"That Stinks": News Framing of a Corruption Scandal

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Abstract

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Whereas political scandals expose the corrupt nature of a society's public affairs, media play a central role in publicizing a scandal and influencing public opinion. The summer 2015 garbage management scandal in Lebanon offers a news coverage case of a corruption scandal and its public reaction. While the Lebanese media outlets heavily covered an event that triggered a nationwide anti-corruption movement named "You Stink", questions arise on the movement and its underlying scandal's framing. Examining such an event's framing offers insights into frame construction of corruption scandals. Drawing from the concepts of news framing, political scandals, and disgust, this research project examines a newspaper's framing characterization of the garbage scandal. A content analysis of 57 images was conducted over the first two weeks of reporting on the scandal from Lebanon's second most circulated newspaper. Research findings offer insights on the pre-movement conditions laid out by the newspaper, opening the door for future research into the Lebanese news media framing of corruption scandals and their role in influencing public reaction.

Acknowledgements and Dedication

There are many reasons why I am generally interested in corruption studies. Perhaps, what motivates most is seeing how much suffering corruption causes to its victims. In Lebanon, absence of rule of law—under which corruption thrives—produces countless victims. The majority are ordinary citizens trying to make ends meet: from those who died or were injured from the absence of impunity to the bystanders of political rivalries. We hear of their stories when they are so outrageous as to become news headlines and talks of the town. This research project is part of a personal lifelong goal to better understand the phenomenon that is corruption and how it impacts people, so that we can collectively come up with solutions that help in not producing victims, however that may be.

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Section 1: Introduction

A Google search of corruption stories in Lebanon produces thousands of results. Too common are the stories about the one who committed a wrongdoing without punishment due to political protection, the one who paid a bribery to obtain a license, or the corporation with close links to a politician that just won a public tender. In the summer of 2015, a political scandal erupted over the government's failure to address the garbage management crisis (referred to in this paper as the garbage scandal) that had recently hit the country. With political disputes among prominent politicians over the profitable state's garbage management contract emerging as the crisis' main cause, the scandal unveiled the resentment that many Lebanese hold towards the government and the political elite's perceived corruption (Kraidy, 2016).[1] Public reaction to this scandal was noticeable as a full-fledged activist-led anti-corruption movement, طلعت ريحتكم "You Stink", emerged following months of protests and the culmination of public discontent (Beck, 2015). On television sets, in newspapers, and on social media platforms, the Lebanese saw their co-citizens objecting to the government's failure in addressing the issue.

But, while many Lebanese agree that corruption levels are high in the country and that the issue needs to be addressed, the scandal's media portrayal revealed the complex relationship the Lebanese have with corruption. In the year before the garbage scandal erupted, the public was consumed with two other corruption scandals: the food safety scandal in November 2014 and the Internal Security Forces fuel scandal in December 2014.[2] Both the food safety and the garbage scandals conveyed emotions of disgust: images of rotten food and of garbage that exhibit disgust widely circulated in the media. Disgust also took on a moral valence since the Lebanese did not shy away from conveying their repulsion at political corruption in their protest chants, in the signs they carried, or in the statuses they wrote or shared on social media. The

periodic outbreak of scandals involving private interests intruding on the public sphere makes their examination persistently relevant. More so, since academic literature on scandals is limited in the country. Sources of information on the topic are mostly composed of news pieces.

Among the many questions explored in social movements theory is the question of how political scandals transform into social movements. While being an important question, this research project is not just an examination of the "You Stink" movement—an explanation of the movement's emergence is presented in the background section—but rather an examination of how the media covered and framed the movement's underlying scandal. As such, this research project subscribes to the subfield of media framing, and whether framing has the ability to generate mobilization. As a powerful communication tool, the media have the ability to frame political stories in a particular way for the general audience (who are also the citizens). The press specifically has the ability to influence public discourse in its capacity as gatekeeper of public information.

If creating a strong and responsible media is a policy goal for active public participation on holding governments accountable (Nabli & Humphreys, 2003), achieving this goal requires an understanding of the local media's coverage and framing of political stories. In fact, what journalists choose to communicate and the way they define a story matters (Adut, 2008). Previous research demonstrated the importance of studying the media's framing of corruption stories as it has implications on anti-corruption efforts. For example, Kramer (2013) found that corruption stories in Indonesia tend to be "scandalized" with the media portraying these stories as "politics-as-entertainment"; the consequence being that such portrayal trivializes this key political issue and discourages meaningful public debate and support for the country's anti-corruption movement. Within this context, I examine in this paper one Lebanese newspaper's

coverage of the garbage scandal that captured the nation's attention in 2015. Understanding how

the media framed the latest corruption scandal offers activists and policy-makers information to

rethink the media's role in anti-corruption strategies and tools, and to reimagine how the

Lebanese audience perceives corruption scandals and social protests.

This research project begins by presenting the theoretical framework outlining the

dominant theories and concepts involved in this research, followed by the research question.

Section four offers background information on the country's state of corruption, the Lebanese

press and its coverage of corruption, and the beginnings of the "You Stink" movement. The next

section covers the research design, while section six presents the findings. Section seven offers a

discussion on the findings and on the project's limitations. The last section concludes the project

and proposes considerations for future research.

Section 2: Theoretical Framework

The following section covers the key theories and concepts of scandals, corruption, media, framing, and disgust, upon which I build my research foundation. The literature review first focuses on exploring political scandals (particularly corruption scandals): their creation and their impact on mobilization. Next, I briefly define corruption and explain its impact. Because I contend that media framing influences public perception, examining the media's role in covering political stories and in curbing corruption is necessary, followed by surveying media framing to better understand how journalists choose their frames when covering scandals.

2.1 On Scandals

According to Markovits and Silverstein (1988), academic literature on scandals is limited due to the phenomenon's transitory and frivolous nature. Adut (2008) defined a scandal as a social phenomenon of publicly exposing a transgression; it contains three main components: a transgression that is either real or alleged, a publicizer publicizing the transgression, and a public reacting to the transgression. Scandals start when the transgression is publicized to a negatively oriented audience and ends when the public loses its interest while eliciting a wide array of reaction. Key scholar Entman (2012) has a similar take to Adut (2008) on scandal creation, as scandals arise when "the media make information on misconduct readily accessible and easily interpretable by the public as scandalous" (p.188). Major scandals arise from what Entman (2012) defines as a self-invigorating process, whereby official misconduct triggers news coverage. What matters for politics is whether the government's elite and media organizations believe that there could be public indignation in the future rather than whether public opinion is actually outraged by the misdeeds (Entman, 2012).

Scandal studies takes on one of two approaches introduced by Adut (2008): objectivist

and constructivist. An objectivist approach to scandals looks at the events that expose to the

public the usually concealed corrupt elements in a social system, while a constructivist approach

focuses on the public's reaction to the transgression. Constructivists as opposed to objectivists

prioritize the media in scandal-making (Adut, 2008).

The scandals' cognitive and emotional experiences are influenced by the structure of

relationships among those who are involved in the scandal. Scandals can mobilize emotional

energy with momentous consequences, and they are one way to understand a specific time and

place's cultural code. In fact, moral conflict in the public sphere is actualized in scandals (Adut,

2008). Political scandals, in particular, serve to affirm a society's collective conscience.

Through the scandal's creation of a needed enemy, a society's bonds of common morality are

strengthened, with implications on mass mobilization (Markovits & Silverstein, 1988). Scandals

have purifying potential, which takes the form of punishing the perpetrators (Logue, 1988, as

cited in Markovits & Silverstein, 1988).

Reaction to a scandal takes the process of investigation, discussion, and punishment

(Markovits & Silverstein, 1988). Publicity is responsible for the intensity and the nature of a

scandal's reaction; it almost imposes the transgression on the audience because it involves

collective and focused attention. High status participants are likely to draw more attention to the

scandals they are involved in as public reaction depends on public attention (Adut, 2008).

Reaction varies depending on what a society defines as a transgression to morality, which is

intimately linked to its political culture. Cases of political corruption are not unique to a specific

country and/or culture: in the developing and the industrialized worlds, cases of political

corruption bring citizens to the streets in protest, and non-governmental organizations that fight

corruption to the forefront (Blechinger, 2005).

2.2 On Corruption

While many definitions of corruption exist, in its broadest form, corruption is the misuse of office for unofficial ends, especially when an office-holder is supposed to put first the institution's interests he/she is representing and its people (Klitgaard, 2015). Transparency International, the leading anti-corruption non-governmental organization, defines broadly corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain, and categorizes corruption as grand, petty or political. For the present purposes, I adopted its definition of political corruption, as it corresponds most closely to the corruption type examined in this research. Political corruption is defined as the "manipulation of policies, institutions, and rules of procedure in the allocation of resources and financing by political decision-makers, who abuse their position to sustain their power, status and wealth."

Johnston (2012) argued that economically, corruption hinders development and traps poor people in the poverty cycle; politically, corruption weakens the citizens' ability to contest corrupt interests by weakening mutual trust and distributing short-term benefits. Examining and responding to corruption matters because when politicians engage in corrupt practices, they are not only misallocating public resources, they are also creating distrust with regards to the public and threatening democratic institutions (Rose-Ackerman, 1999). Corruption also reveals an underdeveloped social conscience "for which personal profit and private loyalty take precedence over public duty" (Venkatappiah, n.d., as cited in Kisirwani, 1974). Hence, corruption impacts a country's economic, social, and political systems, rendering its study necessary.

2.3 On Media

Media is powerful in influencing public opinion. It helps set the political agenda by informing the public about important issues to consider and act upon (McCombs & Shaw, 1972,

as cited in Rohlinger et al., 2012). Communications research on American media found that people use information relayed to them by journalists to confirm their beliefs rather than to acquire new ones (Adut, 2008). Journalists wield great social power and influence in scandal-making (Adut, 2008): when a journalist chooses to cover a transgression's sensational elements instead of its structural elements, they may be exaggerating the transgression, and hence, distorting reality. Entman (2012) studied the media's scandal choices, and journalistic inconsistency in reporting on scandals related to corruption, incompetence or immorality.

As an intermediary between citizens and their government, the media channel information to the public. They monitor and investigate politicians' and public servants' corrupt actions, and make it more difficult for those in power to evade public scrutiny, increasing in the process the costs and the risks associated with corrupt behaviors. Generally, the media build pressure for reforms, and promote accountability and integrity norms as well as a society's values and practices (Khatib, 2007; Mendes, 2013; Nabli & Humphreys, 2003). Even when it saturates publications and television programming, coverage of corruption scandals serves to inform and educate the public about political events and actions, providing access to information the public might not otherwise have (Kramer, 2013). By producing an informed public, a free and independent press is key to preventing and fighting corruption (Mendes, 2013).

After the media expose corruption stories, mass mobilization does not necessarily ensue. Only when evidence of inappropriate practices is widely available and that citizens are engaged for change can mobilization occur (Chapman, 2005). Quah and Wescott (2013) explained that scandals spark protests when corruption victims lose their patience; victims are thus awakened to demand action and take their frustration and anger to the streets. Protesting generally signals that a society is upset, and that a trust issue exists between state and society. For social change to

occur, public support and active community participation for a movement is needed (Quah & Wescott, 2013).

2.4 On Framing

Framing first appeared in Goffman's work in 1974, when he suggested that the context and organization of messages matter as they affect an audience's thoughts and actions about those messages (as cited in Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). Media framing constructs meaning by framing people, events, and ideas, and has been used to study a variety of topics in the social sciences. Frames are "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual" (Burke, 1999, p.181). News framing is of great interest to political communication researchers, and refers to the impact of presenting media news information on judgement and choice (Iyengar, 1996). Similarly, for Burke (1999), news framing defines how news media coverage shapes mass opinion by using specific frameworks that help guide the readers or viewers.

Iyengar (1996) posited that two genres exist for television news framing of political issues: "thematic" and "episodic." The "thematic" news frame places an issue in some general context and usually takes the form of an in-depth, structural report, whereas the "episodic" news frame describes an issue in terms of specific events. He argued that when it comes to television media coverage of corruption, the "episodic" frame predominates with implications on the audience's media perception as the audience might think that the media is not fulfilling its watchdog role appropriately. Exposure to a "thematic" framing shifts the attribution of responsibility from individual to society, impacting in the process the way citizens see complex issues as ones appropriate for collective action. Overall, Iyengar (1996) argued that beliefs about

who is responsible in a news story is likely to shift depending on the information environment in which the political issues and events are presented.

The press defines for the audience how to interpret a corruption story through its reporting, thereby, influencing the way stories are discussed in public debate (Entman, 2012). Gitlin (1980, as cited in Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011) explains that news frames are heavily influenced by journalistic conventions, values, and ideology in the perception, selection, and presentation of information. The political environment in which journalists operate also matters to be able to conduct their work. When the audience is indifferent to political wrongdoing, and when those who pass discreditable information are unwilling to help, journalists' reporting on politicians is constrained (Adut, 2008). News frames are the visual and verbal information contained in an article; they exist as characteristics of the news itself and as mentally stored principles for information processing known as audience frames (Entman, 1991, as cited in Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). With the flood of daily news information, audiences organize their life experiences to make sense of them (Goffman, 1974, as cited in Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). Burke (1999) would add that for this reason, visuals are more valuable to look at in framing studies.

Visual news is an important yet unexamined area in the literature on news framing (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011), as research in that field often focuses on textual data (Casas & Webb Williams, 2017; Coleman, 2010). News images are less intrusive than words, rendering them strong framing tools as they "require less cognitive load" for their audiences (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011, p.50). Since images depict reality, they are easily remembered, and create strong emotional and immediate cues in the process. For these reasons, pro-mobilization information is more easily processed through images, making the study of images crucial in this

news media environment (Casas & Webb Williams, 2017). It would be narrow to look at news images as solely news products since they are also cultural products created by the news source to disseminate information to its audience (Carneiro & Johnson, 2014).

Visual media in general has a great potential to create social and political change (Robins, 1996, as cited in Khatib, 2007). However, the possibility of change triggers a discussion on the question of perception (Brown, 2016). Previous research has shown that image choice influences an audience's perception (Fahmy et al., 2014). Mirzoeff (1999, as cited in Khatib, 2007) argued that people are brought together using images, whereas Meyer (2002, as cited in Khatib, 2007) argued that culture's visualization results in the viewer's acceptance of images without questioning and a paralysis of their "critical faculties." This is possible since the media have the power to be selective about what events are covered and to interpret events and issues for the audience (Gurevitch & Blumler, 1999, as cited in Khatib, 2007).

The literature above shows that a relationship triangle exists between public opinion, media, and mobilization. For this particular scandal, I explore the role of disgust in mobilizing those who experience it to better understand the Lebanese media's possible use of such an emotion to mobilize its audience.

2.5 On Disgust

Disgust can be classified into three domains: "pathogen disgust, which motivates the avoidance of infectious microorganisms; sexual disgust, which motivates the avoidance of sexual partners and behaviors that would jeopardize one's long-term reproductive success; and moral disgust, which motivates the avoidance of social norm violators" (Tybur et al., 2009, p.103). Kelly (2011) defined disgust as a complex human emotion that goes beyond recoiling or physically manifesting repulsion. Expressing disgust signals to others information about what to

avoid in the local environment be it physical or moral, the emotion thus reveals a concern that underlies an individual's existence. Herz (2013) cited research that showed how individuals perceived other people's disgust as their own, which means that the level of intimacy and connection one has with somebody parallels the level of disgust one can have toward their misfortunes.

Whereas disgust can manifest itself in putrefaction like rotten food or decomposing corpses; people can be disgusted by an ideology and a value system they find morally abhorrent. Disgust takes on a moral valence rendering it dependent on social norms and ethnic boundary markers (Herz, 2013; Kelly, 2011). In fact, one's experience and understanding of disgust depends on individual sensibilities and culture. When disgust is implicated in politics, the best example is that of a politician exhibiting immorality by engaging in corrupt or objectionable acts. The emotion has the ability to divest people away from corrupt politicians by generating a withdrawal reaction even when disgust is irrelevant to justifying morality (Kelly, 2011). And, since disgust can be induced, it can aggravate moral condemnation (Herz, 2013). Lastly, people react to "disgusting" images through a gut reaction as images reduce an underlying issue's complexity. Nevertheless, overexposure to disgust reduces the trigger to react, and people will tend to avoid "disgusting" images (Herz, 2013).

Section 3: Research Question

Allegations of corrupt behaviors regularly attract the local media and the public's attention; unsurprisingly given that corruption is a social ill many Lebanese complain about on a day-to-day basis (Mattar, 2004). In fact, high profile cases of political graft: disruptions of accountability cases and briberies, regularly appear in public political discourse and daily news coverage (Mattar, 2004; Safa, 1999). Both the food safety and the garbage scandals received noticeably different media coverage and public reaction.

During the food safety scandal, media covered the Minister of Public Health's campaign, as the Lebanese saw him on television heading food safety inspections and providing press conferences on the food sample tests' results (Rothman, 2015). Newspapers sensationalized the scandal with headlines such as *The Daily Star*'s "Food scandal: Menu of death" and *Alakhbar*'s "Lebanese consumers learn they are eating shit" (Battah, 2014). Despite the "hysterical" coverage, the media asked little questions on why this crackdown was occurring, with only one newspaper coming close to an investigation on the scandal's causes (Battah, 2014). The media focused instead on the Minister, who by appearing on television talk shows and on newspapers' front pages, was portrayed as a "sleaze-free" celebrity in a country marred in corruption. Some Lebanese hailed the Minister as a champion, while others questioned his motives (Naylor, 2015).

Eight months later another corruption scandal emerged to occupy the nation and the media's attention. The media focused on the protests in their coverage of the garbage scandal because of the movement that followed, revealing the media's following of the public. Coverage mirrored the polarization existing among media outlets that usually frame news events based on political affiliation (Aljazeera English, 2016). Social media played an unprecedented and essential role in publicizing the scandal and mobilizing the protesters (Luca, 2015). On social

media platforms, citizens named and shamed the politicians deemed responsible, while grassroots groups appeared online particularly on Facebook to organize and coordinate protests (Battah, 2015). Public reaction was noticeable in that people protested in numbers unseen since the 2005 "Independence Uprising" protests (Nader, 2015).

Beyond media coverage and public reaction, the scandals differed in terms of publicity, participants, and agenda-setting. However, both scandals constituted immoral transgressions as the level of political corruption reached a point where politicians, many of whom participate in the national government, were disregarding and harming citizens' lives. Questions emerge on the Lebanese media framing and portrayal of corruption scandals in general, and on the Lebanese society's perception of these scandals. In addition, because this scandal galvanized the Lebanese public and resulted in a nationwide anti-corruption movement, showing that a relationship exists between the media's framing and the public's reaction, raising the question on media's ability to create social movements through framing. Alas, it would be difficult to adequately answer such questions here due to the lack of apparent evidence. For instance, media framing does not evaluate citizens' level of patience regarding corruption scandals, even though this is one of the factors that trigger social movements.

Understanding news framing of corruption scandals requires characterizing the Lebanese news media's portrayal of these scandals, with the garbage scandal offering such an example. Understanding the frame's characteristics provides insights on what the audience saw or read on this scandal, opening the door for future research on perception or the processing of information. Since perception impacts reaction, comprehending this particular framing provides clues on the pre-"You Stink" movement's conditions. Thus, I ask how did the Lebanese newspapers frame the garbage scandal? Particularly, which images of the scandal did the newspapers show?

Section 4: Background

The background section presents the information necessary to analyze the images since image interpretation takes into account the image's relation to its socio-cultural and political contexts (Scott, 1994).

4.1 Corruption in Lebanon

According to the Lebanese Transparency Association, a local anti-corruption non-governmental organization, corruption has always existed in the country. However, it was magnified in the 1990s during the post-war period. The issue exists in all aspects of the Lebanese society and government, and impacts the political and economic systems by generating mistrust in state-society relations, undermining governance system, among other outcomes. Some of the causes of corruption the association cites are a lack of awareness, dysfunctional anti-corruption institutions, a weak legal framework, and a lack of proper legal implementation mechanisms. Lack of a strong political will to fighting corruption also exists especially since the political class is structured based on a confessional power-sharing arrangement of the state's resources. This elite, which is represented in the government, also controls the country's closed decision-making structure (Wickberg, 2012). Most corruption forms exist such as bribery, nepotism, vote buying, and clientelism fueled by the political elite's arrangements.

In 2016, Lebanon's corruption level ranked 136 among 176 countries according to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index.[3] Being among the most corrupt countries in the Middle East renders the fight against corruption an urgent matter, especially since a majority of the population views established political parties, public administration, parliament, and police as the most corrupt public sector areas (Wickberg, 2012, as cited in Beck, 2015). But, the lack of will to act on corruption does not only come from the top. While it is

worrying to have Lebanese public affairs reduced to cases of graft and discussions on avoiding

corruption's consequences, Mattar (2004) writes that corruption has become embedded in the

minds and the souls of the Lebanese. He argues that this mentality that promotes lack of

accountability demonstrates the matter's seriousness and the urgency to identify the problem and

to propose a remedy.[4]

Research on corruption is crucial to comprehend the country's complex state-society

relations especially since corruption occupies a significant place in the Lebanese public sphere.

Literature on corruption is narrow in its perspective due to the issue's non-formal nature and the

difficulties in obtaining data (Kisirwani, 1974; Leenders, 2012). Existing research has focused

on evaluating the phenomenon's macro picture by focusing on examining the political elite's

actions and political institutions, and measuring governance indicators such as rule of law and

government efficiency as demonstrated by international organizations' numerous development-

focused published reports. Research also focuses on micro measures of corruption by looking at

citizens' attitudes and behavior to political corruption. When it comes to the media's role in

shaping corruption stories, the literature when it exists mentions ownership and funding based on

political affiliation or the prevalence of briberies to explain the media's polarization and the

limitations of its investigative role (Baaklini, 2016). Despite that, the media always sides with

the public in voicing their concerns over political corruption (Safa, 1999).

4.2 The Lebanese Press

Careful handling of political stories comes from the control and the restrictions the media

are subject to in the Middle East. Despite the limitations, the media in the region has contributed

to the vocal public debate on government accountability (Nabli & Humphreys, 2003). Lebanon

has always had a solid tradition of press freedom regardless of the internal and external pressures

on media freedom, lying mainly within the country's sectarian and financial structures (Dajani, 2013). The country has more newspapers than any other Arab country, partly due to the fact that the country has the highest literacy rate in the Arab world (Rugh, 2004). The press covers a wide spectrum of political opinions as it reaches different audiences depending on the newspaper's political affiliation and ownership (Hammoud & Afifi, 1994). Most newspapers are non-commercial, and their content carries a clear political direction (Open Society Foundations, 2012). Experts, civil society leaders, among others regularly write and publish in newspapers studies and recommendations on the best way to improve public administration (Safa, 1999). For his book on the country's political corruption, Leenders (2012) heavily relies on newspaper sources to relate corruption scandals, demonstrating the importance of newspapers as a source of information for corruption stories. Lebanese journalists in their turn use investigations and interviews with officials and experts to shape public opinion and to offer the public different political positions (Safa, 1999). But, while this plurality in opinion reflects the Lebanese society's pluralistic nature, the press represents a source of information to the reader and does not serve as a discussion platform on political matters for citizens (Hammoud & Afifi, 1994).

Coverage is usually biased depending on the newspaper's political affiliation, its ownership, and the political context, and the average reader is usually aware of these nuances in the content they are reading (Rugh, 2004). One example of a coverage bias is when newspapers focused on explaining the Ministry for Industry and Oil's structuring and operations instead of investigating the causes of the energy scandal the country was marred in (Jadaliyya, 2014). Determining the journalists' motive for covering corruption scandals is difficult; in all cases, they are careful in practicing self-censorship to avert undesired repercussions (Safa, 1999; Wickberg, 2012). Furthermore, ethical concerns are raised for the journalistic profession in the

country. For example, most journalists rely on their "personal conscience" when conducting

their work and are not familiar with the code of ethics adopted by the Press Federation for

journalists to abide by (Matar & Harb, 2013).

4.3 The Garbage Scandal and the "You Stink" Anti-corruption Movement

The garbage scandal had several contributing factors including political polarization, the

infrastructure of dumping, and the waste management contract's nature (Abu-Rish, 2016).

Paralysis and dysfunction best describe the year 2014-2015 with political polarization between

the March 8 and the March 14 alliances hindering presidential and parliamentary elections, and a

foreign interference in Lebanese public affairs (Kraidy, 2016; Nader, 2015). Kraidy (2016) uses

the metaphor of a decapitated and decomposing corpse when referring to the nation's aimless

and rotting body politic at this time. The garbage management crisis erupted after the country's

Naameh waste landfill was shut down without alternatives on July 17th 2015 after exceeding its

absorption capacity. This chaotic landfill in the Beirut suburbs, which opened in 1997, was

supposed to be a temporary place until the national government finds a sustainable waste

management plan. Yet, it stayed open for two decades. The landfill had long been a contentious

issue between its neighboring residents and the government due to the environmental and health

hazards it posed (Boutros, 2015). The government first decided to close the landfill in January

2014, later extending it for a year. From January 2015 to mid-July, the prime minister's cabinet

did not put forward a plan to find alternatives due to political disputes among members of the

political class (Boutros, 2015). A week after the crisis erupted, 22,000 tons of uncollected

garbage were found on greater Beirut's streets putrefying under the summer sun (Kraidy, 2016).

The government's lack of action over the citizens' demands for a solution to the environmentally

catastrophic and unsanitary situation catalyzed a series of protests. By August, Sukleen—the

private company responsible for the country's waste management—simply stopped collecting

garbage when its contract expired. As a result, huge amounts of garbage piled up on the capital's

streets, eliciting large discontent among the Lebanese. Sukleen is owned by a prominent

politician and had the waste management monopoly for most of the post-war period (Kraidy,

2016). Recently, it had been accused of charging some of the world's highest garbage collection

rates (Battah, 2015).

The protests were part of a campaign named "You Stink" that quickly escalated into a

movement, with its first demonstration held on July 28th, 2015. The movement's importance

comes from its mobilization ability, especially given that a majority of Lebanese surrender to

corruption as an inevitable part of their lives (Karam, 2013; Mattar, 2004). The country had not

witnessed civil demonstrations without interference from the political class or without being

tainted by sectarianism in four decades (Abu-Rish, 2016; Nader, 2015). Even as the movement

has lost momentum since its inception, understanding it deserves attention in order to learn about

efforts that lead to social change and curbing corruption in the country.

Brown (2016) explains that most people accept their social environment as a given, and

that a variable degree of fatalism and freedom in the public's mind exists when it comes to

imagining alternatives to the status quo. Piven and Cloward (1977, as cited is Brown, 2016)

argue further that a mental shift is necessary to overcome this sense of fatalism and inspire

individuals to take action in changing their circumstances. The national government's ineptitude

in offering solutions to the crisis was seen as a serious transgression, making the government

appear as the people's enemy. When the angry public converged and took to the streets their

frustration over the government's inaction and corruption, they were met with security forces'

tear gas and rubber bullets (Luca, 2015). Logue (1988) argued that while political scientists

cannot easily define what a scandal is, its participants know when their behavior is deemed

scandalous. Not only did the government offer little solutions, but its resistance to popular

demands was seen as indicative of its responsibility in the scandal (Kraidy, 2016).

When the movement was born in August, that mental shift was already occurring as those

frustrated by the governing political elite hoped that it could result in real efforts to make long-

lasting changes (Kraidy, 2016). According to Yahya (2015), the movement's name not only

references the piles of garbage lying in the street, but also the widespread corruption within the

political class, with garbage symbolizing corruption's "putrefaction, odor, dirt, nausea, disease"

(Kraidy, 2016, p.22). Social protests in Lebanon represent a challenge to the political elite who

claims leadership status by virtue of representing their confessional community (Baumann,

2016). This movement was no different as the government responded by deploying police

officers who used brutality against the demonstrators without any sanctioning. Slogans such as

"all means all" conveyed the protesters' anger at the political class, without excluding anyone

(Kraidy, 2016; Nader, 2015), and "we want accountability" referenced the people's will to hold

accountable those managing their public affairs (Nader, 2015).

The media reinforced this anti-establishment sentiment as television outlets attacked the

political class as a whole during their coverage in the first weeks of August rather than siding

with the broadcaster's political affiliation (Aljazeera English, 2016). However, television

coverage was soon divided between those who gave 24-hour coverage to the protests such as

LBC and those who used their platforms to dismiss the protesters such as *OTV* (Abu-Rish, 2016).

Secular television outlets such as *Aljadeed* endorsed the movement from its beginnings in their

coverage. Interestingly, as journalists participated in the protests to cover the events, they built

relationships with the movement's activists (Aljazeera English, 2016). The coverage's nature

not only reflected the existing political polarization, but also the fact that broadcasters in the country have established political fault lines (Aljazeera English, 2016). The press in its turn reflected the tense political climate in its coverage. For example, *The Daily Star* headlined "Lebanon on brink of chaos" for the mass protest events that occured on August 22nd, 2015, while *Annahar* headlined "Infiltrators hijack the You Stink revolution", and *Assafir* headlined "The Aug. 22 Intifada" in reference to the 2011 "Arab Uprisings" events ("Lebanon's anti-government garbage crisis", 2015).

Divisions on the ground between the protesters started emerging at the movement's start with some demanding the garbage crisis to be resolved, some demanding parliamentary elections and a president, and others demanding a change in the political system and the tackling of political corruption (Luca, 2015). Kraidy (2016) added that failure to find alternatives prompted the movement to demand the Minister of the Environment's resignation over his mishandling of the crisis, and later, the sanctioning of police officers involved in brutality against the protesters. The movement moved from a mere contestation of the government's failure to collect and dispose of garbage to become a secular-progressive social movement focused on redefining citizenship and tackling corruption "in a country with a deeply entrenched sectarian political system, where politics is nearly always already sectarian" (Kraidy, 2016, p.19).

Due to its recency, literature on the movement is limited. Nevertheless, a number of authors like Kraidy (2016) and Beck (2015) attempted to study the movement and its larger impact on Lebanese society, especially since the protests carved a space in Lebanese national memory and marked an evolution of the Lebanese society and its political system when faced with popular uprisings. The literature has generally placed the movement within three contexts. Beck (2015) and Luca (2015) discussed the movement and its place within the larger global

social movements that occurred in 2011, such as the Spain and Greece anti-austerity movements and the United States Occupy Movement. Kraidy (2016) analyzed the movement in the 2011 Arab Uprisings' context. Abu-Rish (2016), Nader (2015) and Yahya (2015) all explained that the country's political and socio-economic factors triggered the movement's emergence.

Having discussed the literature and background necessary to contextualize this research project, I proceed to explain the research method and design, before presenting and discussing my findings.

Section 5: Research Design

5.1 Method

Surveying different newspapers that covered the scandal would allow collecting a diverse representation of how the Lebanese newspapers framed the scandal. Interviewing or surveying the newspapers' readers would be the best method to explore the audience's scandal interpretation. Since this research focuses on the way in which the scandal's events were intended to be interpreted as opposed to how the audience interpreted the events, content analysis emerged as the most suitable method. In fact, content analysis is the most suitable method to account for frame presence. Through precise, systematic, repetitive observations, this research method allows the categorization and the comparison of messages in specific contexts (Merrigan & Huston, 2015). As an empirical and objective method, it quantifies representation using explicitly defined categories (Bell, 2011).

Content analysis has also a qualitative aspect used in theme exploration, which allows the researcher to relate the findings to a larger research concept. The difference between qualitative and quantitative content analyses is that qualitative analysis does not limit itself to manifest content and frequency counts. Because this method is concerned with interpretation and meaning, it emerged as an appealing analytical approach for visuals (Schreier, 2013). The movement's image- and media-saturated nature was apparent on media channels and during the protests. Imagery including hand-made images and texts that protesters brought with them were profuse, ranging from signs to banners to Lebanese flags. Given these considerations and given the importance of images in framing and mobilization research (as explained in the theoretical framework's section on framing), analyzing visual information proved to be more interesting to understand news framing and more practical for data collection purposes. Visual content

analysis allows the researcher to gauge generalizations about what is shown in the press, on

television or in advertisements using observable and objective evidence. Since visuals are

culturally complex elements, a researcher from the group, who recognizes its cultural constructs,

is best suited for this kind of research (Bell, 2011).

5.2 Sampling

The most widely circulated newspaper in Lebanon *Assafir* unexpectedly closed in

December 2016. While the newspaper's online version still exists, choosing this newspaper for

my research would have been more difficult to study. For this reason, I chose to concentrate on

the second most widely circulated newspaper in the country—*Annahar*—since it is more likely

that the newspaper was read by the greatest number of people (Hammoud & Afifi, 1994; Rugh,

2004). Founded in 1933, the daily newspaper is published in Arabic, with an online presence in

Arabic and in English. The family-owned newspaper covers national (political, economic,

social, and cultural issues) and international news. With a daily circulation averaging 15,000 to

45,000 copies depending on the reporting source, the newspaper takes on a moderate (Rugh,

2004) to rightist (Open Society Foundations, 2012) political stance. Today, the newspaper

supports the March 14 political alliance. Its website was ranked in 2009 as the second most

visited Arabic news site in the country and is considered one of the immediate sources of

mainstream news in the country. It does not provide a space for readers' comments, nor does it

provide room for interaction (Open Society Foundations, 2012).

The unit of analysis for this study is the image contained in an *Annahar* article related to

the scandal and published on the newspaper's website on any day from July 17th, 2015 when the

Naameh landfill closed marking the scandal's beginning until July 30th, 2015. Using these

keywords in Arabic: "you stink" and "garbage", all the articles related to the garbage scandal

were collected from the newspaper's website. Scanning the article's headline as well as the

image's caption revealed the article's relation to the scandal. If the article's main focus was not

the garbage crisis or the "You Stink" movement, the article was excluded. Articles that did not

include images and/or videos were also excluded. Choosing the first two weeks of reporting on

the scandal as the analysis' timeframe rests on two factors. First, the newspaper's immediate

reaction to and coverage of the scandal is crucial in framing research; second, the timeframe

covers the movement's beginnings, which is an important consideration in understanding the

pre-movement's conditions. Protests peaked in the second half of August (Abu-Rish, 2016).

Articles or opinion pieces whose images were extracted from the archives and/or reused from

previous media events were kept as long as they related to the scandal. When an article included

an image slideshow, only the first image was kept for the analysis.

	Dates	Total articles (A)	Articles unrelated to the scandal (B)	Articles that did not include images and/or that included videos (C)	Articles used for the analysis (A – B – C)	Articles that reused images
Week 1	July 17th – July 23rd	101	19	27	55	9
Week 2	July 24th – July 30th	261	63	89	108	12
Total	July 17th – July 30th	361	82	116	163	21

Table 1: Data collection steps

 55 images (33%) were collected in week 1 and 109 images in week 2 (66%) forming a

total of 163 images (see Table 1). These images were published every day at an average rate of

12 images per day. Due to time limitations, this amount of images proved difficult to analyze.

To collect a representative sample of 57 images, a stratified sampling was conducted of one third

of week 1 images and two thirds of week 2 images. In the end, 19 images from week 1 and 38

from week 2 were collected via a simple random sampling for my main analysis. The images

were archived as they appeared in the article.

5.3 Coding

Coding was conducted using a codebook on Excel (see Appendix for the codebook used in this research). My content analysis had both quantitative and qualitative aspects, and was an iterative process with a three-trial coding to ensure that nothing was left out of the analysis. The first coding trial focused on coding formal categories and taking notes on the images' depicted elements: symbols, activities, participants, and setting. The images were placed into the following five categories:

1. Images depicting garbage and/or garbage landfills

2. Images depicting people in contact with garbage

3. Images depicting protests against the garbage crisis

4. Images portraying public figures

5. Other

Subcategories for the symbols, activities, participants, and setting were created based on notes taken in the first trial and concepts derived from the theoretical framework. The second trial coding focused on coding the subcategories for images within one category, and on coding the interactions between the image's elements to gauge its qualitative aspect, especially since images pose interesting questions on representation and socio-cultural expression (Carneiro & Johnson, 2014). For example, power was captured by evaluating camera angles, while nonverbal expressions were captured by evaluating emotions (exhibited by facial expressions), posture, and gesturing (Coleman & Banning, 2006, as cited in Coleman, 2010). The third trial coding focused on coding all the variables and values I had consolidated over the first two trials. After ensuring that the coding sheet was sufficiently reliable and valid and that no further changes would be

made, I proceeded to the main analysis.

Because findings on image effects are missing, I relied on other disciplines to derive the theoretical foundation needed in understanding the meaning of visuals (Bock et al., 2011). The variables examined in my research are borrowed from previous research that has been conducted in the fields of media and communication studies, psychology, and anthropology. Additionally, because visual and verbal messages occur together in news media and because audiences process them simultaneously, it was important to capture and to code the headlines along with the captions accompanying the images (Coleman, 2010).

5.4 Validity

Validity is "the extent to which categories adequately describe the material and the concepts that are part of the research question" (Schreier, 2013). It was ensured by minimizing residual categories coded as unknown and other, and revising the coding scheme accordingly in the coding's first phases. Prior to starting the main analysis, the codebook was presented to an expert in the content analysis method. External validity was satisfied through the degree of coder training and the sample data's representativeness (Merrigan & Huston, 2015).

5.5 Reliability

Defining the variables and units of analysis is important to ensure inter-coder reliability, which is the degree to which the results are replicable (Bell, 2011; Merrigan & Huston, 2015). In addition to the primary researcher, an Arabic-speaking coder was recruited to code a randomly selected sample of 6 images at the end of the first coding trial. To ensure the coder understood the variables and the values consistently, especially since recipients allocate meaning from images in fractions of a second (Todorov et al., 2005, as cited in Bock & al., 2011), a training session was held to provide instructions on the coding process and to clarify each variable and

value's criteria. The coders compared their coding to check for inconsistencies, revealing

differences in the symbols category. Following discussions, the coding sheet was revised for this

category. At the end of the third phase, two Arabic-speaking coders were again recruited to

randomly code a selected sample of 10 images. To measure reliability, a coefficient of

agreement between the primary coder and the two additional coders was calculated, yielding

82% (Bell, 2011). This level of reliability is lower than the recommended 90% (see Table 2).

	Percentage agreement	Reliability = [(76 + 91 + 80) / 3] = 82%
Coder 1, Coder 2	76%	
Coder 1, Coder 3	91%	
Coder 2, Coder 3	80%	

Table 2: Percentage agreement between coders

Section 6: Findings

This section presents the content analysis' findings on categorization, reuse, and captions based on the 163 collected images. Findings are explained using frequencies and examples.

Image categories

Categorization reveals that the newspaper mostly shows images of public figures (29%) during the scandal's two-week coverage, followed by images of protests against the garbage crisis (24%) (see Figure 1).[5] In the first week, most images depict garbage and people in contact with garbage. By contrast, in the second week, most images are those of public figures, followed by protests against the garbage crisis.
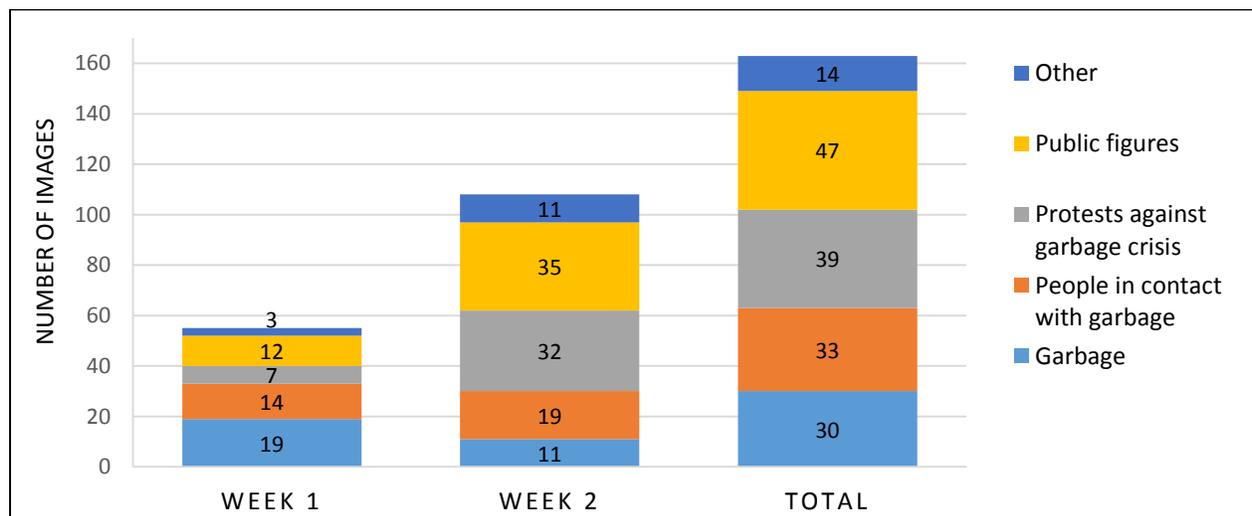

Figure 1: Image category distribution over time

A closer look at the 47 images of public figures shows the following distribution—47% are those of politicians participating in the national government, 45% are those of other politicians, 6% are those of Sukleen's chairman, and 2% are those of an artist. The first image of a politician appears 4 days after the scandal's allegations erupted, whereas images of garbage and of protests appear on the same day the scandal erupted. The 15 images of the other category show downtown Beirut including the Grand Serail—the prime minister's seat (27%), roads (27%),

policemen (20%), and the rest depict a political party's flag.

Reused images

21 of the 163 images are reused, ranging from being republished on the same day to 9 days after they first appear, with the majority of these images appearing a day after they are first published. Reused images are associated with specific headline themes depending on the image's category (see Table 3). For example, images depicting garbage are reused in articles whose headlines focus on the public's response and the municipal government's response.

Image category	Headline theme 1	Headline theme 2	Headline theme 3	Headline theme 4
Protests	Public's response	Public figure's response	Foreign party's response	National government's response
People in contact with garbage	Public figure's response	Public's response	Municipal government's response	National government's response
Garbage	Public's response	Municipal government's response		

Table 3: Image category with the associated headline theme for reused images

Image captions

Analyzing the 163 collected images reveals that only 39 images had captions. A closer look at these captions reveals that they describe the image's content directly. 34% of these captions are associated with protests images, followed by 24% of public figures images.

I now proceed to present the findings based on the 57 sampled images, starting with those related to all the images, before moving on to the individual image categories. Within each image category, my analysis focused on evaluating the trend of each variable over time and the frequency of each value within one variable, all in the purpose of identifying patterns of elements shown in those images.

The images are categorized as follows—10 depict garbage and/or garbage landfills, 18

depit people in contact with garbage, 12 depict protests against the garbage crisis, 13 depict

public figures, and 4 belong to the other category. All the images appear at the top of the article

under the headline, giving prominence to the image, and they are all photographs except for one

image of a political party's flag. 60% of these images come from the newspaper itself, 7% come

from other sources namely the National News Agency—the country's official news body, while

the rest have unknown origin. Coding the headlines associated with these images reveals that

37% tackle the public's response to the crisis, followed by 30% for the national government's

response to the crisis, 21% for a municipal government's response to the crisis, and 12% for a

public figure's response to the crisis (see Figure 2).
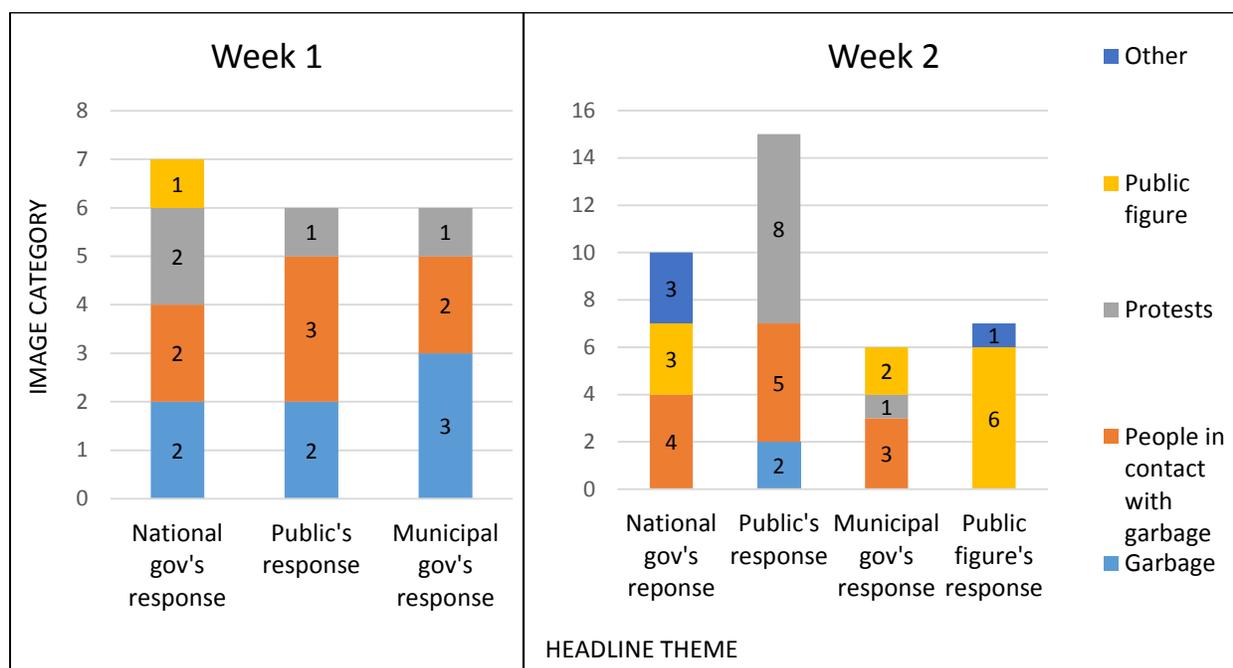
Figure 2: Headline theme associated with image category by week number

Protests images

During the coverage's week 1, protests are associated with headlines focusing on the

national government's response; during week 2, they are associated with headlines focusing on

the public's response. Captured using high angle and medium camera shots, protests images

show Lebanese citizens of diverse age groups (less than 40 years old), genders, and regions

(occurring in 3 governorates) protesting in open spaces mainly streets. Accompanied by civil

society activists, journalists, and police officers, the protesters average less than 50 participants

in numbers. When their faces exhibited emotions, we see happy- and angry-looking participants.

The police officers are seen standing on the sides or the backgrounds with no interaction with the

protesters. In 58% of these images, the protesters are carrying banners or signs with texts

referencing the political situation and the political class' corruption. These texts appear in

Arabic, English, and French. For example, in an article dating from July 22nd, a sign in Arabic

reads "Our rights' landfill?! Your council #You_Stink" in reference to the council of ministers.

These texts do not call for action in their majority. Elements representing the police either police

officers, barbed wires or metal grids appear in 42% of the protests images. Other noticeable

elements appearing in these images are: the Lebanese flag (in 42% of the images), and metal

grids, water cannons, and barbed wires used to contain the protests (in 28% of the images).

Garbage and/or garbage landfills images

        In week 1, images depicting garbage and/or garbage landfills are associated with

headlines focusing on the municipal government's response; in week 2, they are associated with

headlines focusing on the public's response. Captured in medium camera shots, the images are

taken in 4 different governorates. Garbage and burnt garbage (to prevent the spread of diseases)

are seen in open spaces like streets, sidewalks, open fields, and parking lots. Uncontained

garbage appears in 77% of the images.

People in contact with garbage

        During the two-week coverage, images depicting people in contact with garbage are

associated with headlines focusing on the public's response. Captured in medium shots, these

images show citizens passing by or driving by garbage while covering their noses, or a traffic

policeman wearing an odor mask with garbage bags behind him. Most participants are seen

avoiding any contact with the garbage in 58% of the images; except for the citizens and/or waste

management workers picking up trash from the streets. While it is difficult to read their facial

expressions, covering the nose from the odor is indicative of disgust. Interestingly, one image

showed a woman separating her garbage for recycling.

Public figures images

In week 1, images are associated with headlines focusing on the national government's

response, while they are associated with headlines focusing on the public's response in week 2.

Captured in close-ups and medium shots, the public figures are seen sitting down and talking or

looking at the camera—activities that do not require physical effort. Their faces do not exhibit

recognizable emotions, however, 2 images show happy-looking politicians. 31% of these images

show speaker's tribunes, journalists covering the event, or discussion tables where participants

are sitting down and talking. These elements indicate a certain staging of the images since they

require preparations in advance. 23% of these images are captured in the Grand Serail showing

members of the prime minister's cabinet talking with one another.

Other

No article tackles a public figure's response during week 1. However, during week 2, the

images are associated with headlines focusing on the national government's response.

Section 7: Discussion

7.1 Discussion

A "disgusting" crisis

  Annahar portrays a "disgusting" crisis in this scandal's framing by choosing images depicting garbage. These images convey to the reader the crisis' reality, absurdity, pervasiveness, and moral valence.

  Images of people in contact with garbage convey that this crisis is a public one, and humanize this environmental crisis that was not brought by environmental factors. The fact that these images are associated with headlines focusing on the public's response demonstrates the newspaper's efforts in communicating people's reaction at the sight of garbage. During the scandal's first 9 days (marking the period when the garbage crisis is first mentioned until the "You Stink" campaign is first mentioned), *Annahar* shows mostly images of garbage (31%) and images of people in contact with garbage (26%)—garbage landfills, burnt garbage, waste management workers and/or citizens collecting garbage from the streets, and citizens walking by or driving by the garbage while covering their noses from the smell, lowering their heads, or closing their windows to avoid any contact with it (see Figure 3 for an example). Interestingly, headlines associated with images showing citizens collecting garbage reveal that municipal governments stepped up to contain the crisis while the national government was absent. Eye level camera shots used to capture the people in these images—who are always placed in the center front—allow the reader to directly feel the crisis' impact.

Figure 3: Photograph depicting citizens passing by piles of garbage.

This image appeared three times over 4 days in the newspaper's two-week coverage.

Taken from: Al-Tawil, I. (Photographer). (2015, July 20). [Annoyance from the garbage smell in the Ared Jalloul area] [Digital image]. Retrieved from https://www.annahar.com/article/253441-آخ-يا-بلدنا-بالصور

Captured on streets, on sidewalks, in front of residential buildings in daylight, the images convey the crisis' absurdity—while the issue is affecting our everyday life and our public spaces, citizens could still walk or drive past garbage undeterred. Normality—as shown through cars passing by or buildings under construction in the backgrounds—coexisting with abnormality—as shown through the uncontained garbage—creates confusion for the reader. The presence of garbage increases the framing's intensity and emotional resonance as repulsion is felt at the sight of uncontained garbage on streets, sidewalks, and parking lots that obstructs mobility. Absurdity is also reinforced through the newspaper's recycling of 21 images in its two-week coverage. By attempting to fill a gap in the article's content, *Annahar* is making efforts at providing answers to its readers even when it has precedence of omitting images in its articles.

Images containing garbage are captured across the country and appear throughout the coverage, thus reminding the reader that the crisis is affecting everyone and at any time. There is

no escape from garbage that surrounds us as the crisis is a nationwide problem. The prominence

of garbage relative to the participants in the images depicting people in contact with garbage

convey that garbage has overwhelmed people. Waste management workers or citizens, who

despite their efforts at picking up, cleaning up, or even holding their noses when passing by,

have surrendered to the piles of garbage that rise to a man's waste level in 68% of the images.

The eye level camera angle used to capture these images allows the reader to feel this garbage's

weight overcoming and entrapping people. Yet, despite the crisis' severity, the newspaper shows

that solutions exist such as recycling.

Disgust took on a moral valence in this framing when garbage as a manifestation of

disgust in its messiness, its smell, and its decay (Kraidy, 2016) becomes a metaphor of the

country's absurd corruption level and its deteriorated state of affairs. First, headlines focusing on

the national and the municipal governments' responses to the crisis are associated with images of

garbage and of people in contact with garbage over the two-week coverage. This creates a

mental representation that the government's response and the existing political feuding over the

crisis are "political garbage." Second, garbage bags, odor face masks, and signs with garbage

references to the political class were all brought with the protesters to refer to the disgust felt at

the national government's response and the current state of political corruption. Third,

corruption is first mentioned in an article's headline 8 days after the scandal's allegations

emerged when the newspaper asks whether this crisis is a garbage management crisis or a

corruption one, alluding that the country's public affairs have become "rotten." The article is

accompanied with an image of people in contact with garbage.

A collective issue

Annahar kept the reader captivated by adding elements of collectivity to its scandal's

framing, avoiding the risk of diverting readers away from overexposure to "disgusting" images (as we have seen in the theoretical framework). By drawing attention to the scandal and by tackling the public's reaction in its headlines, the newspaper makes efforts to show the scandal's collective aspect. Combined with its particular framing of politicians and of protests images, *Annahar* conveys that this is a "people against the establishment" issue.

Annahar's intent of drawing attention to this scandal is evidenced through three elements. First, publishing 361 images over a two-week period, averaging 25 images per day demonstrates the extensive coverage this scandal has received. This finding is not surprising as we have read that the country was going through a tense political climate at this time period. The images' distribution—images showing garbage in the first week and those showing public figures and protests in the second week—correlates with the government's response to the scandal's events as they escalate and the emergence of the "You Stink" campaign. Second, high status participants such as politicians and journalists attract the public's attention regardless of their involvement in the scandal. In fact, 92% of the public figures images are those of politicians both inside and outside the national government, and 7% of the total images show journalists and/or press vehicles, providing evidence of the media's involvement in the scandal's coverage. Third, by communicating the public's discontent at the situation on hand, the reader's attention is grabbed. Images showing citizens covering their noses when passing by garbage or those showing angry-looking protesters chanting and screaming evidence the public's dissatisfaction.

An analysis of the articles' headlines reveals the newspaper's efforts to communicate the people's voice by prioritizing headlines tackling the public's reaction. On the day the Naameh landfill closed, the newspaper published five articles: two relate to the closure directly, while the rest tackle the closure's environmental repercussions. The first article's headline focused on the

national government's proposal to find an alternative with an accompanying bird's eye image of the landfill; the second article's headline written in colloquial Lebanese focused on the public's refusal to reopen the landfill with an image depicting a mobilization by neighboring residents.

In the Lebanese public memory, members of the political class are implicated in corrupt or objectionable acts (as we have read in the background section). By showing their images, the newspaper is creating a visual representation of those who might be implicated in the scandal. Captured in medium and close-up angles, the politicians' images convey a level of social proximity. Politicians are seen sitting in meetings at the Grand Serail, talking or holding press conferences. These elements demonstrate a certain degree of staging given the presence of journalists and speaker podiums. Additionally, the depicted activities including sitting down and talking do not require much physical effort like protesting or picking up trash. Hence, while the national government and politicians are responding to the crisis instead of dismissing it, they are doing so in a prepared fashion and passively.

Images depicting protests against the crisis reveal their diversity as evidenced by the different age groups, gender, type, and geographical location. The Lebanese are portrayed as coming together to force a debate on the country's political system. Since protests reveal that mistrust exists between state and society (as we have read in the theoretical framework), the images captivate the reader by creating confusion at the sight of people challenging the existing political order. Using medium and high angle shots to capture the protests shows their reality and prominence, but also their weakness in the face of the crisis. Particularly striking elements in these images are the protesters' young age (specifically the [19-30] age group) and the omnipresence of Lebanese flags as opposed to partisan and other flags.[6] The fact that a significant part of the Lebanese population carried a symbol of national togetherness in a

politically fragmented context conveys to the reader the need to face this crisis communally (see

Figure 4 for an example).

Figure 4: Photograph depicting citizens protesting against garbage crisis part of the "You Stink" campaign

This image appeared three days after "You Stink" campaign held its first protest. The banner reading "Akkar is not a garbage dump" references both the story that emerged of turning a land plot in Akkar—a rural region—into a landfill, and the poor quality of services the Lebanese state provides to Akkar's residents (Abu-Rish, 2016).

Taken from: Al-Tawil, I. (Photographer). (2015, July 28). [Digital image]. Retrieved from https://www.annahar.com/article/255356- طلعت-ريحتكم-في-وسط-بيروت

Additional aspects of the protests' framing contribute to building this collectivity sense.

First, the protests are portrayed as peaceful, with the protesters depicted as either holding signs,

chanting or sitting-in. None of the images show altercations with the police; in fact, police

officers are seen standing on the images' sides or backgrounds. The police symbolizes the

national government's authority, and its presence indicates the government's attempt to control

and to keep the protests civil.[7] The police's presence with their barbed wires and metal grids

reveals the government's desire to force a separation on the public and to impose the status quo.

Second, the fact that 58% of the depicted protests happened in downtown Beirut reinforces the

importance of physical space for public action. Downtown Beirut has a long history of acting as a forum for collective public action (Khalaf, n.d., as cited in Khatib, 2007). Third, the protesters efforts to align their struggle to the protests happening elsewhere is evident through the texts written on the banners and the signs. They not only represent the protesters' linguistic diversity, but also their desire to reach out to an audience beyond the Lebanese borders. This desire to communicate beyond borders is also seen in the protesters' activities and wear. Some protesters used pots to make noise and wore the Guy Fawkes mask to signal their cause's alignment with the recent anti-government/anti-establishment protests and movements around the world in which these symbols appeared.

7.2 Limitations

There are several limitations inherent to this study with the method, the data, and the findings. While content analysis is well established in communications research, visual content analysis (Carneiro & Johnson, 2014) and specifically visual framing (Coleman, 2010) are less so, as they have limited theoretical foundations. Content analysis allows the researcher to make inferences about the messages' effects based on the context in which the content is presented (Berelson, 1952; Rogers, 1994, as cited in Merrigan & Huston, 2015). Added to that, even when content analysis tries to assume a recipient's cognitions, most recipients may not necessarily have the skills to critically analyze pictures or media or to be sufficiently self-reflexive (Bock & al., 2011). This means that causal statements about the impact of the garbage scandal's framing on mobilization could not be made using content analysis alone. While content analysis provides information on an element's frequency of occurrence, it would not necessarily indicate the underlying content's significance (Bell, 2011; Saldana, 2009). Statements on the significance of the scandal's framing on the mobilization decision could not be made. Lastly, a level of

reliability lower than the recommended level revealed limitations in the explanations provided at the coders' training session.

Images are proxies for reality; as such I am aware that using images as sources of factual information has its limitations (Bell, 2011). Image presentation results from a conscious decision to frame reality. Additionally, since images are culturally complex elements, the risk that the researcher might import their own interpretations into the analysis and harm the "objective" definitions of the images' variables and values exists (Bell, 2011). In fact, pictures have several meanings depending on the context in which they are presented (Bock et al., 2011). In efforts to counteract this limitation, I developed a coding frame with explicit definitions of the variables and values. Lastly, I could not verify whether the articles appeared in the same format online and in print or what page number the articles appeared on; attempts to find the newspaper's print version in the United States were fruitless. However, newspapers' online content is usually recycled from its original source (Open Society Foundations, 2012).

Content analysis findings cannot be easily compared with some assumed "reality" by which the researcher can make claims of "bias" or "negative" representation (Bell, 2011). Thus, no claim of bias on *Annahar*'s scandal coverage was made. Since this study's results are not generalizable, this scandal coverage could not be compared with other newspapers' coverages to make claims of bias. Newspapers' ownership, distribution, and competition are all consequential in determining a media event's coverage and framing, especially if it serves to fight corruption (Camaj, 2013). Choosing an in-depth analysis of one newspaper in my research comes at the expense of limited external validity of my findings to the Lebanese press industry. In addition, the mixed nature of this particular scandal (corruption, socio-political, environment) make its framing unique and difficult to generalize across corruption scandals.

Section 8: Conclusion

Examining the news framing of corruption scandals matters to comprehend how corruption stories are presented to the public, with implications on the nature of the discourse on corruption and the efforts to curb the problem. The 2015 garbage management scandal with its powerful imagery was used as a case to evaluate such framing's characteristics. *Annahar* being a major newspaper and news source for the Lebanese public presented an excellent opportunity to study the frame's characteristics. Images are powerful tools to transmit pro-mobilization information and were used in the study because they offer a medium to understand the public's reaction. To understand the scandal's framing by Lebanese newspapers and the nature of the information presented to the public, a content analysis of 57 images was conducted in the scandal's first two weeks.

Findings demonstrate that this newspaper's framing laid out the conditions for the audience to perceive the scandal as one worthy for mobilization, based on both the belief that awareness of a transgression and of protests has a mobilizing effect on an audience and the fact that framing has an effect on public opinion. By using visually unappealing images of garbage, the newspaper portrayed the scandal as a "disgusting" crisis that provoked emotions of disgust and increased the scandal's frame resonance. This interpellated the reader in the process by showing the crisis' reality, absurdity, pervasiveness, and moral valence as disgust became a metaphor of the country's corruption. Added to that, the newspaper's framing conveyed that the crisis was impacting the country as a whole by strengthening elements that conveyed collectivity, such as the crisis' intense coverage, politicians depicted as passive in their response to the crisis, and young people protesting energetically the government's lack of solution and against the "corrupt" political class. These elements combined demonstrate that *Annahar* framed the

scandal based on a corruption victimization framework.

The findings—generated by inductive research—establish preliminary evidence as to how powerful images can be on mobilizing a public when portraying victims of corruption. While my research project did not make a causal argument between scandal perception and public reaction, what is certain is that images of a proactive public brought hope as demonstrated by the mass numbers of Lebanese who took the streets in the weeks that followed the scandal's emergence. Furthermore, the media's involvement in the coverage proves its importance in shaping public opinion. Commentators agree that the scandal and the movement would have not had the same impact, had it not been for the media's extensive coverage and social media activism. In contrast with the food safety scandal that centered on the Minister, this time people were sending media messages to their co-citizens and to the political class through the signs and the banners they carried, instead of the government. For future anti-corruption efforts, the relationship between decision-makers and activists, and media institutions needs to be reinforced to shape public debate in a direction for change to occur.

Two years later, and the crisis is still being talked about in local media since television reports, newspaper articles, and social media continuously discuss the lack of solution, indicating that the crisis has not been silenced. The media acted as the publicizer and the people acted as both the publicizer and the citizens who protested. Yet, the people's dual role as the citizens and the publicizer complicate the argument that in the relationship between media generator and media consumer, the media generator is more powerful. Since traditional media outlets remain divided in their scandal's coverage, the question becomes whether social media has the ability to influence corruption stories for mobilization to occur. Evidence on the media's role in creating social movements in the literature is inconclusive given that research has been and is still

conducted on the role of traditional and social media in contemporary social movements like the

anti-austerity movements, the Occupy movement, and the Arab Uprisings. What is certain about

social media's impact on mobilization is that it allows the public to monitor and report corrupt

acts (Paterno, 2015).

As this research project is not meant to be an exhaustive project on news framing of

corruption scandals, I briefly discuss below considerations for future research.

This project initially started with the goal of analyzing how news framing of corruption

scandals could have led to the public's mobilization. Choosing multiple newspapers with varied

political orientations would have not only provided a sound comparison framework for *Annahar*'s

scandal framing, but also accounted for frame diversity within the Lebanese press industry. This

offers a great opportunity for future research not only on newspapers, but also on television news

and social media's framing. A causal argument on the media's role in mobilization using a

content analysis alone cannot be made; as such, there is a need to find new evidence linking the

Lebanese citizens' perception of images with the mobilization decision in order to make such an

argument. One way to answer this question would be to look at the comments on the images

linked to the scandal to gauge the public's reaction, perhaps on social media since newspapers

websites in the country do not provide a space for comments. This provides the first step in

developing an analysis of corruption scandals based on the theory of frame-building and media

effects using visuals drawing from Scheufele (1999)'s work. Another interesting take on this

research project would be to examine the presence of a thematic or an episodic frame following

Iyengar (1996)'s work. Since an episodic framing informs the audience of an individualistic (as

opposed to societal) attribution of responsibility to the government/political elite for this scandal,

the consequence would be weakening of accountability for responsible officials.

Endnotes

[1] The term "Lebanese" in this paper refer to Lebanese nationals living in Lebanon.

[2] The Internal Security Forces fuel scandal did not harm public health like the other two scandals. The food safety scandal began in November 2014 when the Minister of Public Health decided to launch a series of surprise inspections in food establishments such as restaurants, slaughterhouses, and supermarkets in efforts to respond to citizens' concerns on foodborne illnesses. While the food investigations' test results launched by the Minister were shocking, the Minister's response gained more attention. During one of his televised press conferences, he named and shamed food establishments that were part of a list that included more than 1,000 places that have broken food safety regulations and inspections (Rothman, 2015).

[3] The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) is the most widely used corruption index. It classifies countries according to the degree of perceived corruption among politicians and civil servants in the public sector (Mattar, 2004).

[4] Some remedies exist to curbing corruption. For example, bribing civil servants is punishable according to the Lebanese Penal Code Articles 350 to 356. Mattar (2014) also writes that a minority of Lebanese refuses to see corruption as a "perennial intrinsic phenomenon."

[5] The term newspaper in this section and the subsequent sections refers to *Annahar*'s journalists, photographs, and editors. Since it is unknown who made the framing decisions, I use the term newspaper or *Annahar* to denote these decisions.

[6] According to the Central Intelligence Agency world factbook's website, 15 to 24 years old represent 16.73% of the Lebanese population.

[7] We have previously read in the background section on the "You Stink" movement that the police's attitude changed vis-à-vis the protesters as the protests grew in numbers and frequency.

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Appendix

Coder: First name Last name

Date: MM/DD

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Article #: Write article's number as indicated between parentheses

2. Year: YYYY

3. Date: Write MM/DD

ARTICLE FEATURES

4. Headline: Write the headline

5. Colloquial Lebanese: Code as "0" when the headline is written in colloquial Lebanese and "1" when the headline is written in standard Arabic.

6. Headline theme: Code as "0" when the article's headline focuses on the public's response to the crisis (the public includes civil society groups, experts, and private citizens), "1" for the national government's response, "2" for both the public and the national government responses, "3" for the municipal government's response, "4" for the police's response, "5" for a public figure's response (a public figure is an official, a politician, an artist, a civil society activist, a private citizen or a journalist), "6" for a foreign (non-Lebanese) party's response, "7" for another party's response, "8" for both the public and the police's responses.

IMAGE FEATURES

7. Type of image: Code as "0" when the image is a photograph, "1" for a painting, and "2" for

other image type.

8. Caption: Write the image caption when available, otherwise write "N/A."

9. Source: Code to indicate the image source as "0" if the newspaper took the image itself, "1" if another source is indicated, and "2" if the source is unknown. The following items indicate that *Annahar* owns the image: the source is marked as "Annahar", the photographer's name is indicated, the "archive" or "exclusive" watermarking are written, and the newspaper's logo is attached to the image.

10. Other source: Write the image source when the source variable is coded as "1."

Formal category

Variables in this category measure the image's salience.

11. Picture size: Code as "0" for small if the image size is less than 1/3 of the archived article, "1" for medium if the size is less than 1/2, and "2" for large if the size is more than 1/2.

12. Camera angle: Code as "0" for a low angle shot; "1" for a high angle shot; "2" for an eye-level shot with sub-values "2.0" for close-up and "2.1" for medium; "3" for bird's eye; and "4" for unknown. A low angle shot is when the camera is looking up while a high angle shot is when the camera is looking down. In a close-up shot, the camera focuses on the participant's face, while in a medium shot the camera focuses on the participant's body as opposed to only the face. A bird's eye shot captures a scene from above.

This variable is borrowed from Rothstein (1979)'s book on photojournalism and Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011)'s levels of visual framing, and allows the researcher to understand the camera's viewpoint. The choice of camera angle is crucial in constructing a story, and influencing the thoughts and opinions of the person reading the text and looking at the images.

13. Resolution: Code as "0" when the image has a high quality resolution and "1" for a low quality resolution as a result of the camera shaking.

14. Framing: Describe the image's frame lines, space between its elements, and any discontinuity of color.

This variable is borrowed from Kress and van Leeuwen (1996)'s book on visual design. The existence of framing stresses individuality and differentiation, while its absence stresses group identity. The stronger the visual composition's framing, the more it is presented as a separate unit of information.

Setting category

15. Time: Code as "0" when the time of day is daylight, "1" for evening, and "2" when the time of day is unknown.

16. Place: Code as "0" when the image's background is an open space with sub-values "0.0" for a street, "0.1" for a sidewalk, "0.2" for a parking lot, "0.3" for a river's banks, "0.4" for an open field; "1" for a closed space; and "2" for an unknown background.

17. Governorate: Code as "0" when the governorate in which the image was taken is Beirut, "1" for Mount Lebanon, "2" for North, "3" for South, "4" for Beqaa, "5" for Nabatieh, "6" for Baalbek, "7" for Akkar, and "8" when the governorate is unknown. Caption, credits, or headline provide indications on the governorate.

Participants category

Write "N/A" for all the variables when no participant is depicted in the image.

18. Number of participants: Write the approximate number of participants when they are

depicted.

19. Type: Code for all the participants in the image as "0" when the participant in the image is a protester, "1" for a politician, "2" for a civil society activist, "3" for a police/security forces officer, "4" for another official, "5" for a private citizen (and who is not a protester), "6" for a waste management worker, "7" when the type of participant is unknown, "8" for a journalist, and "9" for an artist. The participant's attire provides indications on its type. Politicians, artists, civil society activists, officials, and journalists become public figures when they receive media's attention and become recognized on a national scale.

20. How do the participants relate to another: Write down how the participants are interacting with one another in the image.

21. Gender: Code as "0" when the participants are males, "1" for females, "2" when both genders are present in the image.

22. Age: Code for all the participants' judged age as "0" when the participant's age is ≤ 18 years, "1" for [19-25], "2" for [26-30], "3" for [31-40], "4" for [41-50], "5" for > 50, and "6" when the age is unknown.

23. Position: Code for the human body's position as "0" when the participants are standing, "1" for sitting, "2" for lying, and "3" when no position is shown.

24. Face: Code for this variable when the participants' faces clearly exhibit emotions as "0" for disgust, "1" for fear, "2" for anger, "3" for sadness, "4" for surprise, "5" for joy, and "6" when the coder cannot read the emotion.

This variable is borrowed from Ekman and Friesen (1975)'s book on facial expressions and emotions. Research on facial expressions demonstrated that individuals possess an ability to judge an emotion after reading a facial expression, and found universality in expression for six

emotions: disgust, sadness, joy, fear, anger, and surprise. For example, a disgusted face is

characterized by opening of the mouth, a wrinkled nose, a retracted upper lip with a protruded

lower lip, and eyes squinting. The coder was presented with images of individuals exhibiting the

emotions studied by Ekman and Friesen (1975) to recognize the different faces (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Faces exhibiting the six universal human emotions

Taken from: Lawrence, K., Campbell, R., & Skuse, D. (2015). Age, gender, and puberty

influence the development of facial emotion recognition. *Frontiers in Psychology*. Retrieved

from http://journal.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00761/full. Copyright 2017 by Paul

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Activities category

Write "N/A" for all the variables when no activity is depicted in the image.

25. Activity: Code as "0" when the activity is protesting, "1" for walking, "2" for talking, "3" for

fighting, "4" for spraying water, "5" for other, "6" for lifting up, and "7" for driving.

26. Protest: Code for the protest's purpose as "0" when the protest is against the garbage crisis, "1" against the political class, "2" for elections, "3" about the government's lack of action, "4" against police brutality, and "5" for other. The article's headline, image credits and captions indicate what the protest is about. Write "N/A" when no protest is depicted.

Symbols category

PROTEST

Write "N/A" for all the variables when no protest item is depicted in the image.

27. Protest items: Code as "0" when the protesters carried with them posters, "1" for banners, "2" for signs, "3" for empty garbage bags, "4" for other, and "5" for face masks.

28. Text: When legible, write the text inscribed on these protest items.

29. Call for action: Code as "0" when the text on the protest items calls for action and incites for mobilization, and "1" otherwise.

30. Reference to government: Code as "0" when the text references the government as the party held responsible for the scandal and "1" otherwise.

GARBAGE

31. Garbage containment: Code as "0" when the image shows garbage bags contained in trash containers or trash collection trucks and "1" when garbage bags overflow from containers and when garbage is lying on the ground.

This variable was suggested by Nancy Rivenburgh from the University of Washington who per personal communication suggested looking at the garbage's prominence in the image relative to

the other elements. As a manifestation of disgust, garbage and specifically uncontained garbage

provokes such emotion.

NATIONAL TOGETHERNESS

32. Lebanese flag: Code as "0" when a Lebanese flag is present in the image, "1" when a

Lebanese flag is not present, and "2" when a Lebanese and another flag are both present.

The variable is borrowed from Khatib (2007)'s study on television coverage in the 2005

"Independence Uprising" protests and is a proxy for collectivity and other national emblems

when they applied as opposed to partisan flags and symbols.