

Political Scandals, Newspapers, and the Election Cycle

Marcel Garz
Jönköping University

Jil Sörensen
Hamburg Media School

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Corresponding author: Jil Sörensen, Hamburg Media School, Finkenau 35, 22081 Hamburg, Germany. Phone: + 49 40 413468 72, fax: +49 40 413468 10, email:

j.soerensen@hamburgmediaschool.com

Abstract

Election outcomes are often influenced by political scandal. While a scandal usually has negative consequences for the ones being accused of a transgression, political opponents and even media outlets may benefit. Anecdotal evidence suggests that certain scandals could be orchestrated, especially if they are reported right before an election. This study examines the timing of news coverage of political scandals relative to the national election cycle in Germany. Using data from electronic newspaper archives, we document a positive and highly significant relationship between coverage of government scandals and the election cycle. On average, one additional month closer to an election increases the amount of scandal coverage by 1.3%, which is equivalent to an 62% difference in coverage between the first and the last month of a four-year cycle. We provide suggestive evidence that this pattern can be explained by political motives of the actors involved in the production of scandal, rather than business motives by the newspapers.

Keywords: campaign; information strategy; news coverage; voting

In January 2013, Germany's influential news magazine *Stern* published an article about Rainer Brüderle, then chairman of the Liberal Party's parliamentary faction. According to the article, the politician made inappropriate advances towards the female author of the article during an interview. The author, Laura Himmelreich, reported that Brüderle asked about her age and for a dance. While looking at her breasts, he allegedly stated that Himmelreich could fill a dirndl, the traditional Bavarian costume. The article was the first of many that contributed to a nationwide debate about sexism and the relationship between politicians and journalists. Interestingly, the article was not published in January 2012 when the interview took place. Instead, it was published a year later, just a few days after Brüderle was nominated as front-runner of the Liberal Party for the upcoming national elections. Himmelreich addressed the delay on Twitter, explaining that the nomination had increased the newsworthiness of the incident. On Election Day, the Liberal Party failed to meet the 5% vote threshold and lost their seats in parliament.

Previous studies investigate which factors and circumstances may condition the extent and form to which scandals are covered by the media. For example, Doherty et al. (2011), Basinger (2013), and Doherty et al. (2014) show that the type of the scandal matters, such as whether it is a financial, political, or sex scandal. Media coverage is also affected by prior citizen attachments with candidates (Fischle 2000), the closeness of the race (Fogarty 2013), the quality of available information (Costas-Pérez et al. 2012), partisan motivations of news outlets (Puglisi and Snyder 2011; Budak et al. 2016; Galvis et al. 2016), and the degree of competition between media outlets (Kepplinger et al. 2002). Several studies show that the effects of scandals on election outcomes depend on the timing of the scandal (Praino et al. 2013; Doherty et al. 2014; Mitchell 2014; Pereira and Waterbury 2018). However, it remains unclear whether the amount of news coverage on political scandals changes over the election cycle, and if certain information is kept "in the drawer", as could be conjectured when looking at the Brüderle case described above.

Our study addresses this research gap by evaluating the news coverage of scandals involving politicians – for short, “political scandals” – relative to the national election cycle in Germany. We use the DIGAS news archive to retrieve information on articles about political scandals published by the most important German national daily newspapers. Combining keyword searches and human coding, we identify 794 newspaper articles pertaining to 71 scandals that occurred between 2005 and 2014. The timing of publication of these articles suggests that the amount of news coverage of government scandals – but not necessarily opposition scandals – increases when an election nears.

We also show that the length of time between a politician’s transgression and the publication of the scandal significantly increases before an election. This publication delay suggests that certain incriminating information is indeed kept back until closer to an election. The behavior of the actors involved in the production of scandals – political opponents, media outlets, and investigation authorities (Nyhan 2017) – is only partially observable to the researcher. The reason is that journalists often protect their sources, and that certain pieces of information are leaked by anonymous informants.

Thus we cannot determine who is responsible for the publication delay and the increase in scandal coverage before elections. However, it is possible to shed light on the motives driving these effects: Political opponents, media outlets, and/or investigation authorities could strategically release information when it inflicts the largest damage on a candidate (i.e., presumably shortly before the election). In that case, the publication delay would be *politically motivated*, due to the intention to influence voters. It is also possible that media outlets postpone the publication of scandals as a way to maximize profits, because scandals might attract more attention the closer an election. Thus, the publication delay could be driven by *business motives*, with newspapers trying to increase sales.

Our data suggest that political motives dominate. On the one hand, there is no significant correlation between scandal coverage and newspapers' paid circulation. If newspapers delayed the publication of scandals for business reasons, we would expect that sales increase when more articles about scandals are published, or when the scandals are based on "older" transgressions. This is not the case though. On the other hand, we find that the publication delay positively correlates with government popularity. If newspapers catered to the preferences of their readers, one would expect a negative correlation here, since low approval rates should increase the reader demand for negative information (Romano 2014; Latham 2015; Nyhan 2015).

Our findings contribute to the literature on the determinants of media coverage of political scandals, as referenced above. In addition, our study adds to the literature that investigates strategic timing of information. Durante and Zhuravskaya (2018) find that the Israeli government schedules its military operations in Palestine in a way to reduce the negative publicity related to casualties. That is, Israeli attacks are more likely when predictable competing news events take place and the public can be expected to be distracted. Couttenier and Hatte (2016) provide evidence of a reverse pattern in the case of non-governmental organizations. To maximize publicity, these organizations avoid publishing environmental and human rights reports during competing news events. Garz and Maaß (2018) investigate the behavior of the European Commission in antitrust proceedings. Their findings suggest that European companies receive less negative publicity than non-European firms, because the actions and press releases by the Commission are more likely to coincide with predictable, competing news when the former type of companies are involved.

Most closely related are the findings of Mitchell (2014) and Pereira and Waterbury (2018), according to which the effects of political scandals on voters depend on the closeness of the election. The conditioning effect of the election cycle creates incentives to manipulate the

release of information that could lead to a scandal. Our study provides evidence that political opponents, newspapers, and/or investigation authorities act on these incentives.

Elections, political scandals, and the media

News media play a crucial role for the distinction between transgressions by politicians and actual scandals. Without media visibility, misbehavior cannot turn into a scandal (Nyhan 2015; Hamel and Miller 2018). Waisbord (2004: 1079) sharpens this argument by stating that “[m]edia coverage is the barometer that indicates the existence (or absence) of a scandal.” As the Fourth Estate, news media not only make transgressions visible, investigative journalism also contributes to the detection of misbehavior. In many cases, however, transgressions by politicians are only discovered and made public because certain sources share their knowledge with the media, often for instrumental reasons (Kepplinger et al. 1991).

We discuss the motives of the main actors involved in the production of scandals – political opponents, media outlets, and investigation authorities – to better understand the relationship between scandal coverage and the election cycle. To begin with, the political opponents of someone involved in a scandal usually benefit from the scandal. Due to the effects on voters, the opposite camp has an incentive to obtain incriminating information and to share this information with the media. For example, scandals lead to losses in vote shares in U.S. House of Representatives and Congressional elections (Peters and Welch 1980; Welch and Hibbing 1997), to the point that incumbents sometimes lose their seats (Basinger 2013). The negative effects might even last more than one election cycle (Praino et al. 2013). Similar evidence comes from Spain and the United Kingdom (Costas-Pérez et al. 2012; Larcinese and Sircar 2017). The U.K. evidence suggests that the effects might already take place at the pre-election stage, such that potential candidates are prevented from running. Vote losses may also

result from the possibility that politicians involved in scandals face stronger challengers (Lazarus 2008; Hirano and Snyder 2012). However, physically more attractive candidates experience smaller vote losses than less attractive candidates (Stockemer and Praino 2018). Scandals might also have opposite effects if candidates are relatively unknown (Burden 2002). A scandal can help voters remember an otherwise unknown candidate, which could then increase the chances of that candidate being elected. Opposite effects are also discussed by Hamel and Miller (2018). They show that donors may increase their campaign contribution after a scandal, likely to compensate the negative effects on candidate evaluations. In general, opposite effects are possible because recipients use individual frames when they process information about scandals (Kepplinger et al. 2012). Further studies suggest that scandals may lead to declining trust in political institutions and the media (Bowler and Karp 2004; Jones 2004; Tworzecki and Semetko 2012; Bucy et al. 2014), but such effects are unlikely to offset the strong incentives that political opponents have to obtain and share incriminating information.

Second, media outlets themselves may benefit from political scandals. On the one hand, the news value of scandals (Galtung and Ruge 1965; Palmer 2000) implies that there is usually reader demand for this kind of coverage. Specifically, recipients could have an interest in scandals for the following reasons: they want to make informed voting decisions (e.g., Druckman 2005), they find scandals entertaining (e.g., Baum 2003; Prior 2003), or they are psychologically wired to prefer negative over positive information (e.g., Arango-Kure et al. 2014; Garz 2014; Trussler and Soroka 2014). Satisfying the demand for scandal coverage helps media outlets to increase revenues (e.g., Mullainathan and Shleifer 2005; Gentzkow and Shapiro 2006; Fogarty 2008). On the other hand, media outlets could benefit from political scandals for ideological reasons. The desire to influence election outcomes creates an incentive for journalists, editors, and media owners to produce scandals that hurt political opponents. Puglisi and Snyder (2011),

Budak et al. (2016), and Galvis et al. (2016) provide evidence of this kind of behavior by documenting partisan bias in scandal coverage by U.S. media outlets.

Third, if investigation authorities and law enforcement officials are ideologically motivated, they would also benefit from scandals that involve politicians with different ideological views. For instance, police and prosecutors could investigate the opposite camp more closely, demand more severe sentences, or leak confidential information (Becker and Stigler 1974). Such behavior would increase the chances that transgressions become public and turn into a scandal.

To summarize, political opponents, investigation authorities, and media outlets could all have *political motives* to postpone the release of information and the publication of a scandal. Previous experimental and observational studies show that scandals have the largest effects on candidate evaluations shortly after they break (Praino et al. 2013; Doherty et al. 2014; Mitchell 2014; Pereira and Waterbury 2018). This implies that the effects on election outcomes are largest if a scandal takes place late in the election cycle. Voters do not have much time to forget about a transgression, and accused candidates hardly have the opportunity to make corrections or provide exonerating evidence.

In addition, newspaper readers could have a greater demand for scandal coverage before an election. Reporting scandals would then be a way for newspapers to increase sales (e.g., Mullainathan and Shleifer 2005; Gentzkow and Shapiro 2006; Fogarty 2008). Thus there could be *business motives* to delay the publication of scandals until an election nears. While we do not have an expectation about which type of motive prevails in the context of our study, we can derive hypotheses about the amount of scandal coverage and the recency of the underlying transgressions.

H1: The amount of news coverage on scandals involving politicians increases over the election cycle.

H2: The length of time between the transgression and the coverage of the scandal increases over the election cycle.

RQ1: Is the (potential) relationship between scandal coverage and the election cycle driven by political or business motives?

Data

Our period of investigation covers the time from January 2005 to December 2014. This time window is determined by the availability of the newspaper data. It covers the national elections in September 2005, September 2009, and September 2013, which allows us to observe two full and two partial election cycles.¹ The specific election dates were perfectly predictable and known well ahead, due to constitutional and other legal regulations. Even the date of the snap elections in 2005 was announced several months in advance.

We prefer to use newspaper-months as observation units, even though the newspaper data are available on a daily basis. Daily observations might provide interesting short-run insights, such as differences in news coverage across weekdays. Modelling these data requires more sophisticated specifications, though. Since we are interested in medium- to long-run patterns, a monthly frequency is an adequate choice. In addition, monthly observations correspond to the highest frequency of measurement of many other variables used in this study. Table A1 in the Online Appendix provides summary statistics of the main variables.

¹ We did not limit our analysis to the two full election cycles to make use of all available information and maximize the number of observations in the regressions. Robustness checks indicate that we obtain very similar results when we exclude the two partial election cycles (cp. Table A6).

Election cycle

We constructed a variable that counts the number of months until the next election. At the time of an election, the variable takes the value of 0. To ease interpretation of the results, we multiplied the variable by -1. We also present results based on polynomials and logarithmic forms of this variable to relax the assumption of a linear relationship between scandal coverage and the election cycle.

Scandal coverage

Data on news coverage of political scandals came from the DIGAS database by Axel Springer Syndication. We apply three criteria to select the newspapers for our sample: 1) the outlet publishes on a daily basis; 2) the outlet circulates nationally; 3) the outlet existed throughout our entire period of investigation. Six newspapers fulfil these criteria: *Bild*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Handelsblatt*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Die Tageszeitung*, and *Die Welt*. *Bild* is the major tabloid in Germany, whereas all other titles are quality media. The selection represents the German political landscape quite well, with *Die Tageszeitung* leaning left and *Die Welt* falling at the conservative end of the spectrum. We do not include either the *Frankfurter Rundschau* or the *Financial Times Deutschland*. The former underwent insolvency proceedings in 2012, and the latter was shuttered in the same year, which prevents the consistent measurement of scandal coverage. Excluding these newspapers is not problematic, though, because of their relatively low circulation before the shutdown. Other newspapers do not publish on a daily basis (e.g., *Die Zeit*) or do not circulate nationally. We obtained data on the paid circulation of the six newspapers in our sample from the German audit bureau of circulation (Informationsgesellschaft zur Feststellung der Verbreitung von Werbeträgern, IVW).

As there is no initial list of political scandals during our period of investigation, we identified relevant articles (and scandals) in a two-staged process. First, we extracted all articles containing the German words for “scandal” or “affair” (truncated at the end) in the (sub)heading. Restricting the search to the (sub)heading reduced the amount of false positives, since journalists tend to announce the main topic of an article right at its beginning. We retrieved 14,032 articles with this search procedure. Second, six research assistants manually selected all articles focusing on individual German political actors involved in a scandal as a culprit.² Furthermore, we included only domestic, national-level actors because of their close relationship to and higher impact on German parliamentary elections. We excluded letters to the editor and coverage of historical scandals (e.g., anniversary of the Spiegel Affair). We had human beings select these articles because we believe that a machine-based procedure could not fulfill this task satisfactorily and because the article amount could still be processed without further machine support. As the selection only involved evaluating simple objective criteria (i.e., politician vs. other profession, domestic vs. foreign case, national vs. local level), there is no decision uncertainty, which we confirm by randomly checking the research assistants’ selection (e.g., average Brennan-Prediger kappa = 0.94). The assistants also noted whether the accused belong to the governing or opposition parties. After we discarded duplicates, 794 articles remained, based on which we compiled a list of 71 unique scandals (cp. Table A2).

We also used these 794 articles to determine the amount of scandal coverage by newspaper and month. This amount can be measured in different ways; for example, by counting

² Focusing on politicians rather than parties does not affect our set of scandals, since politicians are nested within parties. Even cases that could be classified as party-level scandals (e.g., “CDU party donations affair”) involve specific politicians (e.g., Manfred Kanther and Ludwig-Holger Pfahls). As a consequence, there are hardly any scandal reports that do not reference an individual actor (i.e., approximately less than 0.01% of all retrieved articles), which confirms previous findings on the personalization of scandals (e.g., Kepplinger 2009; Sikorski 2016).

the number of articles, the number of front-page articles, or the number of characters (as provided in the articles' metadata). We do not have strong arguments for choosing one measure over the others, and the results do not substantially differ across measures (cp. Table A4). We decided to use the number of articles in the baseline specification, as this is the most commonly used measure in political communication and related disciplines (e.g., Fogarty and Monogan 2014).

We distinguished between scandals related to politicians of a governing party and those related to the opposition. In total, we observe 56 scandals on the government side but only 15 scandals pertaining to opposition politicians. The difference in coverage of these scandals is even larger: The monthly average number of articles dealing with government scandals is 1.03, whereas this number only amounts to 0.07 in the case of opposition scandals (Table A1).

Recency of transgression

We determined the month and year in which the transgressions underlying the 71 scandals in our sample took place, based on publicly available information.³ We then used this information to calculate how much time elapsed between the occurrence of the transgression and the publication of articles reporting the scandal. For example, in the Brüderle case described at the very beginning of this study, the transgression took place in January 2012 – as mentioned by the responsible journalist – but most news reports were published 12 months later, in January 2013. Computing averages per newspaper and month converts this variable to the level of observation used in our regression models. As the summary statistics in Table A1 show, the number of

³ If the date or time period of the transgression could not be found in the scandal coverage itself, we used news archives and search engines to research this information. Thus the actual time of the transgression could also be based on other news reports, parliamentary protocols, or database entries. For most scandals the time of the transgression is common knowledge and was thus straightforward to determine. In less clear cases we verified the information by at least two independent, credible sources. See Table A2 for details.

months between transgression and scandal coverage ranged from 0 to 385. Thus, some transgressions immediately turned into scandals, whereas it took several decades for this to happen in some extreme cases. On average, it took about 71 months – almost 6 years – for the transgressions to turn into scandals.

Control variables

Previous empirical evidence suggests that news media turn against the government if voter approval declines. Nyhan (2015) finds that low approval of the U.S. president increases the chances of scandal.⁴ Low approval rates of the U.S. Congress have a similar effect, as noted by Romano (2014). Latham (2015) provides related evidence from the U.K., which suggests that newspapers give more coverage to government investigations when approval rates are low. If government approval systematically decreases over the election cycle, voters may develop a demand for critical news coverage, in which case profit-maximizing news media could satisfy this demand by providing a larger amount of scandal coverage. We control for this kind of confounding by constructing an index of government popularity, using data from the Politbarometer surveys, as provided by GESIS – Leibnitz-Institute for the Social Sciences. Each month, approximately 1,000 participants are asked how satisfied they currently are with the government.⁵ The answers are provided on a scale from 1 (very unsatisfied) to 11 (very satisfied). From this information, we calculated the monthly average satisfaction score by using the

⁴ Nyhan (2015) also emphasizes the degree of congestion of the overall news agenda as a factor that determines if a scandal emerges or not. However, variation in news pressure can be mostly observed at a daily or weekly level, whereas we do not expect significant differences across months (our level of observation).

⁵ Unfortunately, this survey item is only consistently available for the West German elective population. We are not aware of data capturing East Germany on a monthly basis. The western part accounts for roughly 80% of the German population though, which is why we do not expect that omitting government popularity in East Germany could significantly distort our results. If opinions in East Germany differ from those in West Germany, and the newspapers in our sample cater to reader preferences, they would likely focus on the nation's majority views.

sampling weights provided by Politbarometer. That is, for each month in our period of investigation, we averaged over respondents while accounting for respondents' individual probabilities of being selected into the sample.

It is possible that the relationship between scandal coverage and the election cycle is driven by variation in the occurrence of transgressions; i.e., there could be differences in the supply of "scandal material". To some extent, this kind of supply is unobservable to the researcher, for the reasons discussed in the introduction. We do observe when criminal investigations into members of parliament take place though. These investigations do not always turn into scandal, and some scandals emerge without any investigation. However, to the extent that investigations and scandals overlap, the initiation of criminal proceedings can be considered as a main source of variation in the supply of scandal material. The beginning of these investigations is thoroughly documented in the database of the German Bundestag ("Dokumentations- und Informationssystem für Parlamentarische Vorgänge") because the parliament needs to grant authorization before police measures or prosecution against its members can take place. Technically, the responsible parliamentary committee lifts the political immunity of the member in question to grant this authorization; see Garz and Sörensen (2017) for procedural details. During our period of investigation, 23 politicians from a governing party and 19 politicians from an opposition party were investigated. This set of 42 criminal investigations partially overlaps with our set of 71 scandals: Many of the investigated politicians appeared as protagonists in the scandal coverage. Examples are the former federal minister of agriculture Hans-Peter Friedrich (20 articles, Edathy child pornography scandal), the former internal affairs spokesman Michael Hartmann (18 articles, crystal meth and Edathy child pornography scandals), and the former member of parliament Hans-Jürgen Uhl (42 articles, Volkswagen corruption scandal). We used the set of criminal investigations to construct a variable that counts the

monthly number of initiated proceedings.⁶ Note that some investigations might be a consequence rather than a reason for scandal coverage. It is nonetheless useful to control for the number of investigations, even though we cannot interpret the relationship between both variables in a causal way.

Finally, we control for competition between simultaneously reported scandals. Coverage of individual scandals might be affected if multiple scandals are reported at the same time; for instance, because newspapers face page limitations or other resource restrictions. Thus scandals that overlap might be different than scandals that do not. A count variable captures the monthly number of simultaneously covered scandals.

Results

We start by discussing evidence pertaining to H1, followed by the presentation of results related to H2. The last part of the results section addresses RQ1.

Amount of scandal coverage

Figure 1 shows that the amount of scandal coverage increases over the election cycle. Three aspects need to be considered when modeling this relationship in a regression framework: 1) the panel structure of our dataset; 2) the overdispersed count distribution of the number of articles (our dependent variable); and 3) potential autocorrelation of the number of articles.⁷ A dynamic panel-data model (e.g., Arellano-Bond) would allow us to account for 1) and 3) but not 2),

⁶ The database does not contain the end date of the investigations. Thus we cannot control for the duration of the proceedings. However, our main goal is to account for the emergence of scandal, for which the initiation of a criminal investigation likely is the strongest predictor, especially because the corresponding parliamentary event guarantees that the public can learn about these cases.

⁷ The autocorrelation functions plotted in Figure A1 indicate autocorrelation of order 1.

whereas negative binomial regressions with fixed effects would cover 1) and 2) but not 3). The Poisson Autoregressive Model (PAR[p]) proposed by Brandt and Williams (2001) could potentially cover all three aspects. However, PAR(p) models – which do not assume equidispersion – fail to converge for most specifications with the data at hand.⁸ Since dynamic panel-data models are computationally demanding, we use negative binomial regressions in our baseline specifications and relegate results based on the other two approaches – to the extent that the estimation is feasible – to the Online Appendix. However, we note that negative binomial, Arellano-Bond, and PAR(p) models provide essentially the same results here.

[Figure 1 about here]

We include newspaper, calendar month, and government fixed effects in all models. Newspaper fixed effects account for time-invariant differences between outlets, such as ideology or quality. Calendar month dummies capture seasonal patterns that might affect coverage of political scandals (e.g., summer holidays, newspapers' advertising cycles and related changes in content and volume⁹, seasonality in the activities of investigation authorities). We do not use year fixed effects, because they would be highly collinear with the election cycle and would eliminate

⁸ The estimation of PAR(p) models involves a measurement equation, an equation for the autoregressive process, and a conjugate prior (Brandt and Williams 2001). In combination with multiple sets of fixed effects (i.e., at the newspaper, government, and month levels), the convergence problems likely reflect that the specifications are too complex for the data (Greene 2004). We also considered collapsing our data to a single time series by summing up the number of articles over the six newspapers. However, this aggregation involves a loss of information and ignores heterogeneity across newspapers. Importantly, PAR(p) models still fail to converge in most cases when using the collapsed data.

⁹ The amount of money spent on ads in newspapers varies over the course of the year (e.g., more ads before Christmas, less ads in the summer; see, e.g., Gijsenberg 2017), which affects the overall number of pages of individual newspaper editions (e.g., “thinner” newspapers in the summer, “thicker” newspapers before Christmas). The reason is that newspapers usually have a fixed ratio of editorial to advertising content.

all between-year variation in scandal coverage. Instead, we include government dummies, which are equivalent to election cycle fixed effects in this context.

Table 1 summarizes the main estimation results pertaining to H1. Columns (1) to (3) refer to specifications without control variables, whereas we control for government popularity, the number of criminal investigations into members of parliament, and the number of simultaneously covered scandals in Columns (4) to (6). The estimated coefficients are not particularly sensitive to the inclusion of the control variables. In both cases, we find a positive and highly significant effect of the election cycle on the number of articles related to all scandals. According to Column (4), one additional month coming closer to the election increases the scandal coverage by 0.0146 articles, or 1.3% compared to the mean. This implies that the amount of scandal coverage between the first month and the last month of a four-year election cycle differs by 0.7 articles ($48 \text{ months} \times 0.0146$) or 62%. Distinguishing between government and opposition scandals indicates that the effect is mostly driven by government scandals. In the case of opposition scandals, the coefficients have the expected positive sign but are not statistically significant (Columns 3 and 6).

[Table 1 about here]

Thus we can confirm H1 for government but not necessarily opposition scandals. As the summary statistics in Table A1 indicate, the amount of newspaper coverage varied substantially for both kinds of scandal, despite the fact that criminal investigations into members of governing parties occurred about as often as investigations into opposition politicians (23 vs. 19 cases between 2005 and 2014). The discrepancy in the government-opposition ratio between criminal investigations and scandal coverage suggests that non-criminal transgressions (e.g., plagiarism or

sexism) are more likely to turn into a scandal when committed by a politician from a governing party. This is plausible, considering that the government possesses more power and responsibility, thus being subject to greater media scrutiny than the opposition. The greater responsibility also implies that there are more opportunities for mistakes that can be scandalized, and these mistakes might be more relevant for voters. With the focus of public attention on the government, scandals involving members of the governing parties likely have larger effects on voters than opposition scandals. Thus, prior to an election, there are likely greater incentives to politicize transgressions by government than opposition politicians.

In the Online Appendix, we present results of several robustness checks that confirm the increase in scandal coverage over the election cycle. Specifically, we evaluate different functional forms of the election cycle variable. In Table 1, we assume the effect to be linear, in accordance with the visual pattern that can be recognized in Figure 1. As Table A3 shows, the effect of the election cycle on the amount of scandal coverage remains positive and statistically significant when using non-linear forms. In Column (1), we use the squared number of months until the next election, while Column (2) refers to the third polynomial. Both transformations emphasize effects in the middle of the cycle, whereas the logarithmic version in Column (3) assumes stronger effects right before and after an election.

In Table A4, we verify that the results are robust to different measures of the amount of scandal coverage, including the number of characters (Column 1) and the number of front-page articles (Column 2). In Column (3) and (4), we distinguish between articles with and without a photo, since visualizations can increase the salience of a topic. The election cycle coefficient is only significant in the case of articles without a photo. Note that articles with a photo are relatively uncommon (they account for approximately 28% of all articles), which increases the size of the standard error of the corresponding coefficient and elevates the p-value slightly above

the 10% level ($p = 0.126$). Compared to the mean number of articles, the point estimate implies an increase in the number of articles with a photo of 4% with each month closer to an election, whereas the point estimate implies a 2% increase in the case of articles without a photo.

Table A5 confirms that our findings are not driven by outliers. As Figure (1) suggests, there might be one or two serious outliers around 20 and 8 months before election day. In Columns (1) and (2), we remove both and the one most extreme outlier, respectively. However, the resulting coefficients remain fairly similar to the initial estimates.

In the baseline specification, we run the regressions on two full and two partial election cycles. In Table A6, we exclude the two partial cycles and confirm that the results hold when we exclusively use the two full cycles.

Table A7 shows results based on PAR(p) models. As discussed before, these models often fail to converge with the data at hand. For example, convergence is not achieved when we try to distinguish between government and opposition scandals, or when we collapse the data to a single time series. However, we are able to obtain results when we maintain the panel structure of the data, use the number of articles pertaining to all scandals as the dependent variable, and include up to 3 lags. As the corresponding estimates indicate, the effect sizes tend to be slightly smaller than in the baseline specification, but the election cycle coefficients remain qualitatively similar and statistically significant at conventional levels.

In Table A8, we re-estimate the baseline specification as Arellano-Bond linear dynamic panel-data models, again with up to 3 lags of the dependent variable. The estimated election cycle coefficients are significant at the 5% level at least and indicate very similar effect sizes than those shown in Table 1.

Table A9 presents separate estimates for the individual newspapers in our sample. The election cycle coefficient is highly significant for *Bild*, and marginally significant for

Süddeutsche Zeitung and *Die Tageszeitung*. For the other newspapers, the coefficient is not significant and close to zero. The largest effect size is estimated for *Bild* – the coefficient in Column (1) translates into a monthly increase in the number of articles by approximately 5.2%, followed by *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (2.3%) and *Die Tageszeitung* (1.5%). This is a plausible finding, since *Bild* stands out as a tabloid, whereas the other newspapers are considered as quality newspapers.

Finally, we distinguish between different types of scandals in Table A10. Accordingly, especially coverage of financial scandals increases before elections, whereas we find a negative and marginally significant coefficient in the case of sex scandals. Considering that financial scandals are often found to lead to larger losses in vote shares than other scandals (Doherty et al. 2011; Basinger 2013; Doherty et al. 2014; Pereira and Waterbury 2018), this finding could be an indication that the increase in scandal coverage before elections is driven by political motives (i.e., the desire to influence voters).

Recency of transgressions

Table 2 presents regression results pertaining to H2. The dependent variable is the publication delay; i.e., the monthly average of the length of time between the transgressions and the publication of relevant articles reporting the scandals. This is a slightly right-skewed but continuous variable, which is why we use OLS to estimate the effect of the election cycle. The regressions are estimated at the newspaper-month level and exclude all newspaper-months without any scandal coverage. The estimates indicate a positive effect of the election cycle. The effect is highly significant when no control variables are included (Column 1) and significant at the 10% level when we do control for confounding factors (Column 2). In the latter case, the election cycle coefficient indicates that one additional month closer to an election increases the

time between the scandalized incident and its coverage by 0.792 months. The difference between the first and the last month of a full four-year election cycle amounts to 38 months or 53%. Thus our findings confirm H2.

[Table 2 about here]

Political vs. business motives

In Table 3, we summarize results pertaining to RQ1.¹⁰ These results do not have a causal interpretation, but we believe that discussing the signs of the correlations is helpful to distinguish between political and business motives of the actors involved in the production of the scandals. Columns (1) and (2) show regressions of the newspapers' paid circulation on the number of all scandal articles, and the interaction between this number and the election cycle variable, respectively. We do not find any significant correlations here. If the increase in scandal coverage over the election cycle was driven by business motives of the newspapers, we would expect to see a positive correlation though, especially before elections (i.e., as measured by the coefficient on the interaction between the number of articles and the election cycle). Instead the coefficients have a negative sign, which implies that the newspapers do not sell more copies when they publish more scandal articles.

[Table 3 about here]

¹⁰ The regressions shown in Table 3 are estimated at the newspaper-quarter level, since the data on the newspapers' paid circulation are not available at a monthly frequency. The frequency of measurement of the remaining variables in the regressions in that table was modified accordingly; i.e., by computing the quarterly sum of articles, and the quarterly means of the publication delay, the election cycle, and the control variables.

In Columns (3) and (4), we present results of regressing the paid circulation on the average length of time between the transgressions and the publication of relevant articles reporting the scandals (i.e., the publication delay). In general, the recency of the transgression does not significantly correlate with the paid circulation (Column 3). However, the interaction between the recency of the transgression and the election cycle is negative and significant at the 10% level, which suggests that scandal coverage of “older” transgressions before elections is associated with lower newspaper sales. Again, this finding is not compatible with newspapers that would expand their coverage of scandals because of business motives. Instead, the negative correlation suggests that newspapers report in the opposite direction of the preferences of their readers, and that readers turn away in response. We cannot determine who exactly is the driving force behind this pattern, but political motives seem to dominate business motives. That is, the newspapers themselves, political opponents, investigation authorities, or all of these actors could be responsible for the pre-election increase in both scandal coverage and publication delay because of the desire to influence voters.

There are further pieces of suggestive evidence supporting this interpretation. First, as Table A10 shows, the increase in scandal coverage is largely driven by reporting about financial scandals, which have been found to affect voters more than other types of scandals (Doherty et al. 2011; Basinger 2013; Doherty et al. 2014; Pereira and Waterbury 2018). Second, our data indicate a positive correlation between the publication delay and government popularity (Table 2). If the newspapers had business motives, and thus catered to the preferences of their readers, we would expect a negative correlation here. Decreasing government popularity usually leads to greater demand for government-critical coverage, and profit-maximizing newspapers can satisfy

this demand by reporting government scandals (Romano 2014; Latham 2015; Nyhan 2015).¹¹

The positive correlation suggests that the opposite might be case though: newspapers reporting on “older” transgressions when the government is more popular.

Conclusion

This study examines the relationship between newspaper coverage of political scandal and the election cycle. Our results indicate that one additional month closer to the election increases the amount of scandal coverage by 1.3%, which accumulates to a difference of 62% between the first and the last month of a four-year election cycle. Our data also indicate that the delay between politicians’ transgressions and the coverage of the scandals grows over the cycle, which could imply that certain information is kept “in the drawer” until the release has the largest effects on readers. We present suggestive evidence that the increases in scandal coverage and publication delay are driven by political rather than business motives of the actors involved in the production of scandals.

Our results are not without limitations. First, our data pertain to a specific period of time in Germany. As in most experimental and empirical research, this raises the question about the external validity of the results. Comparative studies are necessary to evaluate if the findings would be similar in other established democracies. Second, the evidence on the motives driving the relationship between scandal coverage and the election cycle remains suggestive, as most actions of the protagonists are unobserved. Third, our data do not allow us to distinguish between political opponents, newspapers, and investigation authorities when evaluating strategic

¹¹ In practice, however, the demands of the audience that editors and journalists are dealing with are only assumed demands; i.e., newspapers do not exactly know what readers expect. In addition, findings based on two partial and two full election cycle have to be interpreted with caution, since the pattern might differ between periods of governance (e.g., Norpoth and Gschwend 2003).

information withholding. It is possible that the increase in the length of time between transgression and scandal coverage prior to elections is simultaneously driven by all (or merely some) of these actors. Thus, we cannot identify who exactly delays the sharing or publication of incriminating information.

Our findings have important implications, despite these limitations. Higher competition between media companies not only decreases partisan bias in scandal coverage (Puglisi and Snyder 2011; Galvis et al. 2016), but likely decreases the chances of strategic information withholding. The reason is that newspapers face more pressure to report a scandal before a competitor does when news markets are competitive. Thus our findings provide another argument for regulatory intervention if news markets are too concentrated. However, it is important to find the right balance here. Too much competition can lead to a tabloidization of the media landscape because it is easier for news outlets to reach the masses with unpolitical content (Esser 1999; Magin 2017), and scandal coverage might as well have negative effects on democracies.

Another normative recommendation relates to the organization of law enforcement. Institutional procedures should minimize the risk that individual police forces, investigators, and prosecutors discriminate against criminal suspects for political reasons. Investigation authorities should have a self-interest in implementing such procedures, as a differential treatment would undermine their legitimization and credibility. This argument also applies to democratic society as a whole because its stability depends on equal treatment of their citizens before the law.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1: Scandal coverage and the election cycle

	(1) All scandals	(2) Government scandals	(3) Opposition scandals	(4) All scandals	(5) Government scandals	(6) Opposition scandals
Election cycle	0.0178*** (0.00464)	0.0183*** (0.00501)	0.0223 (0.0144)	0.0146*** (0.00532)	0.0162*** (0.00589)	0.0108 (0.0144)
Government popularity				-0.0438 (0.124)	-0.0534 (0.130)	0.267 (0.387)
Number of criminal investigations				0.154** (0.0764)	0.173** (0.0857)	-0.0198 (0.159)
Number of simultaneously covered scandals				0.435*** (0.0416)	0.433*** (0.0440)	0.359*** (0.0922)

Notes: Dependent variable: number of articles. Negative binomial estimates, based on 720 observations (6 newspapers, 120 months between January 2005 and December 2014). All models include a constant, as well as newspaper, government, and month fixed effects. Heteroscedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses.

* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Table 2: Recency of transgressions and the election cycle

	(1)	(2)
Election cycle	1.253*** (0.391)	0.792* (0.428)
Government popularity		23.11* (12.56)
Number of criminal investigations		0.753 (5.306)
Number of simultaneously covered scandals		3.959 (3.780)
Adjusted R^2	0.0842	0.0943

Notes: Dependent variable: monthly average of the length of time between transgressions and scandal coverage. OLS estimates, based on 309 observations (6 newspapers and up to 120 months; newspaper-months without any scandal coverage are excluded from the regressions). All models include a constant, as well as newspaper, government, and month fixed effects. Heteroscedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses.

* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

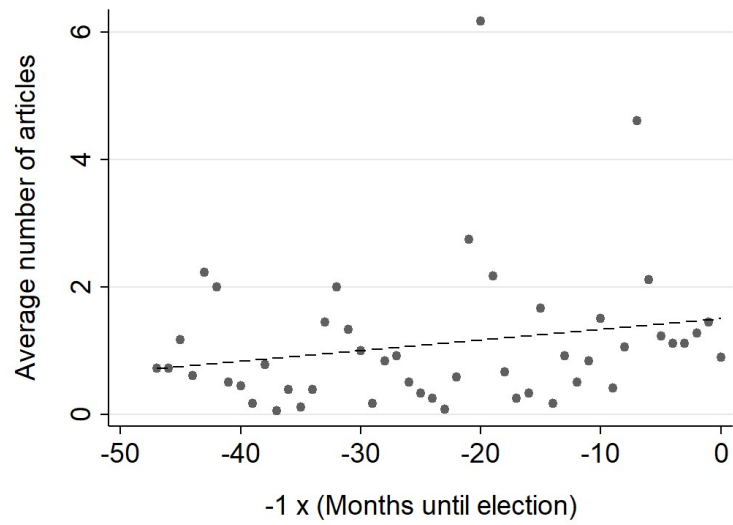
Table 3: Newspaper circulation and scandal coverage

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Number of articles	-2.003 (2.769)	-4.555 (4.081)		
Number of articles × election cycle		-0.147 (0.190)		
Recency of transgression			-0.103 (0.304)	-0.683** (0.310)
Recency of transgression × election cycle				-0.0352* (0.0193)
Election cycle	-1.331 (1.089)	-0.936 (1.337)	-0.244 (1.144)	2.194 (1.498)
Government popularity	-34.79 (30.03)	-32.97 (29.80)	-58.79* (34.29)	-52.86 (33.02)
Number of criminal investigations	3.144 (38.56)	1.460 (38.86)	-35.28 (40.63)	-37.86 (40.21)
Number of simultaneously covered scandals	-7.196 (19.04)	-8.630 (19.56)	-8.341 (24.90)	-12.65 (24.11)
Adjusted R^2	0.973	0.973	0.971	0.972
Observations	240	240	186	186

Notes: Dependent variable: paid newspaper circulation (in 1,000 copies). OLS estimates, based on 6 newspapers and up to 40 quarters (newspaper-quarters without any scandal coverage are excluded from Model 2). The article counts refer to all scandals. Here, the recency of the transgression is defined as the quarterly average of the length of time between transgressions and scandal coverage. All models include a constant, as well as newspaper, government, and month fixed effects. Heteroscedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Figure 1: Scandal coverage and the election cycle



Notes: The figure shows values averaged over election cycles. The dashed line represents linear predictions of the data.

Online Appendix

Table A1: Summary statistics of main variables

	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	Obs.
<i>Panel A: Newspaper-month level</i>					
Number of articles (all scandals)	1.13	2.35	0.0	28.0	720
Number of articles (only government scandals)	1.03	2.32	0.0	28.0	720
Number of articles (only opposition scandals)	0.07	0.30	0.0	3.0	720
Avg. time betw. transgressions and scandal coverage (months)	71.41	73.94	0.0	385.0	309
Paid newspaper circulation (in 1,000 copies)	743.18	1137.63	52.5	4065.5	720
<i>Panel B: Monthly observations</i>					
Election cycle (months)	-24.10	14.85	-47.0	0.0	120
Government popularity (index)	6.21	0.69	4.6	8.6	120
Number of criminal investigations into members of parliament	0.35	0.78	0.0	4.0	120
Number of simultaneously covered scandals	1.73	1.23	0.0	5.0	120

Notes: The number of articles pertaining to all scandals is higher than the sum of articles pertaining to government and opposition scandals, because the former measure includes some articles that simultaneously involve government and opposition politicians.

Table A2: Scandals and transgressions

Name of scandal	Accused politician	Type of transgression	Start of transgression	Type of scandal
Amigo Affair FDP	Guido Westerwelle	Favoritism	Jan 2010	Financial
Amigo Affair Green	Claudia Roth	Favoritism	Mar 2001	Financial
BND Causa Kurnaz	Frank-Walter Steinmeier	Failure of duty	Oct 2002	Political
BND Involvement Iraq War	Frank-Walter Steinmeier	Lying to the public	2003	Political
Brothel Affair	Gert Winkelmeier	Operate a brothel	1996	Sex
Carpet Affair	Dirk Niebel	Tax evasion	May 2012	Financial
Causa Brüderle	Rainer Brüderle	Sexism	Jan 2012	Sex
Causa Edathy	Sebastian Edathy, Thomas Oppermann, Hans-Peter Friedrich	Child pornography, betrayal of secrets	Oct 2005	Sex
Causa Guttenberg	Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg	Plagiarism	Jan 2009	Other
Causa Sarrazin	Christian Wulff	Transgression of competences	Sep 2010	Political
Causa Schavan	Annette Schavan	Plagiarism	Jan 1981	Other
Causa Scheuer	Andreas Scheuer	Inconsistency of doctoral title	Dec 2004	Other
Causa Schottdorf	Beate Merk, Horst Seehofer, Peter Gauweiler	Failure of duty	Mar 2010	Other
Causa Tauss	Jörg Tauss	Child pornography	May 2007	Sex
Causa Wulff	Christian Wulff	Accepting advantage	Oct 2007	Financial
CDU Party Donations Affair	Manfred Kanther, Ludwig-Holger Pfahls	Accepting advantage, fraud, violating campaign finance law	Aug 1991	Financial
CIA Scandal Masri	Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Otto Schily	Lying to the public	May 2004	Political
Cicero Affair	Otto Schily	Violation of press freedom	Sep 2005	Political
Cleaning Lady Affair	Heidi Knake-Werner	Illegal employment	Sep 2000	Financial

Name of scandal	Accused politician	Type of transgression	Start of transgression	Type of scandal
Communism Affair	Gesine Löttsch	Verbal statement	Jan 2011	Other
Consultancy Agreement Affair	Sigmar Gabriel	Hiring external consultants	Nov 2005	Political
Crystal Meth Affair	Michael Hartmann	Drug usage	Oct 2013	Other
Data Privacy Scandal German Railway	Wolfgang Tiefensee	Failure of duty	1998	Political
Diesel Particulate Filter Scandal	Sigmar Gabriel	Failure of duty	Aug 2006	Political
Dioxin Scandal	Ilse Aigner	Failure of duty	Jan 2011	Political
Draft Bill Affair	Marco Buschmann, Stephan Harbarth	Lobbying	n.s.	Political
Drone Affair	Thomas de Maiziére	Failure of duty, lying to the public	Jan 2007	Political
Executive Jet Affair	Oskar Lafontaine	Lying to the public, ordering a executive jet	Aug 2005	Financial
Federal Police Scandal	Hans-Peter Friedrich	Disputable dismissal	2009	Political
Fee Affair	Peer Steinbrück	Non-transparent lecture fees	Nov 2011	Financial
Fish Affair	Renate Künast	Breach of norm	Aug 2009	Other
Flight Affair	Sigmar Gabriel	Tax misspending	Aug 2007	Financial
Floorplan New BND Building	Peter Ramsauer	Failure of duty	Jul 2011	Political
German Railway Bonus	Wolfgang Tiefensee	Failure of duty	Jun 2008	Political
Gorch Fock Affair	Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg	Failure of duty	2003	Political
Gorleben Report	Helmut Kohl	Manipulation of report	May 1983	Political
Hitler Putin Scandal	Wolfgang Schäuble	Verbal statement	Mar 2014	Other
Homosexual Affair	Holger Apfel	Sexual harassment	Aug 2013	Sex
HRE Scandal	Wolfgang Schäuble	Failure of duty	Sep 2011	Political
Kunduz Affair	Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg, Franz Josef Jung	Failure of duty	Sep 2009	Political

Name of scandal	Accused politician	Type of transgression	Start of transgression	Type of scandal
Letterhead Affair	Peer Steinbrück	Abuse of official seal	Apr 2006	Financial
Lie Affair	Bela Anda	Defamation, embezzlement	Feb 2002	Other
Moratorium On Nuclear Energy	Rainer Brüderle	Verbal statement	Mar 2011	Political
NPD Financial Affair	Erwin Kemna	Embezzlement	2004	Financial
NSA Affair	Angela Merkel, Hans-Peter Friedrich, Frank-Walter Steinmeier	Failure of duty	Apr 2002	Political
Nuclear Attack	Wolfgang Schäuble	Verbal statement	Sep 2007	Political
Official Car Affair Clement	Wolfgang Clement	Tax evasion	2003	Financial
Official Car Affair Schmidt	Ulla Schmidt	Private use of official car	Jul 2004	Financial
Olympia Affair	Wolfgang Tiefensee	Defamation	Jan 2003	Political
Panama Scandal	Helmut Linssen	Tax evasion	Aug 1997	Financial
Pedophilia Affair	Jürgen Trittin, Sina Doughan	Breach of norm	1981	Political
Porno Tweets	Johannes Kahrs	Breach of norm	Apr 2009	Other
PR Affair	Michael Glos	Failure of duty	Jul 2007	Political
Rot Off Scandal	Ulrike Nissen	Verbal offense	Dec 2008	Other
Secret Police Affair	Gregor Gysi	Failure of duty	Oct 1979	Other
Secret Police Scandal	Roland Claus	Failure of duty	May 1976	Other
Shredder Affair	Heinz Fromm	Failure of duty	Jun 2012	Political
Skull Affair	Franz Josef Jung	Breach of norm	Mar 2004	Political
Sponsorship Young Union	Kristina Schröder	Favoritism	Nov 2010	Political
Spy Affair BND	Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Wolfgang Schäuble, Bernd Schmidbauer, Thomas de Maiziére	Violation of press freedom	Jan 2005	Political

Name of scandal	Accused politician	Type of transgression	Start of transgression	Type of scandal
Talkshow Scandal	Oskar Lafontaine	Verbal statement	Jun 2008	Other
Tax Data Scandal BND	Peer Steinbrück	Failure of duty	Jan 2006	Political
Terrorism Accusation	Oskar Lafontaine	Verbal statement	May 2007	Other
Toilet Affair	Inge Höger, Annette Groth	Breach of norm	Nov 2014	Other
Travel Costs Affair	Klaus Ernst	Fraud	2007	Financial
Twitter Affair	Julia Klöckner, Ulrich Kelber	Violation of protocol	May 2009	Political
Visa Affair	Joschka Fischer, Ludger Volmer	Failure of duty	Mar 2000	Political
Volkswagen Affair	Hans-Jürgen Uhl, Günter Lenz, Sigmar Gabriel	Accessory to embezzlement, perjury	Mar 1994	Sex
Whistle-Blower Scandal	Helmut Metzner, Guido Westerwelle	Betrayal of secrets	Jul 2007	Political
Wire Affair	Wolfgang Thierse	Failure of duty	2004	Political
Yukos Affair	Gerhard Schröder	Verbal statement	Jul 2004	Political

Notes: The table lists all transgressions leading to scandal coverage between 2005 and 2014, if the accused is a national-level politician. The 71 scandals listed in the table were identified from the 794 news reports that we retrieved from the DIGAS database. The start date of the transgressions is the earliest point in time the public could possibly have knowledge about the misbehavior and thus the possibility of the case being covered.

Table A3: Scandal coverage and the election cycle (alternative functional forms of the election cycle variable)

	(1) All scandals	(2) All scandals	(3) All scandals
Election cycle -squared	0.000313*** (0.0000995)		
-third polynomial		0.00000686*** (0.00000215)	
-logarithmic			0.196** (0.0943)
Government popularity	-0.0124 (0.119)	0.0255 (0.116)	-0.0649 (0.132)
Number of criminal investigations	0.143* (0.0767)	0.138* (0.0767)	0.176** (0.0755)
Number of simultaneously covered scandals	0.447*** (0.0413)	0.452*** (0.0416)	0.430*** (0.0448)

Notes: Dependent variable: number of articles. Negative binomial estimates, based on 720 observations (6 newspapers, 120 months between January 2005 and December 2014). All models include a constant, as well as newspaper, government, and month fixed effects. Heteroscedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses.

* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Table A4: Scandal coverage and the election cycle (different outcome variables)

	(1) All scandals, number of characters	(2) All scandals, number of front- page articles	(3) All scandals, only articles with a photo	(4) All scandals, only articles without a photo
Election cycle	0.0189** (0.00789)	0.0324*** (0.0119)	0.0126 (0.00821)	0.0167*** (0.00586)
Government popularity	-0.0385 (0.224)	-0.369 (0.273)	0.00918 (0.178)	-0.129 (0.143)
Number of criminal investigations	0.167* (0.0995)	-0.150 (0.198)	0.0696 (0.120)	0.189** (0.0836)
Number of simultaneously covered scandals	0.827*** (0.115)	0.435*** (0.0858)	0.356*** (0.0695)	0.422*** (0.0443)

Notes: The column headers denote the dependent variable. Negative binomial estimates, based on 720 observations (6 newspapers, 120 months between January 2005 and December 2014). All models include a constant, as well as newspaper, government, and month fixed effects. Heteroscedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses.

* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Table A5: Scandal coverage and the election cycle (excluding outliers)

	(2) All scandals (excluding the two most severe outliers in coverage)	(1) All scandals (excluding the most severe outlier in coverage)
Election cycle	0.0133** (0.00526)	0.0136*** (0.00524)
Government popularity	-0.0256 (0.122)	-0.0227 (0.122)
Number of criminal investigations	0.176** (0.0759)	0.169** (0.0760)
Number of simultaneously covered scandals	0.436*** (0.0416)	0.432*** (0.0413)
Observations	718	719

Notes: Dependent variable: number of articles. Negative binomial estimates. All models include a constant, as well as newspaper, government, and month fixed effects. Heteroscedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses.

* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Table A6: Scandal coverage and the election cycle (using only full election cycles)

	(1) All scandals	(2) Government scandals	(3) Opposition scandals
Election cycle	0.0187*** (0.00639)	0.0247*** (0.00715)	-0.0234 (0.0200)
Government popularity	-0.170 (0.149)	-0.291* (0.161)	0.930** (0.470)
Number of criminal investigations	0.173* (0.102)	0.192 (0.120)	0.104 (0.200)
Number of simultaneously covered scandals	0.453*** (0.0554)	0.462*** (0.0603)	0.443*** (0.132)

Notes: Dependent variable: number of articles. Negative binomial estimates, based on 576 observations (6 newspapers, 96 months between October 2005 and September 2013). All models include a constant, as well as newspaper, government, and month fixed effects. Heteroscedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses.

* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Table A7: Scandal coverage and the election cycle (Poisson autoregression estimates)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	All scandals	All scandals	All scandals
Election cycle	0.0105*** (0.0040)	0.0090** (0.0046)	0.0090* (0.0047)
Government popularity	-0.0584 (0.0852)	-0.0682 (0.0948)	-0.0725 (0.0961)
Number of criminal investigations	0.0273 (0.0825)	0.0302 (0.0937)	0.0252 (0.0958)
Number of simultaneously covered scandals	0.4152*** (0.0523)	0.4260*** (0.0583)	0.4319*** (0.0601)
Rho (1)	0.2198*** (0.0403)	0.1928*** (0.0401)	0.1827*** (0.0412)
Rho (2)		0.1152*** (0.0335)	0.1021*** (0.0355)
Rho (3)			0.0338 (0.0314)
Log likelihood	-884.332	-874.727	-872.780
AIC	1814.663	1797.453	1795.560
Observations	714	708	702

Notes: Dependent variable: number of articles. The table shows the results of Poisson Autoregression Models, as developed by Brandt and Williams (2001), using R code available from Patrick Brandt's website (<http://www.utdallas.edu/~pbrandt/code--software.html>). The models use 6 newspapers and up to 120 months between January 2005 and December 2014. All regressions include a constant, as well as newspaper, government, and month fixed effects. The Rho's denote lagged values of the monthly number of articles. Standard errors in parentheses.

* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

Table A8: Scandal coverage and the election cycle (dynamic panel-data estimates)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	All scandals	All scandals	All scandals
Election cycle	0.0161*** (0.00613)	0.0131** (0.00557)	0.0130** (0.00565)
Government popularity	-0.235 (0.153)	-0.258* (0.139)	-0.241* (0.142)
Number of criminal investigations	0.130 (0.101)	0.156* (0.0918)	0.130 (0.0939)
Number of simultaneously covered scandals	0.340*** (0.0651)	0.399*** (0.0592)	0.397*** (0.0601)
Lag 1 (number of articles)	0.215*** (0.0328)	0.273*** (0.0307)	0.312*** (0.0367)
Lag 2 (number of articles)		-0.0399 (0.0305)	-0.0405 (0.0328)
Lag 3 (number of articles)			-0.0628** (0.0311)
Observations	708	702	696

Notes: Dependent variable: number of articles. Arellano-Bond linear dynamic panel-data estimates, based on 6 newspapers and up to 120 months between January 2005 and December 2014. All models include a constant, as well as newspaper, government, and month fixed effects. Heteroscedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses.
 * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Table A9: Scandal coverage and the election cycle (by newspaper)

	(1) <i>Bild</i>	(2) <i>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</i>	(3) <i>Handelsblatt</i>	(4) <i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i>	(5) <i>Die Tageszeitung</i>	(6) <i>Die Welt</i>
Election cycle	0.0483*** (0.0167)	-0.00213 (0.0120)	0.00146 (0.0129)	0.0242* (0.0123)	0.0263** (0.0105)	-0.00139 (0.00977)
Government popularity	-0.143 (0.391)	0.0524 (0.326)	0.0175 (0.329)	-0.242 (0.258)	-0.0564 (0.263)	-0.0422 (0.251)
Number of criminal investigations	0.114 (0.154)	-0.00463 (0.213)	0.0915 (0.174)	0.0384 (0.231)	0.206 (0.126)	0.291* (0.158)
Number of simultaneously covered scandals	0.313*** (0.105)	0.549*** (0.108)	0.644*** (0.133)	0.432*** (0.107)	0.465*** (0.0967)	0.404*** (0.0932)

Notes: Dependent variable: number of articles. Negative binomial estimates, based on 120 observations. All models include a constant, as well as government and month fixed effects. Heteroscedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses.

* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

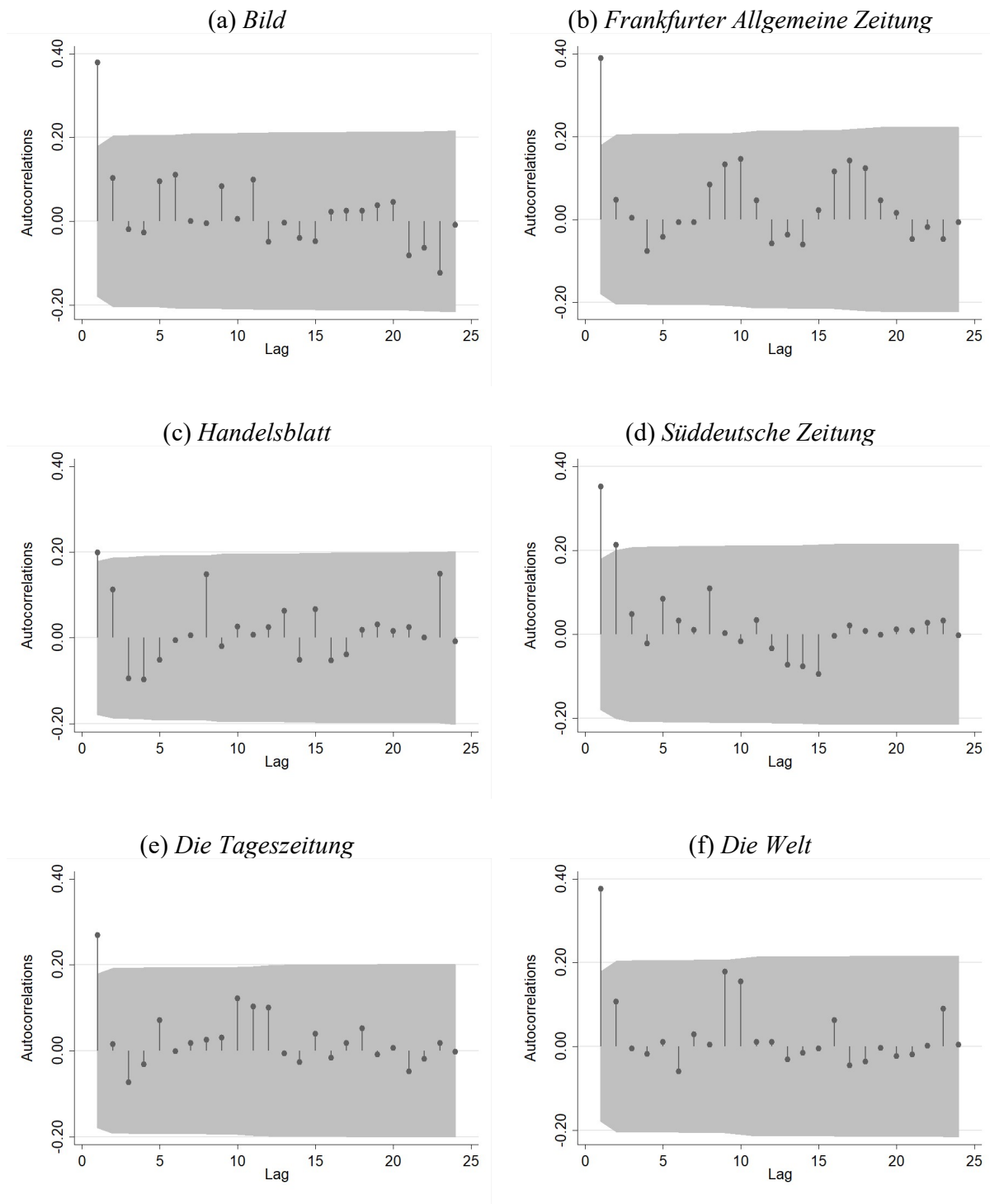
Table A10: Scandal coverage and the election cycle (by type of scandal)

	(1) Financial scandals	(2) Political scandals	(3) Sex scandals	(4) Other scandals
Election cycle	0.0811*** (0.0201)	-0.00284 (0.00804)	-0.0257** (0.0129)	0.0310* (0.0163)
Government popularity	-0.767* (0.438)	0.209 (0.213)	0.466 (0.383)	-1.182*** (0.381)
Number of criminal investigations	0.170 (0.120)	-0.316* (0.191)	0.562*** (0.158)	0.243 (0.164)
Number of simultaneously covered scandals	0.136 (0.0926)	0.601*** (0.0717)	0.383*** (0.125)	0.701*** (0.126)

Notes: Dependent variable: number of articles. Negative binomial estimates, based on 720 observations (6 newspapers, 120 months between January 2005 and December 2014). All models include a constant, as well as newspaper, government, and month fixed effects. We follow Hamel and Miller (2018) and Pereira and Waterbury (2018) and use four categories to determine the type of the scandal: Financial scandals refer to monetary crimes that involve personal enrichment (e.g., tax evasion, corruption, illegal gifts). Political scandals pertain to allegations of professional misconduct without personal enrichment (e.g., election fraud, misuse of campaign funds). Sex scandals involve, for instance, sexual harassment, extramarital affairs, and pedophilia. Other scandals refer to transgressions that do not fit in the other categories, including drug abuse, plagiarism, lying about the professional background, or false statements. Heteroscedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses.

* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Figure A1: Autocorrelation functions of the monthly number of articles



Notes: The shaded areas represent the 95% confidence interval.