

The 2009 British MPs' Expenses Scandal: Origins, Evolution and Consequences

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This chapter introduces the British MPs' expenses scandal; its origins, evolution and consequences. We argue that despite some early predictions, the scandal was limited in its impact: the purported 'revolution' never occurred. We briefly review the comparative literature on political impact of scandal, which illustrates why the effects of scandals are usually limited and reasons why voters may choose not to punish malfeasant politicians. We situate this scandal against other, international scandals, highlighting similarities and differences in the effects of scandal depending on cultural contexts. The chapter illustrates the *mediated* nature of the scandal and how it is best understood as comprised of not only the acts of politicians themselves, but a series of moves and counter-moves by the press and other actors.

Introduction

On 8 May 2009 the *Daily Telegraph* began publishing un-redacted expenses claims made by British MPs. The revelation of parliamentary expenses showed how, and the extent to which, some MPs took advantage of an unregulated expenses system—a system designed by, and vigorously protected against outside interference, by MPs themselves. The expenses regime was intended to cover the costs of performing parliamentary duties: operating costs for running constituency offices (including staff salaries, rent, computers, etc.) and communications and travel as part of their parliamentary duties. The regime also included Additional Costs Allowances (ACA)¹, worth up to £24,000 annually, to reimburse MPs for the expense of staying away from their primary home while performing their parliamentary duties.

It was, predominantly, MPs' ACA claims that captured media headlines and public attention in the weeks that followed the *Telegraph's* initial disclosure. Both the public and pundits reveled in, and were reviled by, some of the now (in)famous claims made: a duck house, a trouser press, chocolate bars, plasma TVs, a riding lawn mower, jellied eels, moat cleaning, light bulbs, dog food, Kenyan carpets, and hanging baskets and potted plants. However, it was the practice of 'flipping' or switching an MP's designated second home (which was eligible for ACA expenses), that revealed the extent to which the expenses regime could be manipulated to maximize personal gain. MPs reaped the benefits of renovating and maintaining their properties at taxpayers' expense: mortgage interest on second homes was tax deductible and many were sold on at a profit with MPs pocketing any subsequent capital gains.

The first few days of the *Telegraph's* revelations started with members of the then governing Labour party, senior ministers in particular, but after a few days switched its attention to senior Conservatives and Liberal Democrats before turning to rank-and-file members of all political parties. What quickly became apparent was the degree to which Members were implicated. This was not a scandal limited to a few 'bad apples', but rather, engulfed many in the House of Commons. Its institutional nature dictated that media and public scrutiny could not simply focus on individual cases of wrong-doing, but was compelled to consider the rules and regulations—established by MPs themselves—governing parliamentary expenses.

The institution-wide focus revealed that while many were implicated in the scandal and charged in the court of public opinion as having abused the system, very few MPs had engaged in outright *illegal* behaviour. Of the millions of claims made, the vast majority were made within 'the rules', a point many a MP was quick to cite as justification for their behaviour. Yet in attempting to direct attention away from individual cases of purported wrongdoing and towards the institution itself, MPs placed the expenses regime on the front line. With the public eye centered firmly on life inside the Commons, the intensity and secrecy with which Parliament sought to protect the expenses regime from external scrutiny was revealed. The next section briefly outlines the emergence and evolution of the expenses scandal, showing how repeated efforts were made to exempt the expenses regime from efforts to make the system more transparent and accountable.

A Scandal Unfolds: A Brief Chronology

Few outside of the Westminster Village could claim to know much about MPs' pay and expenses before May 2009. However, that changed markedly with the disclosure of MPs' expenses claims by the *Telegraph*. The revelations resulted in a perfect storm that dominated media coverage in the weeks that followed (vanHeerde-Hudson 2011), and save for the handful of journalists heavily involved in preparing the data for publication, few could have predicted the fallout from the disclosure and the fury of the British public (Winnett and Rayner 2009). But for many in the Commons, parliamentary expenses had been an issue of concern and contention dating back as early as 2004, when Heather Brooke, an investigative journalist, began making requests to the Commons' Data Protection Office to release information concerning MPs expenses.² Later that year the Commons did publish the information, broken down by office, travel and ACA claims, but the aggregated nature of the report meant that the details of MPs' individual claims remained hidden from public view (Winnett and Rayner 2009).

By 2005, Brooke's requests had company, as two other journalists, Ben Leapman and Jon Ungood-Thomas, made similar requests to the Commons' new FOI Office. All three were rebuked, often with personal involvement from then Speaker Michael Martin—citing the costs of preparing the reports and concerns over Members' privacy—which ultimately contributed to his resignation in May 2009. Undeterred, appeals were filed with the Information Commissioner, Richard Thomas, in 2006.

Meanwhile, some in the Commons didn't intend to wait for the Information Commissioner's decision. Conservative MP for Penrith and the Border, David Maclean, sponsored a bill that would have exempted Parliament from FOI, thereby

ensuring secrecy for MPs' expenses (Barrett and Bloxham 2010). The bill ultimately failed and in 2007 the Commissioner ruled that ACA claims should be published, disaggregated by the various categories, but without detailed receipts. This partial release of information satisfied neither side and appeals were lodged with the Information Tribunal, the appellate body on FOI requests. In February 2008 the Tribunal upheld the Commissioner's decision; it also went further, suggesting that allowances should be published except in cases where protecting them was 'absolutely necessary'. It was also at the Tribunal's hearing that the controversial 'John Lewis List' was made public for the first time (see Worthy, chapter 2).

In the following months, the issue of expenses was actively being played out in Westminster, featuring in a few newspaper headlines, but with no real splash or indication of what was to come. And once again, Parliament intervened, this time appealing the Tribunal's decision to the High Court. However, in May 2008 the Court upheld the Tribunal's decision and ordered the publication of detailed expenses claims. The Commons indicated that it would do so by October of 2008, but this was pushed back several times with little to no explanation from Commons officials. But the all-quiet was soon explained as Parliament, led by the Leader of the House of Commons, Harriet Harman, made a final attempt to exempt the House from FOI legislation. However, the bill quickly ran into trouble, with many MPs fearing the legislation looked 'as if they had something to hide' (Winnett and Rayner 2009: 29). The bill failed and Parliament reluctantly agreed to disclose detailed information on expenses in June 2009.

However, Parliament's publication of expenses claims was spectacularly thwarted by the *Telegraph's* acquisition of a disk containing millions of non-redacted claims dating back to 2004. The disk was sold to the *Telegraph* for £300,000 by John Wick, a former SAS officer, on two conditions: 'first, that the *Telegraph* had to publish details of expenses immediately, and second, that the alleged abuse of expenses would not be used for partisan purposes, but would expose what was believed to be systematic abuse of parliamentary allowances' (vanHeerde-Hudson 2011: 245; Winnett and Rayner 2009).³

In the days and weeks following the *Telegraph's* revelations, there was little talk or focus on issues save for parliamentary expenses, as each new allegation and response contributed to a seemingly unending saga. Life inside the Commons was increasingly unbearable, as many Members anxiously reviewed their own claims, awaiting their turn to answer for perceived excesses (Winnett and Rayner 2009; see Wright, chapter 3). Only a few scandals in history had shaken the political foundations of the country so intensely, and none in living memory. Former Prime Minister Gordon Brown called it the 'biggest parliamentary scandal for two centuries'.⁴ In an effort to respond to the crisis party leaders uniformly condemned the abuses, a handful of MPs were deselected by their parties and a record number of MPs announced their retirement. The Independent Parliamentary Standards Agency (IPSA) was created to oversee the investigation into MPs expenses and to design and administer a new expenses regime.

Properly understood then, the expenses scandal and public anger that arose as a result, was not about castigating politicians as criminals or indeed criminal behaviour in the true sense of the word; only a handful of MPs were charged with criminal wrong

doing.⁵ It was the intentional lack of transparency and accountability that governed the parliamentary allowances scheme that was widely perceived to be the real offence. That MPs had deliberately sought to keep expenses details from being disclosed and were essentially free to regulate their own activities, reinforced for many in the public the belief that politicians are subject to a different set of rules and standards and increasingly ‘out of touch’ with the lives of ‘ordinary’ British citizens.

The consequences and fallout from the scandal were expected to be severe. Survey data from May-June 2009 showed that only a small percentage of the British public had not heard of the scandal and most were angry about it (YouGov 2010) and trust, while historically low, had fallen further as a result of the scandal (Hansard Society 2010). Public opinion of politicians also fell: 50 per cent of the public thought that MPs: spend their time furthering personal and career interests (Hansard Society 2010); are unprincipled (47 per cent); are more interested in serving their own personal interest (66 per cent); are dishonest (48 per cent); and are out of touch with the day-to-day lives of their constituents (70 per cent) (YouGov 2010). How would the expenses scandal change the political landscape if citizens and voters acted on their anger and distrust? What impact would the scandal have in the short and long-term? This volume aims to answer these and other questions detailed in the next section.

Aims of the Volume

The aim of this volume is to comprehensively examine the 2009 British MPs’ expenses scandal, its anatomy, evolution and consequences. In the chapters that follow, the authors consider the scandal across a number of domains: the scandal’s

origins in Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation; how MPs viewed the expenses regime and their efforts to protect it; its impact on turnout, vote choice and retirement; public perceptions of MPs' involvement in the scandal and on their reputations; evidence of media bias in reporting the scandal; and the efforts to reform the expenses regime and unintended consequences of reform efforts in the wake of the scandal.

More generally, the volume considers two views that have emerged concerning the impact of the scandal. The first view holds that while the scandal was a significant political event, similar to scandals elsewhere, it would not have a significant impact on British political life. Any evidence of short-term falls in trust and confidence in parties and politicians would likely return to previous levels as memory of the scandal faded. This view did not discount institutional reform to the expenses regime itself, but more generally didn't see the expenses scandal as a catalyst for fundamental change to the way of doing politics. The second view saw the expenses scandal as a political earthquake that shook Westminster to its core, the consequences of which, would be instant and irrevocable.⁶ Bell (2012: 2-3) has described it as a 'revolution', providing a permanent change to the way we do politics in Britain. Given the intense media scrutiny, and public fury that followed the *Telegraph's* revelations, it was more than credible that the expenses scandal was the juggernaut needed to clean up British politics.

Here, we assess the evidence for both views. Was the MPs' expenses scandal a revolution, as purported by Bell (2009), or was the impact relatively limited, as consistent with the general findings from the comparative literature on scandal? Our findings show, that the revolution never happened: with a few exceptions where we see

significant scandal effects, the full force of public anger never really took hold, particularly in electoral terms. The most significant impact of the scandal is IPSA: an independent body created to both regulate and administer a new expenses regime, however, even its long-term existence is not assured (see chapters 9 and 10).

The volume draws on contributions from a range of outstanding UK and international academic and non-academic experts. Each chapter provides original research drawing on a rich range of data and a variety of methodological approaches. Care has been taken to translate findings from quantitative approaches so that they are widely consumable. Each of the chapters focuses primarily on the British MPs' expenses scandal, and where appropriate, consideration is given to scandals elsewhere. In this vein, a secondary aim of the volume is to consider the expenses scandal comparatively, drawing on the findings regarding scandals in other countries and contexts to see where there are similarities and/or differences. This is not to say the *method* is comparative; we aim only to view the British scandal in light of the comparative literature.

The Scandal: Legacy and Aftermath

This volume looks at the impact of the scandal some five years after the initial publication of parliamentary expenses, and while the intensity and scrutiny of the initial episode no longer exists, a line has not yet been drawn under it. Fortunately, it does not render this analysis premature; rather, it points to the continued saliency of parliamentary expenses for the British public, the consequences of rapid reform in the wake of the scandal and the inherent difficulties in balancing two competing objectives—facilitating MPs' ability to perform their parliamentary duties and

ensuring accountability and value for money in the use of public monies, particularly in the context of the current economic climate. And with some distance between the onset and today, we can consider it in light of its short and medium term consequences.

As recently as May 2013, Peter Osborne argued that MPs had not learned lessons from the 2009 scandal as evidenced by their continued criticism of IPSA, the body in charge of regulating the new expenses regime, and ‘failing to accept [its] authority’ (Osborne 2013; see also Gay, chapter 9). And it’s not just MPs’ dissatisfaction with IPSA that yields headlines, but expenses related behaviour: claiming expenses for business class flights despite being against the rules (Watts 2013); claiming expenses for learning their respective partner’s languages (Brocklebank 2013); and perhaps most importantly, in taking advantage of a ‘loophole’ in the new regime that allowed MPs to rent tax-payer funded homes to each other (Hastings 2012). With regards to the latter, Speaker John Bercow suffered some of the same criticism as that of his predecessor, Michael Martin, when he was accused of attempting to block moves to publish the names of MPs’ landlords under a FOI request (Unlock Democracy 2012). Speaker Bercow argued that releasing the names of the 27 MPs who rented to one another was not feasible given ‘security concerns’, but critics responded that these could be alleviated by simply blacking out the addresses of the properties in question.

The legacy of the British expenses scandal, in conjunction with the global economic downturn, appears to have inspired similar debates in other national and supranational parliaments. For example, in October 2011, MEPs voted to freeze their expenditure allowance despite proposals by some MEPs to reduce it. This followed a decision in

the previous June where the European Parliament ordered the publication of details of MEPs' expenses. In France, National Assembly members voted in July 2012 against plans for external scrutiny of their £5,000 monthly expenses⁷ allowances, despite evidence of abuse: Pascal Terrasse, Member for Ardeche, claimed expenses for his family holiday, and Christian Blanc, State Secretary for the Paris region, claimed some €12,000 for Cuban cigars.⁸ Canada is currently engulfed in its own expenses scandal, focusing predominantly on the living and travel expenses of senators. One senator, Pamela Wallin, has been accused of claiming parliamentary expenses while carrying out personal business. Although the scandal is thus far limited to a handful of senators, recent polling data shows that '86 per cent of respondents — including overwhelming majorities in all regions and across all age groups and party affiliations — feel it's likely that MPs and senators are claiming improper expenses. Of those, 56 per cent feel it's very likely'.⁹

In Italy, a rash of current scandals has raised concerns that Italian politics is still plagued by levels of institution corruption similar to that of the Tangentopoli scandal of the 1990s. Roberto Formigoni, Governor of Lombardy, himself under investigation for accepting paid vacations from a health care lobbyist, 'dismissed the entire city government of Reggio Calabria to stave off infiltration by organized crime and surrendered his own government after accusations of vote-selling and more than a dozen regional lawmakers embroiled in scandal'.¹⁰ At the national level, Italy's provision of both salary and expenses is amongst the highest in the West. Italian politicians can claim for 'meals in lavish restaurants, cosmetic dentistry, private cars and chauffeurs, and police protection—including outriders stopping traffic to let them

through' (Malone 2011). The degree of abuse is thought to be so extensive, that the scandal the engulfed British politicians would be seen as 'amateur' (Malone 2011).

Thus, expenses related scandals are, and remain, an important and salient issue in many countries. The next section considers the cross-national literature on scandals and their impact on political life before considering in more detail, the explicitly mediated nature of the MPs' expenses scandal, a feature of nearly all modern political scandals. The final section outlines the contributions of each of the chapters presented in this volume.

The Political Impact of Scandal

Knowledge of the political impact of scandals comes largely from studies of the US and UK, although there is a growing literature looking at scandal cross-nationally.

This section examines the state of the literature on the impact of scandal and shows, despite a great deal of public knowledge/awareness of scandal and condemnation of politicians' behaviour, scandals are rarely the electoral and political earthquakes they are initially thought to be.

In the UK, scandals involving public figures have generally been labeled with the term 'sleaze', although Dunleavy and Weir (1995) delineate different types: alleged financial wrongdoing (including improprieties regarding lobbying, quangos, honours, 'jobs for the faithful', company directorships and party fundraising); unconventional sexual behaviour; and salary increases for 'fat cats' in the privatized public utilities.

Thompson (1997) also distinguishes scandal by type: those involving sex, those involving money (usually fraud or corruption) and those involving an abuse of power,

although modern scandals frequently blur these boundaries. For example, in 1963 UK Secretary of State for War, John Profumo, who was married, had a brief sexual relationship with Christine Keeler. The scandal around his extra-martial affair was compounded by the allegation that Keeler had a relationship with a Soviet attaché, and her relationship with Profumo—during the peak of the Cold War—was a means to access top-secret British military intelligence. More recently, former US presidential candidate John Edwards admitted to a sexual relationship with Rielle Hunter, with whom he also had a child, while married to Elizabeth Edwards. This sexual scandal also became a financial one when Edwards was later charged with violating US campaign finance law for using campaign funds to cover up his relationship with Hunter.

Delineating the type of scandal matters because the impact or effect of scandal varies depending both on its type and the cultural context. In the US, morals violations have been shown to result in the most severe electoral consequences and conflict of interest the least, ‘bringing about essentially no retribution’ (Peters and Welch 1980:703). However, with respect to the 1997 UK general election, Farrell *et al.* (1998: 88) find that ‘financial and sexual scandals were of about equal importance in the minds of voters, although neither resulted in any major shifts in votes’. They go on to point out however, that prior to the 1990’s, ‘almost all British scandals were concerned with sex, not money, while the opposite was closer to the truth in the US (King 1986). It may be that voters punish the types of scandals they are least familiar with in their particular polity’ (1998: 91). Drawing on these insights then, we would expect to find significant effects of the expenses scandal on electoral outcomes, however, as shown in chapters 4 and 5, the effects are relatively muted.

Research into the effects of political scandal on politicians' electoral success or failure reports mixed findings, but overall tends to suggest that effects are limited (Farrell *et al.* 1998 ; Alford *et al.* 1994; Jacobson and Dimock 1994). Several theories have been suggested to account for the low impact of scandal on vote share, including uninformed voters (Klasnja 2011), cognitive dissonance (Dimock and Jacobson 1995), and implicit trading (Rundquist *et al.* 1977) Together, these suggest that while better informed voters may sometimes be less likely to vote for corrupt politicians, partisan and issue-based priorities often take precedence over scandal in determining vote choice. Herrick (2000) argues that the minimal effect of scandal on incumbents' chances of re-election is often due to members' degree of electoral security. While association with scandal tends to lead to a decline in vote share, this regularly fails to do away with members' majorities altogether.

For example, the British 1997 general election followed a torrent of sleaze allegations directed at the incumbent Conservative Party and saw a landslide win for New Labour. That year, average Tory vote loss across all seats was 11.8%, compared to 13.5% in Conservative constituencies where the MP had been subject to an allegation of sleaze (Farrell *et al.* 1998: 789).¹¹ However, the net electoral effect of sleaze allegations was much reduced when comparing predicted and actual electoral outcomes. While sleaze played a partial role in motivating defections by Conservative voters in 1997, 'it was overshadowed by other issues, such as economic management and, most important of all, education' (Farrell *et al.* 1998: 90).

Similar findings have been reported relating to the 1992 U.S. House Bank scandal. Despite public expectations of disastrous consequences for those caught up in the scandal, Alford *et al.* (1994: 799) find ‘practically no effect of the scandal on reelection. While numerous challengers used the issue in their campaigns and many political observers braced for the impact of the Banking scandal, the issue did not appear to resonate with voters’. At the 1992 US congressional elections, over 80% of offending incumbents were re-elected (Alford *et al.* 1994; Dimock and Jacobson 1995). Furthermore, the majority of those who failed to secure re-election ran in redrawn districts and five had to contend with fellow incumbents (Alford *et al.* 1994: 789). Ahuja *et al.* (1994: 920) conclude that for the few who were ousted, ‘it was usually because there were opposed by a politically experienced, well-financed challenger not a novice’ (see also Abramowitz 1991). Therefore, had redistricting and the associated quality of challengers not been factors, the number of check-kiting incumbents gaining re-election may have been even higher.

The effects of individual (rather than institution-wide) scandals are also somewhat limited. The average loss in vote share for US House incumbents facing allegations or charged with corruption has remained relatively low: between 6 and 11 per cent from 1968 and 1978, and at 9 per cent from 1982-1990 (Welch and Hibbing 1980; 1997). Welch and Hibbing (1997) also show that during the period 1982-1990, the vast majority, 75 per cent, of corruption-charged US House Representatives competing in general elections were successfully re-elected. However, the 25 per cent who lost compared to just under 3 per cent of other incumbents. So while the loss in vote share wasn’t substantial, it was enough to have a sizeable effect on re-election rates compared to ‘clean’ politicians. Welch and Hibbing suggest therefore that ‘the

common wisdom that corrupt politicians continue to go unpunished is not altogether on target' (1997: 237).

Electoral security, seniority and incumbent advantage do help to protect scandal-ridden incumbents from electoral defeat however. Peters and Welch (1980: 704) note that seniority provides 'a larger cushion against retribution than that possessed by the more junior candidate'. Similarly, Herrick (2000: 96) finds electoral security to be the most significant factor affecting whether or not members accused of unethical behaviour can survive an election cycle. Herrick notes that while institutional power, media coverage, the political climate and the member's age also impact upon their electoral prospects, the size of the swing necessary to oust them tends to be the most decisive factor. Peters and Welch (1980) and Nyblade and Reed (2008) also show that scandal-ridden incumbents who choose not to stand down are insulated by seniority and incumbent advantage. Therefore, while the negative effect of scandal on vote share is apparent, it often fails to be strong enough to result in a defeat of scandal-ridden members who chose to run for re-election.

The electoral effects of political scandal have also been found to differ along partisan lines. Peters and Welch (1980: 703) find that from 1968 to 1978, Democrats were more likely than Republicans to be charged with corruption, and lost almost twice as many votes as corruption-charged Republicans. Conversely however, Welch and Hibbing (1997: 237) find that from 1982 to 1990, all else being equal, Republicans were more likely than Democrats to be charged with corruption and were also harder hit at the polls.¹² Clarke *et al.* (1999) also find that Republicans were more affected than Democrats following the House banking scandal, a finding echoed by

Banducci and Karp (1994). Partisan variation in the electoral effects of scandal may reflect many factors, including differences in the mediation of scandal and in the trade-offs made by voters of varying partisan affiliations.

The electoral consequences of scandal can also be seen in its effect on turnover or members' decisions to retire.¹³ Clarke *et al.* (1999) note that at the 1992 congressional elections, 66 members of the House of Representatives retired, constituting the highest number of retirements since the end of World War II. Of these, 53 did not seek another elective office (Clarke *et al.* 1999: 81). They find that in addition to scandal effects, political and economic factors also exerted significant influence on individual decisions to run and thus turnover (see also Groseclose and Krehbiel 1994; Kiewiet and Zeng 1993). And again, differential partisan effects were observed. Although representatives for both parties were equally implicated in the scandal, trouble with the economy, a partisan climate hostile to Republicans, and time-limited claims on retirement income made Republicans more likely to retire in 1992. So while the scandal led to an increase in turnover, thus narrowing the pool of scandal-ridden incumbents seeking re-election to those with greater chances of success, the phenomenon was moderated by other factors which encouraged certain groups to cut their losses.

While these factors help to explain why scandal often fails to result in electoral defeat, three additional factors relating to characteristics or behaviours of voters themselves—information levels, cognitive dissonance and trading—, may also serve to limit electoral accountability. Klasnja (2011) finds that less-informed voters are more likely to vote for incumbents accused of corruption, and argues therefore, that an increase in

political awareness may serve to reduce support for malfeasant incumbents. This is supported by Chang *et al.* (2010), who argue that mediation of a political scandal may constitute the necessary spark to hold those implicated accountable. Their study of judicial investigations of malfeasance among deputies in the Italian lower house over the course of eleven post-war elections found that while all legislatures included deputies charged with malfeasance, a dramatic rise in press coverage in the 1990s preceded the ousting of the previously immune corrupt legislative elite, concluding that ‘this change in the informational environment was crucial to the change in voter behavior’ (Chang *et al.* 2010: 213). The authors theorize that one consequence of mediation is that as corruption increases in salience, voters are alerted to the level of shared anti-corruption sentiment among them, and act to hold politicians accountable.

Dimock and Jacobson (1995) however, observe a more perplexing pattern of behaviour in their study of voter reactions to the US House Bank scandal:

‘Fortunately for members who had written bad checks, voters who knew about the transgression were least disposed to be outraged by it, while the voters most disposed to outrage were also most inclined to believe the guilty were innocent. The explanation for these curious patterns is that voters who faced the option of condemning an incumbent they otherwise appreciated or dismissing the offense as inconsequential often chose the latter course. The damage was also moderated by partisanship; voters of the incumbent's party showed a strong tendency to err in the incumbent's favor in assessing involvement in the scandal. The classical theory of cognitive dissonance readily explains both phenomena’ (Dimock and Jacobson 1995: 1143).

Therefore, knowledge of a scandal may not always lead to a straightforward decrease in approval or likelihood of voting for malfeasant politicians.

Finally, Rundquist *et al.* (1977: 956) propose a theory of implicit trading to describe why informed voters continue to vote for malfeasant candidates: 'if candidate corruption is treated like any other component in the voter's choice between two candidates, it follows that there are conditions under which a rational voter would knowingly support corrupt candidates'. This is supported by Farrell *et al.* (1998) who find that British voters in 1997 prioritized education issues over sleaze allegations in casting ballots. Rundquist *et al.* (1977) suggest that a strategy for corrupt politicians would then be to take distinct positions on substantive issues in order to encourage implicit trading with specific constituencies. On balance however, the literature suggests that the electoral success of both incumbents and challengers associated with scandal may not simply be attributable to voters' lack of knowledge, but also to their partisan and issue-based priorities. Therefore while knowledge may be a necessary condition for voters to seek electoral retribution, it does not appear to be sufficient.

A Plague on Your Houses: Evidence of Minor Party Gains from Scandal?

It is worth pausing for a moment to consider how this scandal affected minor parties' fortunes post 2009 in Britain. As the evidence above suggests, mainstream parties and politicians do not seem suffer electorally in the medium to long term, which may not be surprising given that nearly all were implicated. But what, if anything, happens to minor party support in the short to medium term? Is there any evidence that minor parties' fortunes are helped by 'a plague on all your houses' sentiment by the public?

The minor party story in Britain post 2010 general election has been that of UKIP. Clearly positioned as the antithesis to the ‘Westminster-insider’, UKIP has experienced surge in popularity and in terms of electoral support. In the European Parliament elections in June 2009, one month following the break of the scandal, UKIP won only 7 seats—not much evidence the voters were turning to an anti-establishment, anti-expenses party.

Since then, UKIP’s popularity and electoral fortunes have blossomed. In the May 2013 local county council elections, UKIP won over 140 seats and fielded 1,700 candidates, three times the number that stood in 2009. They’ve also increased their vote share in nearly every by-election since 2010, most notably in Barnsley Central, taking 12% of the vote and beating the Conservatives, Liberal Democrats and BNP into second place behind Labour. In the run up to the 2014 European Parliament elections, support for UKIP is at 26%, and is taking support not just from the Tories, but across all three major parties. But is UKIP’s increased popularity the result abandoning the main three parties over expenses or does it reflect UKIP’s long-standing anti-EU, anti-immigration stance under ‘austerity’?

The short answer is, not likely. One way of getting at this is to look at what UKIP was talking to voters about in the run up to the 2010 general election. In terms of its manifesto, UKIP argued for the right of the public to recall MPs, including those who abused expenses. But much of the language around recall was couched in references to bureaucracy, both Whitehall and Brussels, and giving power back to local people; hardly taking expenses head on.

There is some evidence however, that UKIP was talking to voters about expenses seen in review of UK national newspapers in the month prior to the 2010 election. Just over one in five articles (23%) mentioned UKIP or party leader Nigel Farage and expenses. However, by comparison, 54% of all articles mentioned either Europe or immigration. The reality of austerity and the economic downturn, the re-emerging split within the Conservative party over Europe, and Ed Miliband's low popularity, rather than expenses, are more plausible factors explaining UKIP's rise in popularity. In sum, there is little evidence to support the expenses scandal had an impact on the party system more generally, despite the success of one anti-system party.

The Negative Effects of Scandal on Trust and Confidence

Outside the electoral arena, scandal has also been shown to negatively affect public trust and confidence. Unsurprisingly, scandal has been found to harm the overall reputation of both the individual politicians and institutions implicated in scandal (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995; Patterson and Magleby 1992). For example, both the House Banking scandal and the 1976 'Koreagate' scandal—in which it had emerged that members of Congress had taken bribes from South Korean businesspeople acting on behalf of the Korea Central Intelligence agency, with the intention of influencing US policy in the context of uneasy relations between the two countries—coincided with two of the lowest recorded approval ratings of Congress (Patterson and Magleby 1992, cited in Herrick 2000: 97). British public attitudes towards MPs following the expenses scandal were remarkably cynical: 40 per cent of respondents report not trusting MPs to put the national interest first and a majority believing MPs never tell the truth (*The Telegraph* 13 December 2010). The Hansard Society's Democratic Audit of Political Engagement (2010: 32) however, points out

that the expenses scandal didn't contribute to a 'collapse in trust' because trust was already so low. Instead, the scandal 'confirmed and hardened the public's widely held skepticism about politicians rather than changed their views'.

In Italy, the aftermath of the Tangentopoli or 'bribesville' scandals was a somewhat more dramatic 'citizenship revolt', leading to a 'massive vote against state funding of parties, the collapse of the traditional parties in local elections and the accompanying hemorrhage of membership' (Pujas and Rhodes 1999: 49). While the severity of public response to scandal may vary, the negative effects of malfeasance on trust have also been shown to extend beyond Western Democracies. Chang and Chu's (2006) study of five Asian democracies (Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand), also found a consistent 'strongly corrosive effect of corruption on citizens' trust towards political institutions' (265).

The breadth or reach of a scandal, for example whether institutional or individual in nature, has important implications for blame attribution and accountability. Alford *et al.* (1994: 790) distinguish between the effects of individual and institutional scandals on voter evaluations of candidates, noting that voters 'discount the culpability of their own members for a scandal that is perceived as attached to an institution'. This mirrors overall gap in evaluations of individuals in institutions, seen in positive evaluations of local representatives despite negative evaluations of Congress as a whole (Fenno 1975; Parker and Davidson 1979). Alford *et al.* (1994: 790) contend that the diffuse nature of the House Bank scandal explained how it impacted on attitudes towards Congress without causing great harm to individual members. Furthermore, in individual terms, while the activation of a politician involved in a

political scandal has been found to decrease judgements of trustworthiness of politicians in general (assimilation effect), it also *increases* judgements of other specific politicians not involved in the scandal (contrast effect) (Schwarz and Bless 1992; Bless and Schwarz 1998; Bless *et al.* 2000). These findings, however, are mediated by level of expertise or information. Régner and Floch (2005: 259) show that when taking account of political knowledge, ‘expertise’, assimilation and contrast effects are present among young adults in France with a rich political knowledge, but tend not to be seen among those with poorer knowledge. Therefore, the impact of scandal on confidence and trust in individuals and institutions is not always straightforwardly negative, and mirrors wider patterns of conflicting attitudes towards politicians individually and collectively.

Some cases, such as the expenses scandal constitute clear-cut examples of institutional scandal given the uniformity of the type of allegations made (if not the degree of impropriety) and the implication of all main political parties; however, others are less clear cut. For example, the wave of Tory ‘sleaze’ preceding the 1997 UK general election was the result of diverse individual activities constituting several types of scandal, but ‘the number of cases of reported corrupt activities by Conservative politicians, and their prominence in the media, made the issue a national, collective one’ (Farrell *et al.* 1998: 92). Arguably, it was the way in which these activities were presented collectively as a ‘wave’ by the British press, which transformed the relatively unconnected behaviour of specific individuals into an institutional scandal tainting an entire political party. Had the same behaviour been mediated differently it may have resulted in different outcomes in perceptions of both individual politicians and parliament as a whole. Farrell *et al.* (1998:92) also argue

that while sleaze was viewed as a national, party-wide issue in Britain in 1997, the 1992 House Bank scandal was conceived differently in the US, 'whose individualistic political culture attributes blame for corruption to the candidate, and only rarely to a party as a whole across the country'. Thus, the conception and mediation of a scandal as individual or institutional may depend both on political culture and media landscape.

A Decline in Diffuse Party/Political Support?

Thinking about the medium to long-term, what evidence is there that the expenses scandal has impacted diffuse support for the political system, if at all? Have parties, politicians and political institutions lost legitimacy in the eyes of the public? Data and research on the long-term effects of scandal are extremely limited. This is unsurprising given that confounding variables pose serious challenges to measuring the causal impact of the scandal in the short term, and even more so in the long-term. Even the best research designs will have difficulty teasing out a range of factors which may have influenced support for and engagement with the political system post 2009: the financial crisis, BBC/Savile inquiry, press intrusion and Leveson inquiry, bankers' bonuses, and the 'Etonization' of the front bench in government, among others.

Castells (2007: 244) has argued that the 'crisis of political legitimacy in most of the world cannot be attributed exclusively, by any means, to scandal politics and to media politics. Yet, scandals are most likely at the very least a precipitating factor [...] in rooting skepticism vis-à-vis formal politics in the long term'. Perhaps the greatest long-term effect of the MPs' expenses scandal, compounded by the succession of

scandals in public institutions that followed, has been what might be termed a crisis of engagement.

The most recent Hansard *Audit* (2013: 1) found that ‘just 41% of the public now say that in the event of an immediate general election they would be certain to vote – a decline of seven percentage points in a year and the lowest level in the debate of the *Audit*’. The authors contend that, ‘combined with the low turnout levels at recent local elections and the disastrous turnout at the polls for Police and Crime Commissioners in November 2012, these findings are deeply worrying for the health of our democracy’ (ibid: 1).

Party political membership has also suffered as a result of the scandal, but it follows a long-term trend dating back to the 1950s. Political commentators predicted a decline in support for Britain’s largest political parties and the evidence suggests this has been the case. In 2011, the BBC noted that, ‘there are more members of the Caravan Club, or the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, than of all Britain's political parties put together’.¹⁴

However, the news is not all bad with respect to party membership. The number of Labour party members has fluctuated more so than Conservative or Liberal Democrat numbers (House of Commons Library, 2012), and while the trend remains negative, Hansard *Audit* (2010:108) data following the expenses scandal showed two point rise, from 3 to 5%, in the number of respondents reporting having donated or paid membership fees to a political party. Though the rise was marginal, this was the first occasion in which there was a year-on-year increase since the second *Audit* in 2005.

A Comparative Look at Scandals and Impact

The bulk of research into political scandal and its effects has focused on the US and Britain. However, available evidence from several other countries—constituting a variety of political contexts—reveals striking similarities in the electoral consequences of scandal: as in Britain and the US, they are consistently limited by other factors. In Europe, mayors convicted of corruption in both Spain and France have also enjoyed high re-election rates (Jimenez and Cainzos 2006; Lafay and Servais 2000). Similarly, in Japan, 60 per cent of legislators convicted of corruption in the post-war period were subsequently reelected (Reed 1999). Furthermore, legislators who were indicted on charges and ran for re-election suffered only minor losses in vote share, while those convicted went on to *increase* their vote share in subsequent elections (Reed 2005).

Ferraz and Finan (2008) have studied the electoral effects of media coverage of corruption in Brazil and find that among municipalities with the same levels of reported corruption, those which released audits of their expenditures which were then reported by the local radio saw a significant effect on incumbents' electoral performance. Chang *et al.* (2010) note similar changes in the electoral consequences of scandal in Italy over the postwar period, specifically following operation *manipulite* or 'clean hands' of the 1990s in response to the *Tangentopoli* scandal that rocked Italian politics. *Tangentopoli* was the name given to revelations that a number of political parties were being illegally financed by business and industry. Until this point Italy had constituted a particularly extreme case in which charges of corruption were not associated with loss of vote share. However, this shifted following increased

public awareness of the extent of the issue and resulted in a dramatic increase in the electoral effects of scandal, rendering the country a unique example in which ‘voters turned on a whole class of allegedly corrupt national political leaders and ejected them from public office’ (Chang *et al.* 2010: 178). Despite these postwar shifts, a series of financial scandals, many associated with former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, in the run up to Italy’s 2012 general election has led to concerns from some quarters that the Tangentopoli of the 1990’s may have re-surfaced.¹⁵

Cross-national similarities in the electoral consequences of scandal and the impact of media dissemination of information regarding corruption, stand in contrast to differences in the types of scandal which capture media and public attention across different countries. These differences have been discussed previously in relation to the contrast between UK and the US, but Thompson (2000: 10) notes similar differences elsewhere: ‘sex scandals typically play a much less significant role in French or Italian political life than they do in Britain, for example, while political scandals in France and Italy have been concerned primarily with corruption and abuse of power’. While the focus on financial matters in Italian political scandals is explained by high levels of corruption in the country, the British and American focus on sex suggests the degree to which national media and public in both countries continue to be scandalized by the infidelities of their political leaders.

While Italy and Sweden represent two extremes in terms of financial corruption in politics, mediated political scandal in both countries has focused on financial dealings. This is explained by the features of Nordic political culture, ‘in which legislation and official regulation play a central role, [therefore] political scandals

often involve violations of decisions, rules or statutes concerning economic affairs' (Allern and Pollack 2012: 15). So in Italy, the prevalence of financial scandal results from high levels of corruption, while in Sweden corruption levels are low and the focus on financial scandal is instead motivated by the severity with which even minor financial wrongdoing is judged. However, while economic affairs continue to dominate Nordic political scandal, those involving politicians' private lives have risen in prominence over the past few decades (Allern *et al.* 2012). This may perhaps point to a degree of convergence as global media trends continue to shape the way in which political scandal is mediated.

A Modern, Mediated Scandal

The British MPs expenses scandal cannot be understood in isolation from the modern, mass media which played an integral part in its revelation, dominance and persistence in May 2009. It was, a *mediated* scandal. In other words, it was a scandal played out first and foremost in the media: public knowledge and experience of MPs' malfeasance was made possible via the mass media, which gave life to and sustained the scandal in the weeks following the initial revelations. Lull and Hinerman (1997: 11-13) provide a list of criteria that serve to systematically identify characteristics of mediated scandal:

1) social norms reflecting the dominant morality must be transgressed [...]

The transgressions must be performed by 2) specific persons who carry out 3)

actions that reflect an exercise of their desires or interests [...] Further,

individual persons must be 4) identified as perpetrators of the act(s). The must

be shown to have acted 5) intentionally or recklessly and must be 6) held

responsible for their actions. The actions and events must have (7) differential

consequences for those involved. [...] revelations must be 8) widely circulated via communications media where they are 9) effectively narrativized into a story which 10) inspires widespread interest and discussion.

Lull and Hinerman's definition sets out the necessary components of a mediated scandal, but it retains a degree of separation between the acts which constitute a scandal and their mediation. Conversely, Thompson (2010) conceives of mediated political scandal as a unified *process* in which the scandal is itself constituted by its mediation and more accurately captures the expenses scandal under investigation here. Thompson (2000: 61) notes that 'disclosure through the media, and commentary in the media, are not secondary or incidental features of these forms of scandal: they are partly constitutive of them'. Therefore, he argues, 'a mediated scandal does not begin with the transgression itself, but rather with the act of disclosure and/or allegation which turns the original transgression into an object of public knowledge' (2000: 73).

Allern and Pollack (2012: 22) build on Thompson's conception, employing the metaphor of a drive hunt to describe the process:

'There must be a pack of hunters and numerous editors evaluating the situation's nature and news value in the same way. The media's dramatic focus requires the hunt to be undertaken over a certain period of time and in order to increase the level of suspense and public attention, uncertainty regarding the consequences and outcome' (Nord 2001).

Thus, in the case of the British MPs' expenses scandal, *The Telegraph* maximized suspense by drip-feeding details of misdoing over several days, and meanwhile the

news value the story was consistent across other news publications and platforms, remaining at the top of the headlines wherever the reader turned.

Both Thompson and Allern and Pollack conceive of mediated political scandal as a collective event which includes several stages comprising a sequence of moves by all of the relevant actors. This conception of mediated scandal is useful in considering the distinctions between institutional and individual scandal discussed previously, given that to some degree this distinction rests not simply on the behaviour of those accused, but the way in which that behaviour is framed, and responses and counter-responses by the subjects, press and public are subsequently collectivized.

Additionally, the similarities in Thompson's and Allern and Pollack's conceptions of mediated scandal, who consider US and Scandinavian contexts respectively, suggests an interesting degree of cross-cultural similarity in the way in which mediated scandals are manifested in each region, despite significant differences in their media and political landscapes.

Lull and Hinerman (1997:1) suggest that the rising prevalence of mediated scandal in general may be viewed both as 'a distinctive sign of the "Murdochization" of modern media' and, in the U.S. as, 'part of the ultra-conservative overall trend in popular culture' (1997: 5). In addition to sweeping changes to the make-up of the media industries and the role of journalists, Thompson (2000: 8-9) also argues that the weakening of ideological, class-based politics and belief systems in favour of more candidate-centred politics has contributed to the positioning of mediated political scandal in a 'a newly potent and self-reinforcing role as a "credibility test"'.

This aspect of mediated political scandal is perhaps most significant in the context of high-profile, closely fought and candidate-centred electoral contests. For example, Gronbeck (1997: 125) argues that during presidential campaigns, ‘the line between political and entertainment reporting all but disappears [and] issues like character (political morality) and celebrity (popularity, likability) are melded’. In this context, Gronbeck argues, voters turn to character over issues as a guide to voting, and therefore scandal can make or break a campaign. ‘Such an amalgamation of character and celebrity by the press has made meta-politics and meta-ethics, rather than actual political action and concrete morally relevant activity, the pivots upon which electoral decisions turn’ (Gronbeck 1997: 125). Furthermore, Welch and Hibbing (1997: 228) note that ‘the continued lack of policy awareness of many voters and the continued decline of political parties as voting cues mean that image-based variables have become more central’. Scandal can also be perceived as easier to judge than policy success or failure. For example, Jacobson and Dimock (1994: 622) point out that scandal can sometimes be measured in a way that responsibility for economic crises may not be. Thus in the context of elections following the U.S. House Bank scandal ‘voters had no way to measure their representative’s personal contribution to the savings and loan fiasco or the budget deficits, but they did know who wrote overdrafts-particularly where challengers mounted vigorous campaigns to remind them’.

The suggested melding of political actors with celebrity, combined with a lack of policy awareness among voters as factors contributing to the central position of mediated political scandal in high profile campaigns, points to the possibility of a self-reinforcing cycle in which issues slide down the agenda, while the hunt for

scandalizing personal details increases in force. However, the issue agendas of particular campaigns may not always lose in the tug of war over column inches, and even if they do, voters may continue to prioritize other concerns. For example, Jacobson and Dimock (1994: 621) note during in the 1992 US presidential campaign, ‘the economy, taxes, and the future direction of the country [...] may have reduced the importance of overdrafts compared to the candidates' basic partisan differences on these national issues’. Furthermore, despite ‘a series of colourful stories about the sexual proclivities of certain Conservative candidates’ (Farrell *et al.* 1998: 82), sleaze only accounted for 12 per cent of all policy coverage during the UK 1997 general election campaign (Norris 1997, cited in Farrell *et al.* 1998: 83).

Examples from the US House Bank scandal and UK 1997 general election, discussed previously, suggest that scandalous behaviour itself (as distinct from mediated political scandal) has limited electoral consequences and voters themselves report (though with debatable reliability) that other issues take precedence when weighing up their choices. However, Herrick (2000) finds that durring the period 1977 to 1995, the more media coverage a member of the U.S. Congress received realating to an allegation, the more likely their departure. This confirms the power of mediated political scandal to exerbate the electoral effects of scandalous behaviour by individual members.

This may have particularly troubling consequences for candidates and legislators from underrepresented groups. Niven (2004) investigates racial, gendered and partisan bias in newspaper coverage of the U.S. House Bank scandal, comparing the degree of criticism received by check-bouncing House members of different groups. He notes:

‘by utilizing a baseline of known political behavior, (the number of overdrawn checks) as a basis for studying media coverage, we can eliminate the vast number of complicating realities that otherwise preclude us from reasonably concluding that a difference in coverage is the result of bias, and the lack of difference in coverage is evidence of fairness’ (Niven 2004: 649-50). While no partisan differences were found, women and ethnic minority members were penalized more severely than white males by longer, more prominent and more negative coverage. If an increase in the frequency of coverage of a political scandal increases the likelihood of departure of the individual concerned, and women and minorities receive disproportionately high levels of news coverage when embroiled in a political scandal, they are therefore likely to face consequences unequal to those of their white, male counterparts.

Furthermore, Hammarlin and Jarlbro (2012) argue that gendered comments and criticisms were rife in coverage of the then Swedish Deputy Prime Minister Mona Sahlin during the so-called ‘Toblerone Affair’, a high-profile financial scandal surrounding the Sahlin’s use of an official credit card for personal purchases which included, to the delight of the Swedish press, several Toblerone bars. Therefore, mediated political scandal may at times constitute a platform for the manifestation of gendered or other biases cloaked beneath scandalized indignation.

Mediated political scandals also remain in collective memory with possible effects long after the period in which they occur. For example, Lull and Hinerman (1997: 18) argue that ‘Watergate and Richard Nixon have become synonymous with scandal. Any scandalous misdeeds attributed to a politician today will necessarily be read against this generalized reputation of party politics’. Thompson (2000: 265) also

identifies the tendency of scandals to appear in cycles or waves in which ‘each scandal raises the political stakes still further and increases the symbolic and political value that might be derived—both for political opponents and for media organizations and personnel—from further revelations’. However, while mediated scandals may damage the collective reputation of political actors over time, they do not necessarily have negative consequences for specific individuals in the longer term.

The Expenses Scandal: Evidence of a Revolution?

The primary aim of the book is to understand the expenses scandal: its origins, evolution and consequences for political life; and where appropriate, we consider the generalizability of the MPs’ expenses scandal to scandals elsewhere. In the chapters that follow, we take an in-depth look at the scandal, from its origins in the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), to the political response to the scandal, the creation of the IPSA, and everything in between. Five years on, and drawing on the best data available, the authors here consider the impact of the 2009 MPs’ expenses scandal on British political life.

In chapter 2, Ben Worthy examines the origins of the expenses scandal in the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) and the efforts by campaigners, led by Heather Brooke, over a period of years to gain access to the expense claims made by MPs. Worthy provides an in-depth analysis of the workings of FOI showing how it both constrained and facilitated the release of the data. The chapter draws on interview data with key actors, considering the role of FOI legislation in making government more transparent and accountable to the public. Worthy then provides a comparative look at how other countries with similar FOI legislation, including Ireland, New

Zealand, Australia and Canada, and devolved institutions within the UK have navigated expenses scandals/enquiries.

Chapter 3 looks at the expenses scandal from the inside. Tony Wright, who sat in the Commons from 1992 until 2010 (Labour, Cannock Chase), explores the expenses system that MPs designed and administered in a culture of self-regulation. Wright explores the context of the scandal, showing how the pay and expenses system for Members of Parliament developed over time and the confusions and behaviours that this gave rise to. He gives considerable attention to the Additional Costs Allowance (ACA) scheme, the core of the expenses regime that allowed MPs to claim for expenses incurred from staying away from their primary residence and the focal point of much of the abuse. In conclusion, Wright explores the consequences of the scandal including reforms that have enabled the House of Commons to seek to restore its reputation by demonstrating its relevance.

The next three chapters consider the electoral impact of the scandal. In chapter 4, Jennifer vanHeerde-Hudson asks to what extent was the expenses scandal a factor in MPs' decision to stand down or voluntarily exit the House of Commons? The evidence here suggests that it was: it did not however, have the impact many suspected given the intense media scrutiny and public outrage following the *Telegraph's* initial revelations. In fact, it was the more mundane and less controversial factors such as age and seniority, which played a bigger role in MPs' decision to stand down before the 2010 general election.

In chapter 5, Charles Pattie and Ron Johnston ask to what extent public anger over the expenses scandal had any measureable impact on the 2010 election outcome with respect to turnout and vote choice? Their analysis shows that despite worrisome predictions, voters didn't take the scandal as a reason to abandon electoral politics. At the constituency level, indignation over MPs' expenses was a mild discouragement to participation, no more. Moreover, the decision to vote or not was influenced by the same factors as in previous elections: what people thought of the scandal had no independent influence once these well-established factors were taken into account. Pattie and Johnston show that voters were undoubtedly disturbed by the expenses scandal, but few MPs who stood for re-election had their prospects damaged by their involvement in the scandal. Valence issues, such as concern over the state of the national and international economies, trumped concerns over the scandal.

In chapter 6 Nick Vivyan, Markus Wagner and Jessica Tarlov examine voter knowledge of MPs' misconduct in the expenses scandal. Given the institutional make-up of the UK, which encourages voters to see their electoral choice as one between parties and not between candidates, we would not expect many voters to know whether their MP was involved in the scandal or not. They show that in general, voters' perceptions of their MP's behaviour do correspond, at least somewhat, to their actual involvement in the scandal, and that voters' perceptions were biased by their political predispositions. However, voters did not punish their MPs for their perceived misconduct: the link between perceptions and vote choice was weak compared to that between publicly available information and perceptions.

In chapter 7, Nicholas Allen and Sarah Birch shift focus and consider the impact of the scandal on public attitudes toward politicians and politics. They argue there is a structural gap between citizens' expectations of politicians, on the one hand, and their perceptions of politicians' conduct, on the other, that stems from differing understandings of the ethical norms governing politics. Their findings show that contrary to expectations, the scandal's impact was surprisingly limited. If anything, respondents were less critical of politicians six months after the scandal than immediately before the media frenzy first broke. Allen and Birch discuss various psychological and structural factors that account for this finding and locate the public response to the scandal within the broader mood of disenchantment that currently pervades British politics.

In chapter 8, Valentino Larcinese and Indraneel Sircar examine whether there is evidence of partisan media bias in coverage of the UK expenses scandal, since certain newspapers have traditional and fairly well known right- or left-leaning preferences. Drawing on data from widely read UK papers, as well as biographical and electoral data, their results do not show evidence of partisan media bias. However, they show that MPs received higher levels of coverage across all newspapers if they were on the front bench, misappropriated higher sums of money or received more media coverage before the scandal. Their evidence also points to gender differences in media coverage of the scandal.

The regulatory consequences of the scandal are considered in the final two chapters.

In chapter 9, Oonagh Gay traces parliamentary reaction to the Members' expenses crisis, which led to the creation of the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority

(IPSA). The chapter considers the evolution of IPSA, its role, remit and importantly, the perceptions of both the public and MPs in regulating the new expenses regime. Gay argues that in its dual role as both regulator and administrator, IPSA has caused tension with its customers, and there are continuing questions about its long-term viability, given the administrative overheads.

In the concluding chapter, Justin Fisher and Jennifer vanHeerde-Hudson consider the impact of the MPs' expenses scandal on British politics and in light of scandals elsewhere. The chapter highlights some of the dangers of political reform in direct response to institutional scandals, in particular how reform efforts can often produce unintended consequences or encourage loophole seeking behaviour elsewhere. Final consideration is given to the role of IPSA and its role in servicing its clients, restoring confidence in the Parliamentary expenses regime and in parties and politicians themselves.

Endnotes

¹ London-based MPs were not eligible for additional costs allowances, but instead received a London Supplement (less than £3,000 in 2007-08).

² See http://www.public-standards.gov.uk/Library/Background_Paper_No_2_Timeline_of_Events.pdf for a complete timeline to the expenses scandal.

³ The *Telegraph's* revelations were not the first to be brought to the public's attention. Leaks from the disk had emerged in February of 2009 including Jacqui Smith's claim for pornographic films published by the *Sunday Express* and Tony McNulty's parent's home as his second home, thereby qualifying for allowances under the ACA.

⁴ Viner, Katherine, Interview with Gordon Brown, 20 June 2009, *The Guardian* Online.

⁵ Four MPs have been jailed for illegal expenses claims, Elliot Morley, Jim Devine, Eric Illsley and David Chaytor.

⁶ See for example, Robin Oakley, 'Anger at UK MPs' Expenses Could Change Politics, 11 May 2009.

⁷ *The Times*, 'Look at our expenses? No you don't say French MPs', 25 July 2012.

⁸ See BBC News Europe, 'French MPs Throw Out Proposal to Audit the Expenses', 26 July 2012.

⁹ *The Star*, 'Senators and MPs Likely Cheating on Expenses, Canadians tell Pollsters', 14 June 2013.

¹⁰ *New York Times*, 'Corruption Rattles Already Shaky Italians' Trust in Politicians', 17 October 2012.

¹¹ These figures exclude Scotland, where no Tory MPs had been subject to an allegation of sleaze.

¹² Welch and Hibbing note: ‘This is not consistent with the findings of Peters and Welch. It is consistent with the general pattern of results indicating that previous vote is less predictive for Republican candidates, leaving more clout to be exercised by national partisan swing, scandal, and presumably other, more idiosyncratic variables’ (1997: 236).

¹³ See chapter 4 for detailed analysis of the impact of the expenses scandal on MPs’ decision to stand down.

¹⁴ See: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-12934148>, 19 August 2011.

¹⁵ *Financial Times*, ‘Italy’s Scandals Echo the “Tangentopoli”’, 21 February 2013.