification includes both its conceptualization and measurement (Matthes 2009). Although there is a general agreement as to what framing means—in short, an (intentional or unintentional) shaping of the interpretation of social and political issues by emphasizing selected aspects of the discussed topic as important at the expense of other aspects of the same topic—several rivaling definitions of framing are available in the literature due to the interdisciplinary roots of framing research. Furthermore, frames can be identified using an inductive or a deductive approach. By using an inductive approach, frames emerge during the course of analyzing media content. In contrast to this, a deductive approach defines the nature of a frame before it is measured (e.g., de Vreese & Lecheler 2012). Unfortunately, conceptual ambiguities increase the likelihood of operational problems, for example, strong variation in the measurement of frames (e.g., Matthes 2009; Scheufele 1999).

The number of frames identified in the literature is immense. Some studies found (few) so-called generic frames (e.g., de Vreese 2002). Generic frames are claimed to describe the general approach of journalists (or journalists of a particular medium, namely a specific news outlet) and how they handle information. For instance, several studies indicate that journalists perceive politics as a strategic game and therefore cover political issues by focusing on who is winning
Studies focusing on the use of scandals as a generic frame

Framing theory has also been applied to research on political scandals, namely media coverage of political scandals. Studies comparing generic media frames across time and/or countries find that journalists are very eager to report on political scandals. The media’s focus on scandals—often measured by catchwords indicating whether a media report mentions (accusations of) norm violations in politics, the expression of public anger, or harsh language in political debates (see, e.g., Umbricht & Esser 2016)—is most prevalent in countries with a liberal model of journalism (e.g., the UK, the USA) and countries with a polarized political and media system (e.g., France, Italy). The least frequent use of the scandal frame has been found in countries following a corporatist model of political journalism (e.g., Germany, Switzerland, Scandinavian countries; see Esser & Umbricht 2013; Umbricht & Esser 2016).

Whether the scandalization of politics has changed over time is not clear. For the time period between the 1960s and the turn of the century Umbricht & Esser (2014) find that negative coverage of politics has increased in liberal media systems, taken an ambivalent development in polarized media systems, and has not changed very much in systems with a corporate model of political journalism. A more fine-grained analysis of Germany demonstrates that it is important to differentiate between scandalization of political news coverage more generally and the number of individual political scandals in a particular society (von Sikorski 2017). That is, in Germany the number of political scandals has increased over the last couple of decades (Kepplinger, 1996; Kumlin & Esaïasson, 2012). However, no overall trend can be detected for the scandalization of political news coverage in that country. While some years show high levels of scandalization and other years show low levels (Esser 1999), recent data demonstrate that in all countries except Germany scandalization is becoming more popular (Umbricht & Esser 2014, 2016; for similar findings for Sweden see Strömbäck 2008).

Umbricht and Esser (2016; see also Esser 1999) suggest that this development is driven by growing commercialization, tabloidization, and the changing relationship between journalists and politicians. This fits with the observation that tabloid media scandalize politics more often than quality newspapers or public service broadcasters (Strömbäck 2008; but see van Dalen, de Vreese & Albæk 2012).
Studies focusing on the framing of specific scandals

Studies analyzing particular scandals have identified numerous frames significant for the understanding of specific media coverage (e.g., Feng, Brewer & Ley 2012; Kenski 2003; Kepplinger et al. 2012; Shah et al. 2002). However, a couple of studies suggest that two types of frames appear more frequently than others. On the one hand, a “guilt frame” claims that the accused politician is guilty (Kepplinger et al. 2012, 662; other scholars use the labels “attack frame” or “anti-government frame”, see Feng, Brewer & Ley 2012; Shah et al. 2002). The relative importance of this frame varies dramatically (from a minimum of 18 percent, see Shah et al. 2002, 357; to a maximum of 84 percent, see Kepplinger et al. 2012, 668). On the other hand, research suggests the existence of so-called “excuse frames” which excuse or defend the alleged norm violation (Kepplinger et al. 2012, 662; other researchers use the labels “response frame” or “pro-government frame”, see Feng, Brewer & Ley 2012; Shah et al. 2002). Whereas Kepplinger and colleagues (2012) find no empirical evidence that scandal coverage includes excuse frames, Shah et al. (2002, 357) assess the share of response frames to be about 4 percent.

Interestingly, none of the analyses on political scandals used the full framework developed by Entman (1993) to decide whether a story includes a particular frame. With respect to scandals, Entman (2012, 28) specifies that a frame is used to cover a scandal if “the behavior be defined as a problem impeding or threatening the proper operation of government or society” (problem definition), “the misdeed be clearly attributed to the . . . individual candidate as a causal agent” (causal interpretation), “the misconduct and the responsible leader receive public moral condemnation from legitimate political actors” (moral evaluation), and “a remedy involving sanction against the individual be widely demanded or debated” (treatment recommendation). However, Kepplinger et al. (2012) and Feng et al. (2012) utilized at least some aspects of this framework. Kepplinger et al. (2012, 668) indicate that only a small portion of media reports (4 percent) on political scandals provide recipients with complete frames (also known as explicit frames; see Matthes 2007, 138). The vast majority of media coverage is based on so-called fragmentary frames (also known as implicit frames; see Matthes 2007, 138), that is frames including only some but not all frame elements.

How the media frame scandals: evidence from the plagiarism scandal of the German Secretary of Defense

Background

On February 16, 2011 the Süddeutsche Zeitung—one of Germany’s leading quality daily newspapers—voiced the suspicion that parts of the doctoral thesis of Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg (a member of the conservative party CSU), at that time German Secretary of Defense, were plagiarized. A few days later, the investigations of the internet platform GuttenPlag Wiki undoubtedly confirmed this suspicion by identifying plagiarism on 94.4 percent of the total 393 pages, or 63.8 percent of the total 10,421 lines of the thesis (GuttenPlag Wiki 2011; Jansen & Maier 2012, 5). Although zu Guttenberg conceded mistakes, he denied plagiarism. However, within only two weeks he had lost his doctoral degree, resigned as Secretary, and stepped down as a member of the national parliament. In November, the prosecution dismissed the charge for a fine of €20,000.

Data

In total, we analyzed 261 articles of the five most important nationwide German daily newspapers—BILD, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), Frankfurter Rundschau (FR), Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ),
and Die Welt—published between February 16, 2011 and March 1, 2011, that is the day when the SZ started to write about the scandal and the day zu Guttenberg resigned (without Sunday editions). Except for BILD (a tabloid newspaper), all other newspapers are considered to be quality ones. The analysis is based on a full survey of all media reports (regardless of the newspapers’ departments) that (1) mentioned zu Guttenberg by name and (2) had a clear relation to the plagiarism scandal. All contributions with reference to his ministerial work with no mention of the plagiarism scandal were excluded from the analysis.

According to data from a sample of German journalists (Donsbach, Wolling & von Blomberg 1996, 348; see also Keplinger 1998, 45 for politicians and press relation officers), the editorial slant of the FR and the SZ can be described as left or liberal (2.2 and 3.4 respectively on a seven-point scale from 1 ‘left’ to 7 ‘right’). In contrast, the editorial slant of the FAZ (5.4), BILD (6.0) and Die Welt (6.2) can be described as right or conservative.

**Definition and measurement of media frames**

Although we agree with the general understanding of media framing as defined by Gamson and Modigliani (1987, 143), we adopt the model of Entman (1993; 2012, 28) to identify frames on the basis of the four frame elements, that is problem definition, causal interpretation, evaluation, and treatment recommendation. Furthermore, we build on studies suggesting that the media often report on scandals in terms of whether an accused actor is guilty or not (see Feng, Brewer & Ley 2012; Keplinger et al. 2012; Shah et al. 2002). If the media suggest that zu Guttenberg is to blame for his behavior, we call this the use of an “attack frame.” If the media show sympathy for what he did, tries to explain or even to defend him, we label this strategy of coverage “defense frame.” From a methodological point of view, we follow a deductive route to identify media frames (e.g., de Vreese & Lecheler 2012).

To assess attack and defense frames we developed a specific set of indicators for each frame element (see Table 10.1). In a first step, we decided for every article whether the coverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame element</th>
<th>Attack frame</th>
<th>Defense frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem definition</td>
<td>Violation of norms</td>
<td>No violation of norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public issue</td>
<td>Private issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causal interpretation</td>
<td>Personal fault</td>
<td>External circumstances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>Coincidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full personal control</td>
<td>Out of personal control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral evaluation</td>
<td>Condemnation from own camp</td>
<td>Support from own camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Condemnation from opposition</td>
<td>Support from opposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Condemnation from other media</td>
<td>Support from other media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Condemnation from citizens</td>
<td>Support from citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment recommendation</td>
<td>Support of:</td>
<td>Refusal of:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>general/unspecific actions</td>
<td>general/unspecific actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>resignation from office</td>
<td>resignation from office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>personal punishment</td>
<td>personal punishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>defamation</td>
<td>defamation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a complete solving</td>
<td>a complete solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>an apology</td>
<td>an apology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>constitution of committees</td>
<td>constitution of committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural actions</td>
<td>structural actions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
explicitly referred to these indicators. In a second step, we analyzed for each article how many frame elements were addressed. According to Matthes (2007, 138), we distinguish between explicit and implicit frames. Explicit frames referred to all four; implicit frames only to two or three frame elements. If none or only one of the frame elements is mentioned, we argue that an article is not framed. Note that attack and defense frames can appear in the same article.

**Results**

The leading German newspapers framed the scandal to a large degree (see Table 10.2). In nine out of ten newspaper articles, readers were exposed to a particular interpretation of the event. Newspapers often presented only a single perspective—either they attacked or defended zu Guttenberg. Only one-third of the articles presented both frames. Hence, it was very likely that readers were exposed to a biased perspective on the plagiarism scandal.

This bias was strongest for liberal newspapers (i.e. FR and SZ) but also for the FAZ. Conservative newspapers covered the scandal with a higher share of unframed articles than liberal newspapers. In addition, Die Welt and BILD more often than other newspapers provided arguments in favor and in disfavor of zu Guttenberg. This difference is significant (p < .05).

The plagiarism of zu Guttenberg’s doctoral thesis was viewed much more often through the lens of an attack frame than of a defense frame (see Table 10.3). In 88 percent of the articles, readers were exposed to information denouncing zu Guttenberg. In the majority of these articles the criticism was explicit. In contrast, only three out of ten articles included information exonerating the Secretary of Defense. However, very few articles presented this information explicitly.

**Table 10.2 Number of Frames Used by Newspapers (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of frames used</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>FR</th>
<th>SZ</th>
<th>FAZ</th>
<th>Die Welt</th>
<th>BILD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No frame</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One frame</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both frames</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² = 16.2, df = 8, p = .040

**Table 10.3 Use of Implicit and Explicit Attack and Defense Frames by Newspapers (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>FR</th>
<th>SZ</th>
<th>FAZ</th>
<th>Die Welt</th>
<th>BILD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attack frame</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not used</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defense frame</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not used</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attack frame: χ² = 23.1, df = 8, p = .003, Cramer’s V = .21; defense frame: χ² = 22.3, df = 8, p = .004, Cramer’s V = .21
The leading German newspapers used attack and defense frames to a very different extent. Almost all articles published by liberal newspapers included an attack frame. In contrast, about one-fifth of the articles published in the conservative FAZ and Die Welt and about one-third of the articles published in BILD abstained from attacks on zu Guttenberg. These differences are significant (p < .01). However, only a minority of those articles armed with arguments against zu Guttenberg presented this information in an explicit way. Whereas there is no big difference among the newspapers, BILD again takes the most extreme position in this respect.

The same picture—but even more extreme—appears for the use of the defense frame. Between two-thirds and three-quarters of the articles published in FR, SZ, FAZ, and Die Welt lack any coherent presentation of information defending zu Guttenberg. In sharp contrast, two-thirds of the articles that appeared in BILD include this frame (p < .01). If the newspapers decided to present information supporting zu Guttenberg, this usually happened in an implicit way. Only for BILD did we find a larger share of articles explicitly defending zu Guttenberg’s behavior.

There is a striking difference between the picture of the plagiarism scandal as conveyed by BILD and that of the other newspapers. Further analyses (not displayed here as tables or figures) indicate that differences are found in three areas. First, the newspapers significantly differ in their problem definition (p < .001 for both attack and defense frames). In particular, whereas all quality newspapers fully acknowledge that plagiarism of a doctoral thesis violates ethical and scientific norms, BILD is ambivalent on this and presents both attack and defense frames. Furthermore, in a majority of articles of the quality press, plagiarism is depicted as a matter of public interest. In contrast, BILD argues significantly more often that this event is a private matter for zu Guttenberg. Second, BILD and the quality press differ on causal attribution (p < .001, for the attack frame only). Whereas the quality press tends to suggest that his misdeed is an indicator of his personality (e.g., dishonesty), BILD defends him against this portrayal. Third, BILD and all the other newspapers disagree on treatment recommendations (p < .001 for the defense frame only). In particular, BILD pleads a case for protecting zu Guttenberg from, for example, personal fines or his dismissal as a member of the government.

If we analyze the media framing of the scandal over time, it becomes clear why the resignation of zu Guttenberg was unavoidable (see Figure 10.1). First, there was a considerable amount of coverage over a longer period of time (on average 22 articles per day). Second, except for two days the coverage was in disfavor of zu Guttenberg: the share of articles including an attack frame outscored the share of articles defending him. The second exception is when he claimed that he would refrain from using his academic title. He pointed out that after an examination of his thesis, he came to the conclusion that the manuscript contained several major mistakes (February 23, see ZEIT Online 2011). Third, whereas attacks were usually addressed explicitly, defenses were only implicit. This also includes the rare periods when the defense frame was more prominent than the attack frame. Fourth, zu Guttenberg’s most important media ally, BILD, stopped covering the scandal on February 26.

**Conclusion**

Framing is an important instrument for the media to influence the interpretation and the course of a scandal by presenting specific perspectives on a problem concerning a (claimed) norm violation, who is responsible for it and why, how the (claimed) misconduct should be evaluated, and what treatment(s) might be appropriate to overcome the situation. By shaping the interpretation of a scandal, the media can influence public discourse and citizens’ knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. Furthermore, depending on which position they promote and if this position turns
out to be the majority opinion (or at least influential enough), they co-decide about the careers of accused politicians, the electoral success of political parties, and future directions of policy making (see Entman 2012, 37).

However, the research on the media framing of political scandals, its causes, and effects is still in its infancy (Joslyn 2003; von Sikorski & Knoll 2019); only a few studies have explored in detail the framing of specific scandals and the dynamics of their media coverage. Therefore, the data presented in this chapter contribute to the sparse literature in this field from an empirical and a methodological point of view. From a methodological perspective, we adopted the full concept for measuring frames suggested by Entman (1993; 2012). Furthermore, based on previous work we were able to assess attack and defense frames. This finding could stimulate further research on the media framing of specific scandals and academic attempts to find a set of frames relevant for scandal coverage in general. From an empirical perspective our results indicate that scandals cause “feeding frenzy” situations (Sabato 1991, 1), not only in the USA but also in countries lacking a culture of negative coverage of politics. In addition, we demonstrated that framing is pervasive in the media coverage of political scandals. The likelihood of being exposed to a specific media interpretation of a scandal is very high.

However, in our study, the case was quite different for the readers of the coverage provided by the conservative tabloid newspaper BILD, which attacked zu Guttenberg less and defended him more than any other newspaper. In particular, BILD disagreed with all the other newspapers about the definition of the problem, the causal attribution, and the treatment recommendation. In sum, zu Guttenberg’s coverage in BILD was much more positive than in other newspapers (see also Bachl & Vögele 2013), which is in line with the general positive image evaluation of zu Guttenberg during his career as Secretary General of the CSU and as Federal Secretary (Hemmelmann 2011).
Further research should, on the one hand, try to replicate the approach suggested in our study. It would be very interesting to see whether the combination of Entman’s (1993, 2012) framework and the identification of attacks and defenses as general modes of media framing will hold for other (types of) political scandals. On the other hand, studies on the impact of scandal frames are rare (Joslyn 2003; Keppplinger et al. 2012; von Sikorski 2018a). Like research on the media framing of specific scandals, this strand of research lacks general findings, too, as every study uses different frames. If future research indicates that the patterns of media frames found in this study are of a more general nature, it could be a promising direction for research into effects to assess (a) whether these media frames match the cognitive structures of recipients (i.e., whether citizens also classify information about a political scandal in terms of “attack” and “defense”) and (b) how these media frames influence individual knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. This approach would contribute to the demand to strengthen the link between frame-building and frame-setting (e.g., de Vreese & Lecheler 2012). Also, it would be useful to extend the analysis of scandal frames to visual content and examine how the news media visually portray political actors and how those visual frames affect recipients’ political attitudes (see von Sikorski, 2018; von Sikorski & Ludwig, 2018). In particular, the finding in our case—attack frames are usually explicit and defense frames predominantly implicit—can have serious consequences for information processing (see Keppplinger, Geiss & Siebert 2012). As scandals hit democracies regularly and—as some studies suggest—in increasingly shorter time intervals, research on the impact of the media coverage of norm violations by political actors is indispensable.

Notes
1 Some studies treat scandals not as an independent frame but as a subdimension of the conflict frame (see, e.g., Esser et al. 2017; Umbricht & Esser 2014).
2 Intercoder reliability (Holsti 1969, 140) was calculated for a random sample of 10 percent of the total sample. Reliability for the indicators of the elements of the attack and the defense frame ranges from 0.80 to 0.88.

References
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