Chapter 1[i]

'It is the public scandal that offends; to sin in secret is no sin at all'.

Moliere

Media and Scandal

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Scandals are prime case studies to observe and understand current dynamics in news and public communication. Scandals are rich with communication processes: multidirectional information flows, different types of public reactions to revelations, responses by individuals and social institutions accused of wrongdoing, and the mobilization of specific narratives to demand accountability. Just as they illustrate media practices as well as social and political trends, they are rich moments to apply and refine the analytical toolkit: concepts, arguments, and theories. Not surprisingly, the study of scandals sits at the convergence of several lines of inquiry in communication studies, as the thematic foci and the analytical scaffolding of the chapters suggest.

Our interest in media and scandal spans many years. Fifteen years ago, we edited a two-volume special issue of *American Behavioral Scientist* devoted to political scandals and media across democracies (Tumber and Waisbord 2004a; 2004b). At that time, although we acknowledged 'how technological innovations contributed to tuning politics into common features of contemporary democracies' (Tumber and Waisbord 2004a, 1147) such as 24 hour cable news and internet news services, we could not envisage the media changes that have emerged since that time.

Scandals are generally started by news reporting about behaviors and statements by individuals and institutions that violate laws and transgress moral principles (Lull and Hinerman 1997). Public reaction, political processes, and legal and parliamentary investigations generally follow initial revelations. Affected individuals and institutions generally react to defend their interests, reputation, and social standing. Scandalous refers to both the kind of news revelations about illegal or unethical behavior as well as social reactions to exposés. Scandals and mediated scandals are oftentimes used indistinctively. The reason is that mediated forms of

communication are central to scandals (Allern and Pollack 2012). It is hard to imagine that scandals exist as such without news coverage. Media attention provides the oxygen of scandals.

While the media play critical roles, scandals come about as the result of actions by multiple actors. The politics of information disclosure that spark scandals involve sources, whistleblowers, investigators, government agencies and officials, corporations, activists, and civic society organizations and journalists (Alford 2001; Calland and Dehn 2004; Dworkin and Baucus 1998; Hunt 1995; Lewis 2004; Liebes and Blum-Kulka 2004; van Es and Smit 2003; Wahl-Jorgensen and Hunt 2012). In addition, a plethora of actors take part in scandals in subsequent phases: responses by accused parties, public reaction, further investigations, legal and political processes, and public inquiries. They become involved in scandals for various reasons including the pursuit of particular interests, the compliance with due process, the defense of personal and business reputation, and the advancement of institutional agendas.

Consider why news organizations break scandalous information. Although it is hard to generalize, a mix of market, editorial, and journalistic considerations underpin decisions to reveal wrongdoing. Exposés can potentially bolster the credentials of the press as a public watchdog, bring audience attention (and ratings and digital traffic), and reinforce the partisan/ideological positions of news organizations. Scandalous information, especially if related to prominent newsmakers, fit standard news values of conflict, bad news, sensationalism, and elite-driven and centered information. Whereas some news organizations generally follow public journalistic ethics in the pursuit of potentially scandalous information, others engage in dubious newsgathering practices such as deception and privacy invasion to "get the story". In some cases, the use of questionable practices turn the media into the focus of scandals and throw into question journalism's self-defined role as ethical crusader. The phone hacking case in the UK is a prime example of this (Davies 2014; Freedman 2012; Mawby 2016). When press exposés are motivated primarily by commercial goals and specific partisan causes, news organizations become complicit in opaque media politics.

Scandals spur debates about central issues that define social and political life: legality, morality, ethics, inequity, and the behavior of powerful individuals and institutions. Scandals reveal something more than corruption and wrongdoing. They lay bare the ways societies define acceptable behaviors and norms, and how different publics struggle to define and impose laws

and social expectations (Thompson 2000). The literature on morality and moral panics, for example, indicates the degree to which transgression is inextricably linked with mediated scandal (Cohen 1972; Cohen 2011; Critcher 2011; Flinders 2012; Gamson 2001; Garland 2008; Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994; Hatier 2012; Hier et al. 2011; Hunt 1997; McRobbie and Thornton 1995; Pearce and Charman 2011; Young 2011). No matter if they happen in politics, business, sports, science, religion and other social sectors, scandals pry open gaps between expected and actual behaviors. This is why virtually no social realm is exempt from scandals. What is at the center of scandals are the violations of laws and social expectations regarding a range of issues including political, corporate, financial, workplace relations, sexual identity, gender roles. Scandals bring to the fore actions that contradict common assumptions about proper, moral behaviors and statements.

Scandal-saturated societies

Scandals have become frequent, central aspects of contemporary societies. They take place in countries with different political histories, legal traditions, journalistic traditions, and media systems. Certainly, important differences remain. Democracies seem more prone to scandal politics than autocracies. The basic reason is that democracies offer more propitious conditions for publicizing illegal and improper behaviors. Tolerance for public expression and dissent, protection for investigative reporting, public access to government information, and moderate media diversity are fundamental conditions for scandals. We would generally still agree with Markovits and Silverstein's (1988) claim that political scandals can happen only in liberal democracies (Castells 1997). 'Scandals put in evidence the demand for accountability that only democracies, unlike dictatorial regimes, can deliver. Democracy's very essence is to provide institutional mechanisms to check state politics' (Tumber and Waisbord 2004a, 1035).

Another important difference is the kinds of behaviors that are likely to be the subject of revelations and scandals. Whereas revelations about sexual indiscretions and predatory behaviors by powerful men spark scandals in some countries, they fail to cause major uproars elsewhere. Although exposés about illegal corporate behaviors turn into major scandals in some cases, similar revelations fade without much impact in other cases. Two points can be made here. First, differences in the way scandals are treated and received occur not only between democracies and autocracies but also between different democracies. This can be due to differences in political

systems, and media systems, and also cultural differences. Second, in democracies, corporate scandals involving multinational companies can emerge and evolve in many countries. An example is the Volkswagen emissions scandal. But the manner in which it was dealt with by legal processes varied considerably by country.

What accounts for the frequency and pervasiveness of scandals? Although scandals are the result of multiple factors, ongoing transformations in public communication are largely responsible for why scandals are common features of contemporary societies. Certainly, political issues play critical roles: the extent of corrupt behavior, the quality of governance, splits and rivalries within administrations, and the intensity of partisan politics are major causes of scandals. Legal factors are important, too. Certain laws favor (or discourage) press revelations and judicial processes. Just as laws that protect whistleblowers and ensure public access to information support press reporting of wrongdoing, libel laws and corrupt judicial systems have the opposite effect as they stifle news investigations and due process (Calland and Dehn 2004).

While we recognize that scandals are not monocausal, our interest is to underscore that the recurrence of scandals has happened alongside unprecedented transformations in the media and the overall conditions for mass publicity.

The constant succession of scandals is the symptom of the mediatization of politics. The spread of particular characteristics of media cultures and industries, the so-called "media logic," into politics has laid down conditions that favor scandals. As the media has become central to various aspects of politics, notably campaigning and governing, particular attributes of the media influence political dynamics. Central trends in media industries, particularly commercialization and tabloidization, till the ground for scandals, as they favor news values such as drama, conflict, novelty, personalities, and negativity. Generally, scandals packed with more conventional news values are more likely to remain newsworthy. Likewise, the mediatization of other social sectors, such as business, religion, sports, and education, also puts in place conditions that favor scandals.

The personalization of news fuels scandals, too. It steers press coverage to focus on individual transgressions particularly committed by newsmakers and people in powerful positions. In the case of political scandals whether sex or corruption, the causal relationship is not straightforward – whether the news media exacerbate personalization or deep-seated political personalism drives

the process (Apostolidis and Williams 2004; Basinger and Rottinghaus 2012; Entman 2012; Garrard and Nowell 2006; Marion 2010; Sabato, Stencel and Lichter 2000).

A common and justifiable lament in the literature is that scandals overwhelmingly focus on flawed, high-profile personalities who defy moral expectations and/or violate laws rather than on structural forces that allow, foster, and condone transgressions. Scandals create huge public commotion as measured by media attention focused on transgressors - public officials, prominent corporate leaders, entertainment celebrities and other individuals who hold visible positions. Yet what generally attracts large media and public attention are individual peccadillos rather than systemic, social problems – corruption, wrongdoing, racism, violence, sexism, corporate abuses. Media narratives accentuate this problem, as they tend to offer simplified stories about heroes and villains instead of deeper examination of social problems that precede and typically remain after specific scandalous behaviors are reported.

An alternative, more benevolent position is that even if news narratives focus on individuals, they can be valuable storytelling resources, if capably used, to put the spotlight on structural problems. The focus on personal transgressions does not exclude the possibility that media stories can expose broader social ills as when individual cases are used as devices to tell bigger stories, foster empathy with victims, and understand the cause of specific social problems. Likewise, the focus on individual transgressions may be prevalent, but it is not similar across scandals. Case studies show that, at times, the news media used individual cases to highlight deeper problems. So, stories focused on sexual abuses by well-known men may also reveal structural misogyny. Child abuse scandals may reveal institutional fault lines (Greer and McLaughlin 2013). News on fraud committed by prominent business executives may expose broad patterns of corporate transgressions, too. Similarly, expose of the pay, perks and extravagant lifestyles of high profile executives can lead to similar corporate revelations. An example of this was the focus on Fred Goodwin, the chief executive of the Royal Bank of Scotland at the height of the 2007/8 financial crisis. 'Scumbag millionaire' as he and other directors were labeled by the UK's *The Sun* newspaper in 2007.

Scandals in the digital society

Another important aspect of scandals are the complex, multilayered dynamics brought about by the digital revolution. A copious literature has documented the ways the digital

revolution has rapidly transformed news and public communication. The proliferation of digital platforms has radically altered the news ecology, including information flows, journalistic practices, and the conditions and the tactics for gaining public visibility. Not surprisingly, such transformations have affected the dynamics of scandals. As conditions for public communication change, scandals as publicized wrongdoing change too (Mandell and Chen 2017; Demirhan and Çakır-Demirhan 2016).

Consequently, the meaning of "mediated scandals" has changed. Contemporary mediated scandals feature actions, dynamics, and interests of multiple actors with various interests in publicizing corruption and responding to initial revelations. If scandals are revealed wrongdoing, the acts of disclosing illegal and immoral behaviors are not limited to the traditional press. Various actors now participate as they feed tips and information to reporters and members of Parliament, amplify press denunciations in social media, and document wrongdoing by collecting and analyzing data. Citizen journalists and activists leak information, publish reports, disseminate commentary, spread rumors, and follow up investigations.

Potential leakers interested in weaponizing information can utilize various platforms to make revelations; they are not limited, as in the past, to passing secrets to traditional newsrooms. Also, myriad actors collect and dissect information that may be utilized to produce scandalous revelations and damage reputations, such as intelligence agencies, freelance operatives and consultants, and a new crop of investigative sites.

The proliferation of actors that participate in scandals brings in different considerations and motivations. Non-journalism actors are not mindful of conventional news values or standard journalistic ethics. Social media companies are not regulated by the same set of calculations and ethical considerations of journalistic organizations. They allow the publication of scandalous information that legacy media were generally uninterested or reluctant to publish because it did not conform to editorial positions, journalistic ethics, and legal scrutiny. Also, platforms that do not subscribe to public journalistic ethics are able to publish information that traditional newsrooms generally approached gingerly, such as salacious details, uncorroborated claims, and demonstrated falsehood.

Citizens now have the unprecedented ability to participate in scandals in many ways. They engage with news in multiple ways, actively taking part in the intense information flows

that characterize scandals through social media, blogs, texting, and other digital spaces. They contact politicians and reporters with potentially damaging information. They comment, curate, and scrutinize press revelations. They willingly spread revelations and unwillingly help to disseminate false information. They record testimonies from key players and produce original reporting.

Organized groups and citizens can break news with damaging revelations, surreptitiously record compromising evidence, and distribute information widely. “Citizen witnessing” (Allan 2013) contributes to scandals by bringing up information, collaborating with established news organizations, sharing personal stories, and checking revelations. Citizens use social media to take more active roles such as spreading news, keeping information atop daily news feeds, sustaining attention, and fact-checking investigations and reactions. Twitter hashtags serve as popular identifiers to articulate demands for information and justice as well as commentary and discussions.

The participation of myriad actors through a range of media platforms has altered the dynamics of scandals in important ways. In the past, the legacy media wielded unmatched power as news gatekeepers. They held a dominant position in decisions about what revelations to publish and to catapult to the top of the news agenda. Persistent media attention was critical to maintain public interest and to cover reactions by political and judicial institutions to press revelations.

No doubt, legacy media remain important in breaking scandalous news and further documenting wrongdoing. They published revelations that started prominent scandals in recent years. They are not the only gatekeepers, however, in the contemporary information ecology. As myriad actors take part, the dynamics of scandal gatekeeping are more complex and fluid than in the past. The unfolding of scandals has become far more unpredictable. The pace and the content of scandals can rapidly, unexpectedly shift as a slew of actors may potentially introduce revelations and make information viral. In this context, scandal management is not what it used to be. Individuals and institutions implicated in scandals confront a more chaotic information ecology to control messages and provide tight, well-organized responses. New damaging information can surface beyond traditional outlets.

The digital revolution also brought about new ways of finding, processing, and reporting sensitive information with scandalous potential. Journalists and citizens explore digital data to reveal wrongdoing and setup collaborative platforms. As digital footprints can be traced and reconstructed, professional and citizen reporters can scrutinize individuals and institutions to shed light on their political and financial records, behaviors, and statements. Collaborations that dug up valuable insights about people in power suggest the democratic potential of "open data" and participatory mechanisms to bring further transparency and accountability.

The emergence of new types of actors determined to unearth secrets and hold powerful actors to account is evident in high-profile scandals. Both the Snowden/NSA revelations as well as stories involving government and corporate corruption originally broke by Wikileaks attest to these changes (Brevini, Hintz and McCurdy 2013; Leigh and Harding 2011; Quinn 2011). Just as new whistleblowers and platforms introduce important innovations as they reveal state and corporate secrets, the uncontrolled power of state agencies and digital giants tramp on fundamental democratic rights.

Just as it may bring positive consequences, the spreading of scandalous information outside traditional journalism introduces new challenges. This is notably exemplified by the phenomenon of fake news. Unverified and false information finds its way to the public. Rogue actors can disseminate information disguised in conventional news styles to deliberately misinform the public and thereby damage the reputation of individuals and institutions.

Yet the growing news-making power of non-traditional platforms and organizations does not mean that they are on equal footing with legacy news in terms of the power to turn revelations into full-blown, long scandals. Continuous attention by leading, established news organizations and digital platforms with large followings is necessary for sparking and fueling scandals. Leading news organizations are more likely to have resources, expertise, and social prominence to bring up original information and continue with investigations.

Scandals and globalization in the network society

The globalization of three forces is also important in understanding the dynamics of contemporary scandals, namely: corruption, information gathering and leaking, and networked journalism.

Several scandals in recent years, such as the Panama Papers, the Lava Jato in Brazil and other countries in Latin America, and the 2016 election campaign in the United States, exposed new forms of global corruption, such as sophisticated schemes for money laundering and tax evasion, illegal financing of election campaigns, and cash-for-access dealings between corporations and political elites, globalization of corrupt practices involving legal and illegitimate business as well as political elites. Vast networks of corruption span the world, aided by the global expansion of the economy, various forms of illegal trade, and financial networks. Global tax avoidance schemes cater to an international clientele of wealthy individuals and corporations. The globalization of industries, such as extractive resources and construction, where corruption is notorious particularly in countries without a strong rule of law, lays out conditions for scandals. Global companies have colluded with local governments and elites to secure access to contracts, valuable natural resources, and markets. In turn, political elites have sought to benefit from global flows of money and investments by seeking personal financial gain and campaign funds.

The second component of global scandals is the presence of an array of actors interested in collecting and strategically disclosing information about illegal acts to damage the reputations of corporations, politicians and transnational institutions. Scandals revealed the machinations of international networks of politicians, corporations, banks, intelligence services, and civic institutions. The scandal about Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election in the United States is one of the better-known examples about the complicity of global and domestic forces in illegal activities to favor certain candidates. Dossiers by rogue spies and consultants that were published by news organizations reveal global intrigues to influence electoral politics.

A third factor behind global scandals is the emergence of cross-border information networks that revealed transnational shady dealings involving governments, corporations, and banks. In the past years, transnational news organizations, investigative journalists' networks, and data-dumping sites documented corrupt practices and broke stunning stories. These networks include news organizations, funders, NGOs, citizens, media companies, technical agencies, and lawyers. Both the "Panama Papers" and the "Paradise Papers" are the most distinctive examples of the workings of cross-border networks interested in uncovering cases of global corruption. In

both cases, legacy news organizations had a central role coordinating investigations, sharing data, and publishing exposés.

A new type of news sites have contributed to scandals by dumping sensitive information about corruption and wrongdoing. The best-known example is Wikileaks, which had central roles, most notably, during the Snowden/NSA revelations as well as the 2016 presidential election in the United States. While the former case brought it admiration from the radical left, leaking information on Hillary Clinton earned Wikileaks favorable mentions by then-candidate Donald Trump. Its trajectory from embracing pseudo-anarchist, anti-state leftist politics to getting accolades from right-wing politicians attest to the murky, shifting position of Wikileaks in global scandals (Halpern 2017).

Altogether, the mix of global networks of corruption, information gathering, and reporting have contributed to a series of international and national scandals around the world.

The consequences of scandals

A final subject of analysis is the consequences of scandals. Much has been said about this topic, but there are few categorical conclusions. Just as it is difficult to predict exactly the dynamics of scandals, it is equally challenging to assess the impact of scandals on society and politics.

Views differ on the consequences of political scandals. Whereas some scholars believe scandals bring about positive consequences both in the short and long term, others remain skeptical. The first position claims that scandals contribute to democracy by putting the spotlight on a host of problems, prompt the resignations of individuals who committed crimes, and force governments, corporations, and political parties to revisit practices and introduce reforms to tackle the sources of corruption. The second position, instead, is more skeptical even if selected scandals have yielded modestly positive results. Nor do all scandals have similar consequences especially in terms of addressing structural, long-term issues that foster corrupt practices. As scandals constantly come up, “scandal fatigue” settles in and citizens pay limited, distracted attention. In a fragmented media landscape, not all revelations have similar impact and scandalous information does not lead to public demands and actions to uproot wrongdoing.

Reservations about the impact of scandals are warranted. Few scandals have had significant long-term impact in terms of spurring institutional changes and the effective elimination of the causes of wrongdoing. Even if some individuals suffered personal consequences it is hard to point out major, substantive changes that uprooted the deeper problems revealed by scandals – corruption, collusion, human rights violations, structural racism. The downfall of individuals who resigned, were shamed, and/or received legal sentences after scandalous information was revealed may be seen as positive examples of accountability and justice. Yet the punishment of selected individuals was not necessarily followed by sustained, wide-ranging actions to tackle deeper problems. Companies that were responsible for corrupt behaviours suffered little, if any, economic or legal consequences even if some of its members had resigned or were charged with crimes.

There have been some cases though where a company has gone out business or suffered severe economic loss following a scandal. An example of this was an interesting scandal that occurred in the UK in 1991. Gerald Ratner inherited his father's jewellery business in 1984. Within six years he had turned a small retailer into a multimillion-dollar empire. In April 1991 he gave a speech to the Institute of Directors attended by over 6000 business people and journalists. In which he derided his company's sherry decanter as "total cr-p" and explain its earring were "cheaper than an M&S prawn sandwich but probably wouldn't last as long" (Tumber 1993). The now-infamous joke lost him 2,500 shops and his fortune. Another interesting point about this Ratner scandal is how it has been referred to by journalists and used as a kind of metaphor at various times in the past 27 years. The 1991 joke and its consequences were so far reached that a Ratner moment became shorthand for a catastrophic gaffe. Journalists have referred to it numerous times over the last twenty-five years. Two recent examples were in a piece in *The Times* of February 2018 Clair Foges writing about Prime Minister May's indecision over Brexit refers to the previous scandal at the end of her article " But if only she (May) had pushed the crunch point of decision much earlier; rounding her cabinet at chequers in the opening months; ripping of the plaster sooner; abbreviating this national breakdown that all the world has seen. Instead we have had a 20 month *Ratner* moment, a KFC cock-up, a branding disaster" (Foges 2018, 26). Similarly an article also in *The Times* in 2018 had a headline in its business section *'Premier Food chief's 'Ratner moment' leaves a bad taste'*. The article's first

paragraph read ‘The activist shareholder targeting Premier Foods has accused the chairman of the Mr Kipling cakes and Ambrosia custard maker of a “Gerald Ratner” moment for being critical of his own company’s brands’ (Walsh 2018, 53). One begins to wonder though how many readers understand or even recall the link.

Scandal legacies are remembered in other ways as well. When Watergate, the high watermark of scandals, is mentioned, it is often to denote good investigative journalism. And of course ‘gate’ has been added to many other scandals since then.

The impunity of political and economic elites as well as powerful corporations suggest that scandals, even if they attract enormous attention, do not bring about significant consequences. Specific individual sanctions as well as targeted public responses are more likely than broad reforms.

An important issue to consider in the study of the consequences of scandals is that often citizens do not hold consistent and similar views about what constitutes a transgression or what kind of punishment and other actions are necessary. Media revelations generally implicitly assume that certain acts of wrongdoing deserve to be reported because they violate laws as well as certain moral principles. However, at a time of heightened partisanship and political polarization in many countries, public opinion, elites, and the media are divided about the nature, the significance and the adequate response to specific transgressions.

Citizens may not favor news disclosures shedding light or hold certain politicians accountable, or support actions to tackle the sources of corruption as long as they are uninterested in castigating their own party or favoring rival political forces. Motivated reasoning has been a strong moderator of public response to revelations and scandals.

News organizations identified with specific partisan and ideological positions play key roles when public officials of different political parties are embroiled in scandals. They conduct investigations, denounce wrongdoing, and amplify judicial and parliamentary investigations. Conversely, they take different positions when likeminded political elites become the center of scandals. They passionately defend accused individuals and organizations, and minimize attention to the revelations and charges.

Certainly, partisan media have historically tended to cover scandals closely in line with editorial positions, notably in countries with a strong tradition of press organizations affiliated or identified with political parties and other political organizations. However, this situation has become more prominent recently in fragmented media landscapes and fractured media trust. This is noticeable in the United States, where partisan and ideological media have experienced a resurgence in a country where mainstream journalism, bounded by the norms of evenhandedness and detachment, had maintained a dominant position.

Consequently, what qualifies as scandalous information as well as the consequences, vary according to the ideological positions of news organizations. What is scandalous news for journalistic organizations, institutions and citizens on the Right does not generally spark similar reactions on the Left. For example, just as the right-wing media led the reporting of the Oxfam and Save the Children scandals in Britain, its counterpart in the United States downplayed and decried an endless flow of exposés about President Trump and members of his cabinet.

Amid media polarization and strong partisanship, scandals reveal the actions of individuals and organized actors to influence the consequences of scandals by disputing the veracity of original revelations, the motivations of press exposés, the nature and the extent of legal and moral violations, and the appropriate responses.

Divided news coverage as well as public reactions and beliefs about legal and moral wrongdoing challenge an influential line of interpretation of scandals grounded in Durkheimian theory (Alexander 1988). For the latter, scandals are moments of moral and cultural crisis that initially endanger core social values, and subsequently repair the social order when transgressors are punished. In this process, the news media play the role of moral custodians by denouncing transgressions, upholding values, and condemning transgressors. The symbolic and/or legal punishment of individuals and institutions who violated social principles represents the reaffirmation of laws and morals – the institutional anchors of the social order. Therefore, scandals reaffirm the dividing lines between right and wrong. They are powerful reminders of public values; they are moments of conflict and potential social breakdown followed up by stability and order.

Endorsing this line of interpretation *in toto* is fraught with problems to assess the consequences of scandals. Scandals are not necessarily events that trigger widespread moral

panics across societies, shock all citizens in similar ways, reveal threats to core social values, or inevitably lead to social and cultural reaffirmation. Just as the reactions to initial revelations are widely different, the consequences are dissimilar, too.

Scandals magnify social disparities and deep-seated political conflict and polarization rather than reinvigorate social agreements and spark consensus-building dynamics. Scandals represent ongoing conflicts between opposite social forces: tolerance and racism, public interest and corporate greed, transparency and secrecy, women's rights and misogyny, virtuous citizenship and hypocrisy, children's rights and abuses, truth and deception. What some news media and publics find reprehensible legal and moral transgressions, others hardly show any interest, let alone rush to condemn it or demand investigations or punishment. Not all revealed offences spark similar level of media attention or public reaction. Revelations about heinous crimes and abuses may get limited coverage or get lost amid a constant barrage of information and noise.

The dynamics of dozens of scandals offer sufficient evidence to argue that they express and animate various forms of social conflict. They express deep-seated conflicts over laws and morality rather than unified conceptions about virtuous, moral, and legal behaviors. The social, moral and legal sanctioning of transgressors signal the triumph of specific actors and movements pushing for transparency and accountability rather than collective social reaffirmation. Scandals expose social rifts that drive conflict and leave societies equally divided rather than united.

Scandals are propelled by news organizations and other actors (civic associations, social movements, political parties, consumers) interested in holding power accountable. Their actions inevitably meet the reaction and opposition of others firmly set to dismiss revelations, exonerate accused individuals, and take attention away. Because the dynamics and the consequences of scandals are unpredictable and open-ended, it cannot be determined *ex ante* that scandals necessarily foster moral regeneration, solidify public trust, and reaffirm the rule of law. More than the catalyst for legal and moral renewal, scandals condense different visions about "the good society" and competing interests.

Therefore, questions about the consequences of scandals need to be asked differently. Rather than assessing the overall impact of scandals on society and politics, more targeted, nuanced approach is needed to probe the impact of specific aspects of scandals on particular

political and social issues. For example, laws that facilitate access to public information and offer protection of sources and whistleblowers are virtuous instruments to foster more information and transparency about government dealings. Even limited reactions by some publics are positive for they act as reminders about social values. Scandals may contribute to build growing public awareness about accountability and transparency problems. The downfall of disgraced individuals is symbolically powerful to leave public records of different forms of justice and accountability.

Several questions can help to conduct future research on the consequences of scandals. Do good economic times consistently temper the negative spillovers from scandals for governing officials and parties? Does the constant swirl of accusations and firestorms in the current media chaos reduce the agenda-setting power of individual exposés? How can "scandal fatigue" be measured and examined to determine the consequences of specific scandals? Amid media abundance, what is the impact of news framing of specific scandals in public attitudes? Does strong partisanship inevitably weaken the effects of press revelations? Why do certain scandals get sustained news and public attention? What explains the political resilience of scandal-scarred politicians? How do scandals affect media credibility, especially given mixed public views about media performance and strong partisanship?

Conclusions

In summary, scandals are powerful, analytically rich events to understand dynamics and structures in public communication. They lay out struggles over social and moral expectations about virtuous behaviors of powerful individuals and institutions. They illustrate the multiple roles of the news media: Just as some provide valuable public service by documenting wrongdoing and holding powerful elites accountable, others are primarily interested in scandalous information to pursue commercial gains or simply downplay or ignore wrongdoing. They are complex, multileveled instances of mediated politics.

The recurrence of scandals across social sectors and around the world reveal ongoing, monumental changes in the news media and political communication. The rise of networked journalism and the proliferation of digital expression have transformed the causes, development, and consequences of scandals. Scandals are no longer affairs played out by elites. They are not limited to the actions of political and economic elites and news organizations; a range of actors

now intervenes in various ways, for different reasons and with different outcomes. Just as press exposes potentially trigger scandals, scandals may spark forms of collective action against wrongdoing and abuses, demands for justice and social repair as well as backlash actions.

A series of global scandals reveals the consolidation of media and political spaces for reporting cross-border issues, redefining legal and moral boundaries, and transnational citizenship. It also highlights the cooperation between transnational groups of investigative journalists and whistleblowers. However the consequences of the revelations in relation to accountability is more complex. Apart from bilateral extradition treaties, which do not cover all countries, and other policing and legal mechanisms such as the European arrest warrant, the responsibility for police investigation and future regulation to control tax evasion for example, rests mainly with individual states. States who want to attract finance maybe reluctant to introduce measures to control offshore territories whilst other governments may wish to be more draconian in response for popularity and electoral purposes.

Finally, whilst future research on media and scandals will no doubt continue to examine differences in democracies and authoritarian states, media settings and journalistic practices, and case studies, we think that there are three areas that deserve closer scrutiny. The first is for further analysis of the consequences of scandal. How for example do the media operate during episodes of prolonged scandal (Tumber 2004, 1135)? As Castells commented 'the strategy in scandal politics does not necessarily aim at an instant blow on the basis of one scandal' (1997, 338). Despite these questions being asked some twenty years ago little interdisciplinary focus has been brought to bear on the analysis of consequences from political science, law, social psychology and business. The second is for a continuation of recent work on the way social media works in exposing and debating scandal. This relatively new phenomena has changed the nature of scandal revelations as we have outlined above. The third is for building a body of work on scandal and social theory. Whilst research has pinpointed key concepts in news and journalism in mediated scandal, little work, apart from that on Emile Durkheim, has explored the canon for understanding scandal.

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[i] In this chapter we do not make references to other chapters in the Companion. Instead these are referred to in the introduction to media and scandal see page xxx)