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University
of Glasgow

**Facebook and political corruption in Brazil: uses and misuses
of moral panic theory in the context of digital media**

Student ID: 2173396



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of moral panic theory in the context of digital media**

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ABSTRACT

This master's research aims to analyse if representations of Brazilian political corruption on Facebook have been perceived by the media and by the audience as concerning enough to trigger a mass panic, particularly after the launching of Operation Carwash, in 2014. This study is an innovative investigation using both a narrative analysis and a Social Media Sentiment Analysis (SMSA) to examine primary data collected on Facebook: 100 posts and over 60,000 comments from two sources across three timeframes. The research offers a thorough investigation about how the media have framed the issue of corruption in Brazil, and how citizens have reacted when exposed to such regime of truth in the context of 'Media 2.0'. It argues that corruption has indeed been perceived as a potential moral panic since key elements from the literature can be identified, but the very nature of corruption as white-collar crime leads to the adaptation of some elements and characters in the narrative. The results of the investigation indicate that both the narrative and key elements of mass panics are present in the case analysed, although further studies are needed in order to confirm it as a concrete case of moral panic.

Key terms: corruption; moral panic theory; Operation Carwash; Brazil; digital media.

RESUMO

Esta dissertação objetiva analisar se a representação da corrupção política brasileira no Facebook tem sido vista pela mídia e pelo público como preocupante o suficiente para engatilhar um pânico moral, particularmente após o lançamento da Operação Lava-Jato, em 2014. Este estudo é uma investigação inovadora que utiliza tanto uma análise narrativa quanto uma Análise de Sentimentos em Mídias Sociais (SMSA) para examinar dados primários coletados no Facebook: 100 postagens e mais de 60.000 comentários de duas fontes ao longo de três marcos temporais. Esta pesquisa oferece uma investigação completa sobre como as mídias têm enquadrado a questão da corrupção no Brasil, bem como indivíduos têm reagido diante da exposição a estes regimes de verdade no contexto “Mídia 2.0”. Argumenta-se que a corrupção tem, de fato, sido vista como um potencial pânico moral, uma vez que elementos centrais da literatura foram identificados, mas a própria natureza da corrupção enquanto crime de colarinho branco leva a uma adaptação de alguns elementos e personagens da narrativa. Os resultados da investigação indicam que tanto a narrativa quanto os elementos centrais de um pânico moral estão presentes no caso analisado, embora estudos adicionais sejam necessários para que se confirme o caso como um exemplo concreto de pânico moral.

Termos-chave: corrupção, teoria dos pânicos morais; Operação Lava-Jato; Brasil, mídias digitais.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPI – Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito (Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry).

MPF – Ministério Público Federal (Federal Prosecutor's Office).

MPU – Ministério Público da União (Public Prosecutor's Office).

PF – Polícia Federal (Federal Police).

PMDB – Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (Party for the Brazilian Democratic Movement).

PP – Partido Progressista (Progressive Party).

PT – Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers' Party).

SCS-PR – Secretaria de Comunicação Social da Presidência da República (Secretariat of Social Communication of the Republic's Presidency).

SMSA – Social Media Sentiment Analysis.

STF – Supreme Tribunal Federal (Federal Supreme Court).

TI – Transparency International.

UNCAC – United Nations Convention Against Corruption.

UNODC – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes.

1. INTRODUCTION

This research aims to analyse if representations of political corruption in Brazil have been perceived by the media and by the audience as concerning enough to trigger mass panic. Using both narrative analyses and a Social Media Sentiment Analysis (SMSA), this research offers a thorough innovative investigation about how the media have framed issues of corruption in Brazil, and how citizens have reacted when exposed to such regime of truth. The central argument for this investigation is that corruption has indeed been perceived as a potential moral panic since key elements from the literature can be identified, the existence of a general concern about the issue, a particular hostility against the group alleged to be responsible for the event, a consensus that corruption has been rotten Brazilian institutions, and the presence of the image of the 'folk devil'. However, these key elements and characters in the narrative of moral panics had to be adapted for this study, since here is a gap in the literature of moral panics when it comes to very nature of corruption as white-collar crime.

Corruption has been present in the Brazilian history since its colonial times, and there is no evidence that there is more corruption nowadays than before, as Chapter 5 shows. As will be shown later, Brazilian law enforcement agencies are developing better tools for preventing corruption, and the Judiciary has extensively dealt with corruption-related lawsuits since 2012. Despite this, public opinion polls indicate that the Brazilian population still sees political institutions as highly corrupt, and this perception is not a new trend (Datafolha, 2005).

In 2014, the Brazilian Federal Police (*Polícia Federal*, henceforth PF) and the Federal Prosecution Service (*Ministério Público Federal*, henceforth MPF) initiated the Operation Carwash (*Operação Lava-Jato*, as in the Portuguese language), a series of investigations aiming to undercover a corruption scheme in the state-own oil company *Petrobras*. Two years after its outset, the Operation investigated 364 individuals – the majority of them are businesspeople, politicians, and public office holders (Ministério Público Federal [MPF], 2016). Another result of the operation is the increase of the population's distrust of politicians, and the widespread concern that corruption erodes formal and informal institutions, affecting the lives of Brazilians. For the first time in history, public opinion polls have indicated that Brazilians see corruption as the biggest

problem of the country, even more than violence, unemployment or a poor health system (Datafolha, 2015).

Bearing this in mind, it is crucial to understand if corruption in Brazil is being portrayed as a case of moral panic. If so, what are the narratives found in media's coverage on the case? How has the public reacted when exposed to this regime of truth – does it behave in a subservient mode, or does it play an active role in shaping perceptions about the representation of corruption as a moral panic? New digital platforms, like Facebook, are virtual environments of social interaction, in which users engage in debates via comments, and can share their views with others. In the same display, it becomes more suitable for dissident views to raise questions about particular regimes of truth communicated by the media. Therefore, this research aims to examine the narrative of corruption in Brazil as a case of moral panic in this new digital platform, which works as a social proxy to understand patterns of behaviour in the real world.

This study is structured as follows: Chapter 2 sums up the main events from Operation *Carwash*, and Chapter 3 visits the literature on moral panics and media studies to find what has been discussed amongst scholars about the theory of moral panics, and the role of the press in such scenario. It aims to 'navigate' across the literature to identify elements and categories important to the analysis. Chapter 4 offers a theoretical discussion on white-collar crimes and corruption, whereas Chapter 5 brings to the spotlight the Brazilian historical background and development of corruption. Chapter 6 presents the methodological steps adopted to link the theoretical and empirical approaches, providing the research design that will steer the analysis on Facebook. Chapter 7 describes the key findings of this study in two frames: how the media shaped the narrative of corruption in the country, and how Facebook users have reacted when exposed to such regimes of truth. Chapter 8 provides a thorough discussion of the findings previously described, interpreting the data collected and bringing inferences to the research question presented, as well as other raised to support or reject it. Finally, Chapter 9 offers a brief summary of this study and raises questions that might steer further research on the topic.

The ultimate goal of this study is to contribute to debates in the field of criminology by bringing to the stage the possibility to use new digital platforms of interaction, such as Facebook, to understand social dynamics related to the perception of particular offences as potential cases of mass panic.

2. OPERATION CARWASH – CONTEXT AND KEY CHARACTERS

The launching and evolution of the complex Operation Carwash is the contextual frame of this research. Hence, this chapter focuses on the most important events in the storyline, identifying key actors involved in the *Petrobras* corruption scandal since 2014. The structure of the storyline is established mainly from the official website of the Operation Carwash (MPF, 2016b), set up by the state agency that is overseeing the investigation.

Operation Carwash is an investigative operation led by the *PF* and *MPF*. It aims to undercover a long-standing scheme of money laundering, corruption and bribery amongst executives from *Petrobras* – the Brazilian state-owned oil company –, politicians and other entrepreneurs. The name of the Operation is related to the involvement of carwash facilities, and petrol stations used to launder illicit profits belonging to criminal organisations (MPF, 2016c).

The operation's origin date from 12 March 2014 (also the starting point of the first data sampling period of this research, see Chapter 5), when four *doleiros*¹, Alberto Youssef, Carlos Habib Chater, Nelma Mitsue Penasso Kodama and Raul Henrique Srour, were caught managing criminal organisations that operated against the Brazilian financial system. The investigation uncovered that Alberto Youssef had gifted Mr Paulo Roberto Costa, *Petrobras*' Head of the Board of Supplies, with a luxury car, unveiling a link between Youssef and the state company (MPF, 2016c).

The corruption scheme inside *Petrobras* developed as follows. *Petrobras* usually selects service providers via bids, in which *Petrobras*' executives choose for the service the company with the lowest price between all candidates. In the corruption scheme, companies used to organise themselves in a cartel format, setting which contract each company would be running for by establishing fake competitions (MPF, 2016). For instance, if the enterprise A is to win the bid for the contract X, all other companies

¹ The literal translation for *doleiro* is 'money dealer'. In Brazil, the term refers to a person that provides services related to financial institutions (as the trade of foreign bills) without authorization of the Central Bank. The crime is typified under the Law Bill no. 7.492/1986, known as the 'White Collar Law' (República Federativa do Brasil, 1986).

would determine a price for the service higher than that company, leading A to be chosen for the service. To invite to the bidding process only businesses part of the scheme, and to select the 'correct' company for each contract, *Petrobras*' executives would receive bribes ranging from 1% to 5% of the value of each contract (MPF, 2016). Money dealers intermediated the payment of bribes by receiving them in cash on behalf of shell companies. After this, *Petrobras*' executives would receive the bribe via payment in cash or acquisition of goods.

As *Petrobras*' executives are appointed by politicians, disregarding meritocracy, politicians and political parties would also receive bribes for indicating and keeping in the office the executives involved in the scheme (MPF, 2016). Politicians from the parties *Partido Progressista* (PP) and *Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro* (PMDB) received bribes from contracts controlled by the Board of Supplies, led by Paulo Roberto Costa (MPF, 2016). The figure below summarises the bribery scheme on *Petrobras* uncovered by Operation Carwash:

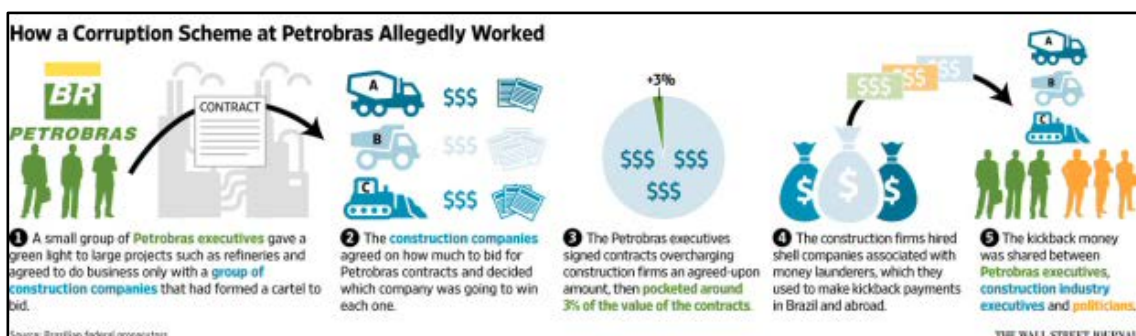


Figure 1 - Corruption Scheme in Petrobras. Source: Rubin, 2015

Mr Costa was arrested on 23 March 2014 and released two months later by determination from the Brazilian Supreme Court (*Supremo Tribunal Federal*, henceforth *STF*), and arrested again on 11 June 2014. This new arrest warrant was issued by Judge Sergio Moro, responsible for the Criminal Court specialised on money laundering and financial crimes, and who would become a main participant of Operation Carwash since then (MPF, 2016b). Mr Costa was alleged to have evaded over 23,000,000.00 USD via overseas accounts and offshore on behalf of his family (MPF, 2016c), and to be involved in *Petrobras*' overpriced purchase of a refinery in Pasadena, California, in the United States, in 2006. Mrs Dilma Rousseff, current President of Brazil, authorised the purchase of the refinery when she was the Head of the Administrative Board on *Petrobras* at the time of the acquisition (Brasil, 2016). Later

on, on November 2015, it was found that the purchase involved the payment of USD 15 billion on bribes, and resulted in a loss of USD 792 billion for Petrobras (MPF, 2016b).

On 14 November 2014, on the seventh stage of Operation Carwash, Judge Moro issued 27 arrest warranties (between temporary incarceration and pre-trial detainments) against politicians, entrepreneurs and *Petrobras'* executives, among the latter, Renato Duque, head of *Petrobras'* Board of Services. The Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores, henceforth PT*), the party of the President and the former President Lula (2002-2010), appointed Roberto Duque to the executive position in the oil company and received bribes from contracts controlled by the Board of Services. Similarly, Nestor Cerveró, head of the Board of International Affairs and appointed to the position by the *PMDB*, was arrested on 14 January 2015 (MPF, 2016c).

The 11th stage of Operation *Carwash* resulted in the detention of the first politicians involved in the scheme, André Vargas and Luis Argôlo (MPF, 2016b). The corruption scheme showed that politicians from the President's Cabinet, state-run banks and federal agencies were also involved in the scandal (Justi & Dionísio, 2015; MPF, 2016b). . One of the most critical stages of the operation took place on 19 June 2015, with the arrest of the owner/president of the Odebrecht Company, and the head of Andrade Gutierrez – the two most prestigious construction companies in the country. The investigations related to these executives also indicated the involvement of the former president Lula, who was allegedly paid by the companies to use his influence and prestige to get new contracts overseas for both companies (MPF, 2016b).

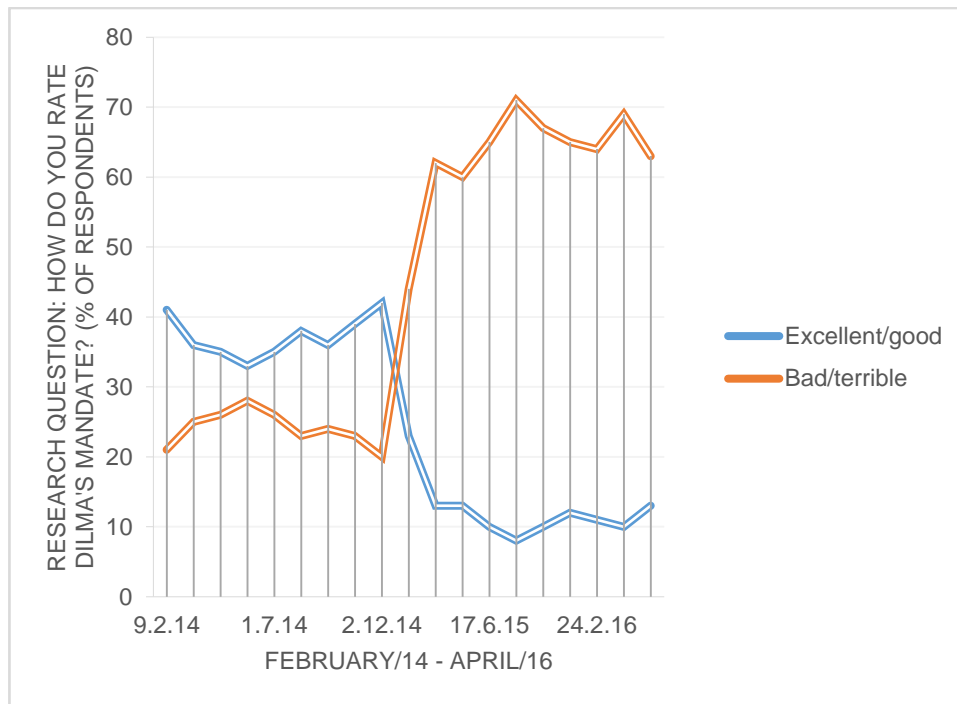
Two years after the launching of the operation (starting point of the third timeframe analysed on the research), on 4 March 2016, over 20 agents from the PF went to former president Lula's residence and coercively conducted him to give a statement regarding his involvement with potential corruption schemes, from revenues addressed to him by investigated companies to illegal lobby over contracts overseas (MPF, 2016b). These are just a few of the many uncovered facts during investigations.

Although Operation Carwash is still evolving, it already has significant results. Currently, the operation resulted in 1,291 proceedings, 74 pre-trial detentions, and 44 criminal charges against 216 individuals for crimes of corruption, crimes against the international financial system, criminal association, and money laundering. The estimated amount of bribes paid during ten years of scheme accounts for R\$ 6,4 billion (around £1,6 billion 1,6, in the exchange rate of £1 = R\$ 4.20). So far, only R\$ 2,9

billion were retrieved through agreements, and 106 individuals were sentenced to prison (MPF, 2016d).

The investigation also has significant implications for Brazilian political and economic stability. The three primary international credit rating agencies - Fitch Ratings, Moody's, and Standard & Poor's – have been downgrading the investment rate of Brazil since the initiation of Operation Carwash, reflecting that investment in the country is not as reliable as before (G1, 2016; Freitas, 2016; Laporta, 2016). This downgrade is a consequence of the uncovering of systemic practices of corruption amongst private companies and the government, the increase in unemployment rates, inflation rates, and the incongruence between the Brazilian president and the Congress (Oliveira, 2015; Brandimarte, 2015). In the midst of the scandal, of a political crisis, and a financial turmoil, President Rousseff is currently facing an impeachment, which is now depending on a final decision from the Senate to confirm her withdrawal from the position². The primary reason for the process is the allegation that the president has illegally manipulated the country's finances to hide a growing deficit during her campaign for re-election (BBC, 2016). Although the case is not directly related to Operation Carwash, the President's involvement with politicians investigated, as well as her participation in the purchase of Pasadena's refinery, have endorsed the public opinion's rejection of Dilma's mandate since the launching of the operation, as shown in graphic 1.

² This information dates from 21 August 2016, and the final decision from the Federal Senate is to be announced by November 2016.



Graphic 1 - Dilma Rousseff's approval rate. Source: Datafolha, 2016 (created by the author)

The operation also affects how citizens perceive corruption as a social problem. In a survey conducted in late 2015, 34% of the interviewees saw corruption as the primary concern in the country (Datafolha, 2015). For the first time since the first public opinion survey in the field, corruption surpassed violence, education, unemployment, and health. Concomitantly, another study from the same institute conducted in 2015 showed that 65% of the Brazilian population believes that politicians are always corrupt (Datafolha, 2015) – the previous survey, held in 2005, after the *Mensalão* scandal, showed a rate of 46% (Datafolha, 2005). Unsurprisingly, though, the presumption amongst Brazilians that political institutions are intrinsically corrupt has a longstanding background. In 2004, a public opinion survey from Transparency International indicated that in a scale from 1 to 5, in which 1 indicates ‘not at all corrupt’ and 5 ‘extremely corrupt’, the average grade given to Brazilian political parties according to interviewees was 4.5. Similarly, respondents also gave the Executive and Legislative branches an average of 4.3 and 4.2, respectively. Even the Police, representative of law enforcement, was graded 4.4 (Transparency International, 2004).

These results raise questions about how corruption, a typical offence from the upper class, though not at all restricted to such group, has been in the media’s spotlight as a major social problem. Additionally, it brings to the debate reflections about how citizens react when exposed to the coverage of corruption scandals, particularly those

related to Operation Carwash, in one of the most prominent spaces for public expression: the social media, especially Facebook. The digital platform represents a social proxy through which representations of corruption and politicians are translated into public comments from the audience, and this fact endorses the importance of exploring and investigating the relationship between the media and their audience in such environment.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW: MORAL PANICS

Operation Carwash has raised questions about how citizens react when exposed to cases of corruption, and about corruption itself throughout Brazilian history. This study has three main assumptions that guide the understanding of the argument presented here. Firstly, corruption is not a contemporary crime, and has been present in the social, political and cultural structures of the Brazilian population since the 1500s, as Chapter 5 shows. However, the offence is now on the spotlight as a major social threat due to both the severity of recent corruption cases involving politicians and entrepreneurs, and the Brazilian new anti-corruption institutional apparatuses, which require transparency and accountability, consequently turning corruption cases more known by the public. Secondly, the current landscape of anti-corruption actions taken in Brazil symbolises a shift in mainstream criminological theories, which use to frame vulnerable groups, as lower-class citizens, as potential threats, and governmental institutions as responsible for ensuring the law-abiding society. Thirdly, the media can indeed influence the setting of public agenda on crime and criminal justice by selecting what and how should cases receive public attention. However, the emergence of new online media platforms, particularly Facebook and Twitter, has re-shaped the relationship between media

professionals and the audience, since the former now also has an active role in representing and interpreting images of crime and criminal justice. This change became notorious with the possibility of mutual interaction between the audience itself and between the audience and media groups, as can be noted in comments on Facebook, or replies and retweets on Twitter.

The literature on moral panics provides valuable tools for understanding corruption as a mass panic in the Brazilian case. Similarly, it is important to comprehend the role of new media platforms in creating and spreading public concerns. In doing so, this study aims to trace a theoretical background in which the object of study – the coverage and public reactions to events of corruption after the launching of Operation Carwash – becomes an interesting research topic in the field of criminology

There is an exhaustive literature on moral panics, ranging from discussions about the epistemological and ontological features of this approach (Garland, 2008) to its empirical usage to understand particular social issues, such as paedophilia (Cricher, 2002; Bray, 2009; Schul, 2013), human trafficking (Gould, 2010; Keo, et al., 2014), or immigration and asylum seeking (Welch & Schuster, 2005; Johnstone, 2015). Traditionally, moral panic can be understood as the framing of a particular event/activity as a threat or a source of fear and risk. The moral panic starts with the media influencing such representation by stylising and stereotyping the event/activity as deviant. Furthermore, representatives of social institutions, such as bishops and politicians, known as the ‘moral barricade’, endorse the perception of fear shown by the media, and require actions against the deviant behaviour, which is seen as an aggression to moral values. As result, ordinary citizens, the audience of the narrative of moral panics, are led to perceive a group of individuals as responsible for the deviant behaviour (the ‘folk devils’), persuading the ordinary citizens to endorse claims from the media and the moral barricade to repress the activity seen as deviant (Cohen, 2002[1972]).

The theory of moral panics was first conceived during the 1960s as an attempt to understand how the process of labelling could influences perceptions about what constitutes a deviant behaviour (Cricher, 2015). Jock Young pioneered the study on moral panics with his research about drug users and the social dynamics related to them (Young, 1971a; 1971b). However, it was Stanley Cohen who refined moral panics as a source of ideas for understanding deviance by analysing how the British society reacted

to seaside confrontations between two subgroups during the 1960s: the Mods and the Rockers (Cohen, 2000[1972]).

The interaction between moral panic agents – the media, the moral barricade, law enforcement agents, and the public (Cohen, 2002[1972]; Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009; Young, 2011; Critcher, 2015) – represents a processual flow in which the increased concern from the media initiates a systematic set of reactions from the moral barricade, the law enforcement agents, and the public, until the issue disappears from the spotlight (Krinsky, 2013). Two consequences arise from these categories of agents. Firstly, it creates the character of the ‘folk devil’, an individual or a group whose actions defies the *status quo* or social moral standards. The ‘folk devil(s)’ usually belong(s) to the vulnerable strata of society – the youth, homosexuals, asylum seekers, or gypsies, for instance (Bearfield, 2008; Cohen, 2002[1972]; Goode, 2008). The representation of ‘folk devil’ as a symbol of disobedience and lack of conformity within social standards creates a relation of otherness³ where the folk devil(s) is/are contrasted with those who have the capability to claim regimes of truth and protect society against the deviants: the ‘Folk heroes’ (Denham, 2008; Flinders, 2012). Moreover, members of the moral barricade, mainly politicians and agents of social control, who are seen as individuals of irrefutable morality, and are able to maintain pre-established moral settings, assume such image (Flinders & Wood, 2015; Schulman, 1996). This relation of otherness is imperative to understand part of this research, which presumes that the Brazilian case requires a perspective different from the mainstream approach of moral panics, since politicians are assuming the role of ‘folk devils’ in the narrative of corruption, rather than ‘folk heroes’.

The second implication is the vertical relationship between the media and their audience. In this model, the media are responsible for determining what and how particular objects become social threats, while the public assumes a passive/submissive role. Although the audience can decide whether or not a media representation of moral panic will turn into a widespread concern, the audience does not necessarily influence how the media chooses and represents their object as a public concern (Critcher, 2015).

³ Greer and Jewkes (2005) show that the conceptualisation of images of the other, as well as opposite terms – as ‘man’ and ‘woman’, ‘they’ and ‘us’, ‘heroe’ and ‘villain’ – are essential for understanding how deviance is fashioned in a polarised spectrum, and, therefore, the classification of patterns of deviance might vary according to cultural, historical and media practices. Hence, the media continually reshape features of each extreme in the spectrum, including or excluding new actors.

The inertial role of the public, who behaves as an outsider in the social construction of deviance, has changed in the past few years, particularly with the rise of new media platforms that encourage the public to express their opinions. These recent changes affected how moral panics are created and reproduced (McRobbie & Thornton, 1995). Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009[1994]) acknowledge these changes on the nature of moral panics, arguing that the core idea behind moral panics is the increased concern, but the source of such concern varies, and might be either the media ('interest groups' approach), elites ('elite-based' approach), or the public itself ('grassroots' approach). In the case of the latter, the role of the media is only to intensify and determine the paths of mass panic. The audience, in this case, does not behave like a puppet of the media; instead, it is the primary source of moral panic and determines the media's agenda. As the authors state,

[p]oliticians or the media cannot arouse the public about matters about which they are indifferent, to begin with. Politicians and the media may *influence* the general public's concerns, but if a latency doesn't exist, to begin with, the grassroots position argues – if a nerve isn't touched – the public will not respond. Political speeches and articles and broadcasts expressing fear and concern won't and can't stir up a public that is indifferent, to begin with (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009[1994], p. 56).

Goode & Ben-Yehuda also summarize the determining elements of a moral panic, regardless of the source of panic: a concern that a behaviour of a particular group might threaten society; some hostility against a certain group that is seen as culpable for the act – which reinforces the relation of otherness mentioned above; some consensus amongst society about the existence and seriousness of the social threat; certain disproportionality regarding the accurate reality; and the volatility through which cases of moral panic might erupt, disappear or be forgotten, is imperative to determine whether a case might be considered a moral panic (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009[1994]).

The mainstream approach of moral panics presented by Cohen, Goode, and Ben-Yehuda is still subject to new investigations, culminating into more recent versions of the ontological nature and the dynamic of moral panics. Ungar (2001) contrasts the concept of moral panic designed by Cohen with Beck's (1992; 1995) view of risk society. He argues that post-modern societies are marked by new anxieties, which are more complex to be solved, more globalised and latent, and not limited to social classes. Therefore, the idea of moral panics becomes anachronistic, as it does not embrace the features of the post-modern society, although Hier (2003) argues that the difference between these concepts relies on how they can create more cases of panic/anxiety.

Furthermore, other authors (Hunt, 1999; Critcher, 2009; Hier, 2011) also highlight the applicability of moral regulations in moral panics and moral boundaries. In such case, definitions of what is immoral change over time and space, and objects previously seen as deviant, as the homosexual relations, become regulated and morally accepted. Consequently, moral panics achieve a peripheral importance, being unable to explain changes in moral boundaries. On the theoretical level, Best (2013) reviews an extensive literature on the field, and argues that moral panic is rather an imprecise, vague concept, oscillating its focus between the break of social patterns of morality (moral panics) and the irrational and disproportionate reaction to events seen as deviant (moral panics).

In sum, the literature of moral panics has indicated that the concept is still useful for understanding crime and deviance, whose definitions are related to how social institutions and the media react when exposed to them. Two aspects of the literature are of particular importance for this study. Firstly, it is important to recall the role of 'folk devils' in the narrative of moral panics. There is no consensus among scholars about the necessity of a 'folk devil' to exist in mass panics, and a little is known about the nature of these agents, and of 'folk heroes'. Flinders (2012; 2015, see also Hatier, 2012), analysing the cases of Obama, in the United States, and Cameron, in the United Kingdom, suggests that politicians have a dual label: they are recognised by nature as 'folk heroes' in democratic societies, since electoral processes symbolise the trust relationship between them and their electorate, but the widespread belief that politicians are corrupt, liars, or untrustworthy, easily drags politicians into the category of 'folk devils'.

The element of 'folk heroes' is important for this study because it facilitates the understanding of the historical longstanding perception in Brazil that politicians are intrinsically corrupt, as mentioned in Chapters 2 and 4. In the Brazilian case, the population consistently frames politicians in general as untrustworthy, rather than only the President of the Prime-Minister, as analysed by Flinders (2012; 2015). Although 'all' politicians in Brazil are seen as untrustworthy, in the last elections (2014), the percentage of politicians re-elected was 69% for governors (Gois, et al., 2015), 75% for state deputies and 56.5% for federal deputies (Uol, 2015)⁴.

⁴ The Brazilian legislation authorises re-election for all regional and federal representatives. Except for those elected as President or Governor, the number of re-elections allowed for State/District Deputies, Federal Deputies, and Senators, is unlimited.

Indeed, the media have a core role in framing concerns as matters of moral panic, and are able to influence audience's perception on the issue, setting the agenda regarding a particular activity/event. However, the development of media channels has also empowered the audience to assume active roles in both creation and dissemination processes of moral panics. The source of moral panics is not monolithic, and the new dynamics of media have fostered the image of the audience as core elements in the creation of moral panics. The next section aims to explore more carefully the role of the media as an important feature in the narrative of moral panics.

3.1 The media

The media have a pivotal role in the social narrative of mass panics because their production and coverage of news can determine trends and representations of social threats, crimes, and criminals – sometimes in a fashioned way. However, the contemporary literature of both media studies and moral panics indicate that the relation between media producers and the audience is no longer monolithic, and the latter is achieving a key importance in the creation of moral panics (Ericson, et al., 1991; McRobbie & Thornton, 1995; Kidd-Hewitt & Osborne, 1995; Ferrell & Websdale, 1999; Rafter, 2000). Still, the media recreate across time and space perceived realities of crime, criminals, and criminal justice, which are not necessarily accurate, or even considered true. Representations of reality claimed by the media are rather expressions of power, knowledge, and individual experiences, in which both producers and consumers shape preferences and agendas, excluding the ontological feature of neutrality (O'Shaughnessy, 1999; Mason, 2003).

The very nature of news production demonstrates a paradigm between the accurate reproduction of concerns, serving as a source of social knowledge, and the exaggerated creation of fears about the external reality of facts, acting as a tool for ideas and interests to take place. Consequently, the media tend to represent crime and criminals different from the official statistics: particular crimes are emphasised, criminals are not represented in their socio-economic reality, and criticism about the criminal justice is rare (Reiner, et al., 2003). The media can also create a 'spectacle of fear' over crime towards the audience, nurturing the coverage of crime in media channels for the purpose of entertainment, rather than information (Ahtheide, 2003).

The monolithic approach that emphasises the power of the media over the audience was predominant during the early-1990s, with the growth of media studies in both

theoretical and empirical grounds. For instance, the hypodermic model, present in Adorno and Horkheimer's work (1983) states that the media create a 'mass culture' in which media channels 'inject' ideas and regimes of truth into society's mind. This model recognised the boundary between producers and the audience, and establishes the framing of the audience as passive regarding the shaping of reality (Thompson, 1995; Yar, 2012). Similarly, other authors argue that the media influence audience's perception of the world by setting the agenda of what is important to be framed (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) or by attributing a particular framing to news stories (Goffman, 1974). Such hierarchical relation between the media and audience spotlights the media as a gatekeeping force by particular groups and institutions, which would determine the nature and dynamic of news coverage, setting a particular perception of reality (Wohn & Bowe, 2016; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Spitulnik, 1993).

The literature has shown that there is no consensus about the unidirectional process of influence between the media and audience. In fact, social networks have also played a role in dealing with responses to media messages, and the media are actually not as undoubtedly powerful before. Therefore, the hypodermic model becomes too simplistic in explaining medium-audience relations since it disregards social and psychological factors embedded in citizens (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955).

The 20th century has changed the structural paths of mass communication, and the boundaries between news production and the media's audience. The spread of digital technologies in broadcast radio and television, as well as printed newspaper, aligned with the booming of internet platforms, have changed the space-temporal scope and the social dynamic of mass communication (Merrin, 2014). The Web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2005, see also Jenkins, 2008; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Hunter, 2015; and Ankersen, 2015, who contrasts the 'read+write' Web 2.0 with the 'read only' Web 1.0) represents a flip in the architecture of communication, as it allows individuals to take an active role in the production of knowledge. As a result, the gap between news producers and their audience has blurred, since individuals have also turned into actors in the production of social realities (Yar, 2012). As Merrin (2014, p. 32) highlights,

what we've witnessed, therefore, is the passage of all older media into the digital, alongside the popular take-off of networked digital technologies. the reason why this is important, however, isn't simply in the creation of digital media but in the new possibilities and capacities that this material transformation creates and their effect upon the existing media ecology and experience.

The literature on media studies in the past years have focused on the role of social media, as Facebook and Twitter, as new platforms of communication in which private and public spheres merge into a more democratic, participatory arena for shaping and representing social realities (van-Dijck & Poell, 2015, see also Helmond, 2015; and Alaimo, 2015 for an empirical example). Litt and Hargittai (2016) add to this the fact that social media amplifies the reach of information towards real and imagined audiences, as friends of users may also see the information liked/shared/retweeted by them. However, some scholars contest such amplification, believing that these imagined audiences are restricted to close friends, not having impact in the construction of social realities or even in the shaping of public policies in particular issues (Weng, et al., 2012; Hermida, 2015).

One major drawback of this approach is that there is an over expectation regarding the democratisation of news production, and the empowerment of the audience as agents of social representations on media and novel news producers. Almgren and Olsson (2015) highlight that the creation of such participatory space is not necessarily translated into practical participation, since, firstly, individuals decide to participate in particular conditions and opportunities to do so, and, secondly, the very digital space of social media is not neutral, and participatory practices take place in an environment thought and shaped by interest groups.

Although there is some important empirical research on how media organisation and the audience interact onto the public space of social media (see Almgren and Olsson, 2015), it is necessary to bring this approach to the field of criminology, particularly in regards to moral panics. The development of media channels has demanded for a rereading of theoretical and empirical grounds of moral panics. New actors have appeared, cultural industry has influenced the news agenda, and the diversification of media channels has empowered the audience and vulnerable groups seen as 'folk devils' to have a core function in the construction a mass panic narrative (McRobbie & Thornton, 1995; Yar, 2012b). In this context, this research aims to provide contributions to studies on mass panic in the 21st century, recognising the pivotal role of the audience in the context of panics spread through digital platforms.

4. WHITE-COLLAR CRIMES AND CORRUPTION: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The term white-collar crimes is originally used to represent 'those crimes committed by persons in the upper socioeconomic class', or 'by an individual with social respectability or high social status in the course of his occupation' (Sutherland, 1983 [1949], p. 7). An important particularity of white-collar offences is the presence of an implicit or explicit relation of trust between the criminal and a third party, which might either be unaware of the offense committed, or unable to refrain from it (Sutherland, 1940). Sutherland's concept lacks precision of concepts, as expected for a first attempt to systematically address the issue, but its impact in the scholarship of criminology was significant enough to nurture the refinement of such theoretical approach since then (see Shapiro 1980; 1990; Braithwaite (1985); Friedrichs 1998; 2010; and Green (2006)).

Helmkamp et al. (1996, p. 351) extend Sutherland's concept, and define white-collar crimes as:

illegal or unethical acts that violate fiduciary responsibility of public trust committed by an individual or organisation, usually during the course of legitimate occupational activity, by persons of high or respectable social status for personal or organisational gain.

Such definition aggregates two pivotal features of white-collar crimes. Firstly, these offences, unlike most of the conventional crimes, go beyond the debate about legality, and reach discussion on ethics and social harm, mostly because white-collar criminals are those who define what is and what is not an offence under local legislations (Friedrichs, 2010). Secondly, white-collar crimes are usually violations of a trust relationship between the individual with respectable social status and a third party (Cressey, 1980), which explicitly, as when politicians are democratically elected, or implicitly, when the criminal is the only servant able to execute a particular activity, depends on the services from the former (Shapiro, 1990).

Corruption, the form of white-collar malfeasance that is the focus of this research project, has existed as long as humankind, being traditionally attributed to developing countries (Friedrich, 2009; Graycar & Prenzler, 2013; Bayley, 1966; Wilson, 1991). There is no universal and consensual definition of what corruption is because of its complexity and adaptability throughout time and space. Some scholars prefer to focus on broad definitions to englobe several cases of corruption, as Green and Ward (2004)⁵ and Graycar and Prenzler (2013). This pattern was also observed during the meetings to elaborate the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), the main international treaty aiming to prevent corruption, elaborated by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) in 2004. During two years of negotiations, the State members could not reach a consensus on how to best define corruption, as each state would represent a particular background on the field (UNODC, 2004b). Instead, the Convention adopted the strategy to list a broad range of cases/offences that could be seen as corrupt, such as bribery, embezzlement, misappropriation, trading of influence, illicit enrichment, laundering of proceeds of crime, and so forth.

Philp (2006) offers an interesting definition of the concept, summarising the key ideas present amongst scholars. According to him, an act is corrupt when:

a public official (A), acting for personal gain, violates the norms of public office and harms the interest of the public (B) to benefit a third party (C)

⁵ Green and Ward (2004, p. 11) defines corruption simply as ‘the abuse of public office for private gains’.

who rewards A for access to goods or services which C would not otherwise obtain” (Philp, 2006, p. 45).

It is noteworthy that a significant part of the literature currently defines corruption as the violation of entrusted power, either for public or private gains, which is similar to the concept of white-collar crime mentioned above (Alatas, 1990; Pope, 2000; Gambetta, 2002; Transparency International, 2016).

Brown (2006) argues that the perception of corruption as the abuse of entrusted power represents a new taxonomy of the crime, which attempts to overcome three challenges in defining corruption. Firstly, corruption goes beyond the scope of public officials. The private sector is also prone to violations of trust if they result in profit to an individual's or groups of individuals', despite any deterrence scheme to prevent crimes (Rose-Ackerman, 1978). Secondly, the results of corruption are not limited to financial gains or to direct personal benefits, nor is corruption a logical and rational sequence of decisions to increase benefits, since the process of decision-making includes uncertainties and lack of information. Instead, the rewards of corruption might also be translated into the facilitation of a service, as a contract, or, in an ordinary scale, the facilitation of a document's emission in a public agency), which does not explicitly demand a financial profit. Finally, defining corruption as the violation of entrusted power also overcomes the challenge of defining public interest, since its definition is a subjective perception that varies according to the time-space framework, and to power structures that 'sell' ideas of public interest through new regulations, or via the media. However, Andersson and Heywood (2009), contest the use of trust as a key factor in defining corruption. According to them, such benchmark zones out corruption in dictatorial and authoritarian regimes, in which the trust relation between politicians and citizens is poor or inexistent.

What is known is that corruption is a threat to social, political and economic spheres particularly in democratic institutions. Empirical studies have demonstrated how the presence, or at least the perception of corruption, undermines economic growth (Mauro, 1995) and market investment (Depken & Lafountain, 2006), distorts policies addressed to the public interest, as in the field of education (Dridi, 2014), and promotes political instability (Theobald, 1990). On the other hand, some theoretical (Nye, 1967) and empirical studies (Walton, 2013) have also highlighted the beneficial results of 'some

corruption' in particular countries and cases, such as when there has been a recent transition of political regimes, as from dictatorship to democracy.

Consequently, governments and regional and international institutions endeavour to systematically measure and quantify corruption, and to translate such production into real mechanisms towards good governance⁶. A broad set of approaches might be considered to quantify both corruption and perceptions of corruption, being the latter usually more widespread than the former, due to all the challenges of defining corruption mentioned above (Ades & Tella, 2000; Duncan, 2006; Galtung, 2006). The Transparency International's (TI) Corruption Perception Index (CPI) and the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators are good examples of accredited cross-national tools to measure corruption and the public perception of it⁷ (Kaufmann, et al., 2010).

Since corruption comprises a set of vast and not clear-cut behaviours, actions, and individuals, this work focuses attention on the dynamics of political (or public) corruption. Philp (2009) highlights that the nature of political corruption, also known as 'institutional corruption', relies on the use of corruption for professional/public gains, rather than for the office holder's personal life. Hence, power and status interests nurture political corruption, rather than necessarily economic rewards. This is clear, for instance, in cases where a politician, aiming to obtain decisional powers, establishes client networks with voters in order to achieve consensus (Porta & Vannucci, 1999). Finally, Neild (2002) emphasises that individuals out of the public sphere may also be part of political corruption, either along with governmental bodies or private agencies, if the ultimate goal is the overcharging of customers or the underpayment of suppliers, such as bribes to win public contracts, in a network that violates trust between public interests and the corrupt agent. This point is important to understand how political corruption has been widespread in Brazil, in a context that brings together politicians, other public office holders, and members of the private sector into a complex dynamic

⁶ Kaufmann et al. (2010, p. 4) define governance as 'the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised, which includes (a) the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced; (b) the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies; and (c) the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them'.

⁷ Both instruments still have methodological challenges, despite their accredited status. Some criticism has been addressed based on errors in coverage, biased sources, and on the very imprecision of the concept of corruption, hampering further cross-national comparisons (Lambsdorff, 2006; Apaza, 2009; Andersson & Heywood, 2009).

of bribery and trading of influence to achieve, on the one hand, political power, and on the other hand, securing public contracts.

This research adopts the concept of corruption as the violation of an entrusted relation between two or more categories of agents. Such definition is naturally not sufficient to understand the complexity of corruption, but it illustrates why the case analysed here is important for the field of criminology: in a democratic system, voters establish a straightforward relation of trust with politicians through elections. Politicians, in their turn, have the responsibility to safeguard citizens' interests, as well as to respect social norms and rules. In the case of political corruption, such relation is violated, and the understanding of how citizens react to such situation is attractive to the field of criminology.

5. THE 'OLD' PROBLEM OF POLITICAL CORRUPTION IN BRAZIL

Corruption in Brazil has inherited the colonial stigma regarding the Portuguese culture on clientelism⁸. Hence, the Brazilian colonial period was marked by a highly bureaucratic administrative structure, aligned with low wages for public office holders. This scenario nurtured corruption practices in Brazil, and allowed corruption to become a natural response to institutional gaps (Figueiredo, 2012). Hence, the practice of public corruption became central throughout Brazilian history, from the colonial to the post-

⁸ Clientelism is a pattern of social interaction in which public officers (or, in some cases, businessmen) exercise influence over clients, who offer, as a response, personal gifts, electoral support, or political donations to the patron (Green & Ward, 2004).

democratic period, including the imperial (1822-1889) and the dictatorial (1964-1985) regimes (Avritzer, et al., 2012).

Carvalho (2012) explains that the understanding of corruption has changed throughout Brazilian history in terms of semantic (whether it is a problem related to the system or to particular individuals), size (as the administrative structure of the country have been increasing since the dictatorial period, which nurture institutional gaps onto which corruption takes place), and tendency (it is expected for corruption to constantly decrease, since the Brazilian population has been demanding for more transparent institutions). The author summarises the history of corruption as it follows:

Political corruption [in Brazil], as anywhere else, is a historical phenomenon. As so, it is old and mutant. The republicans accused the imperial system of being corrupt and despotic. The 1930 revolutionaries accused the First Republic and its politicians of being rotten. Getulio Vargas [the 1930-1945/1951-1954 president] resigned in 1954 under allegations of having created a 'sea mud' in the *Catete* [the headquarter of the Brazilian government at that time]. The 1964's coup d'état was held on behalf of the fight against subversion and corruption. The military dictatorship came to an end under allegations of corruption, despotism, and disrespect for the public interest. After democratisation, Fernando Collor was elected in 1989 with the promise of hunting down corrupt politicians and was impeached for being one of them. From 2005 until now, corrupt scandals are almost monotonous (Carvalho, 2012, p. 200, my translation).

Culture also plays a critical role in perpetuating corruption in both political and social practices. The development of a political system where public and private patrimonies are not clearly separated determined the paths for corruption to nurture (Martins, 1996). However, the permeation of clientelism in social and economic spheres has created a virtuous cycle in which corrupt practices centre the most basic social and political relations. Martins (1996) recalls the impeachment of the president Fernando Collor in 1992, to empirically demonstrate the rooted nature of corruption amongst the Brazilian population. According to him, although there was concrete evidence of the former president's involvement with several cases of corruption, a significant part of the population was still reluctant about terminating Collor's mandate.

The media are also players in the history of corruption in the country, since they spotlight cases of corruption, and contribute to the shaping of public opinion and decision-makings since their establishment in the country, in 1807. The media are sometimes considered as the 'fourth power' due to their ability to protect the interests of the population by fact-checking official statements and conducting investigations to gather information about particular topics, performing the 'watchdog journalism'

(Sparks, 1995; Donohue & Olien, 1995; Waisbord, 2000), or as a 'fourth branch', since they set the public agenda along with the Legislative, the Judiciary, and the Executive branches (Cook, 1997; Albuquerque, 2005).

The media have had a dual performance in the Brazilian background of politics and, particularly, political corruption. On the one hand, they have contributed to the public attention towards urban middle class' interests since the 1950s, as well as to particular problems of political corruption and economic chaos (Silva, 2000). This can be noted in the former president Getulio Vargas' case (1954), where the journalist Carlos Lacerda, from the newspaper *Tribuna da Imprensa*, led a moral crusade against the inefficacy and systemic corruption of the President's government, resulting in the President's rejection by the public, and his further suicide, in 1954 (Dulles, 1991). On the other hand, the Brazilian media evolved because of corruption and clientelism between agencies, journalists, and politicians, selecting what cases to cover, depending on political and economic interests in a particular coverage (or in its disregard) (Silva, 2000).

Silva (2000) brings an insightful argument to the analysis that follows this work. After comparing several cases of political corruption covered by the Brazilian media throughout its history, he traces a twofold conclusion about the media's role in spotlighting corruption and setting the public agenda. Firstly, the media's influence is often overestimated, since the translation of a corruption scandal into a change in the *status quo* depends on the interdependence between formal and informal institutions, particularly those mentioned above. Otherwise, cases selected by the media to become public tend to dissipate after some time because of the press's inability to defeat corruption by itself. Secondly, media agencies might be biased in selecting cases to cover, either because of their proximity with politicians or because of the rivalry between different agencies. Additionally, the public opinion can push the press to cover an issue. Public manoeuvres, as public demonstrations in the streets with thousands of participants, are able to demand from the media special attention to a particular case first neglected or briefly covered, despite its importance to the public interest. This case was observed in the emblematic case of the former president Fernando Collor, in which one of the most powerful media channel, Globo Network Television, only began to cover the issue (and to criticise Collor's administration) after public demonstrations (Silva, 2000).

The understanding that corruption goes beyond political spheres is important because it contextualises how the institutional apparatus has been changing to prevent corruption, investigate cases, and punish those involved. However, relying on cultural patterns to justify the occurrence of corruption, or even to take the act as granted, is not only oversimplified but also empirically challenging. Avritzer (2011) argues that the cultural approach on Brazilian corruption reduces such phenomena into a single domain of behaviour, and neglects different trends in the country to overcome the problem. Similarly, this reduction ignores important governmental efforts since 1990 to nurture transparency and control, both in regional and national domains.

Therefore, it is important to consider institutional structures that have successfully tackled corruption. Nevertheless, the country's political dynamic, alleged to be over bureaucratic, and its large geographic size – the largest country in South America – are translated into a complex network of formal and informal institutions, and accountability processes that establish a relation of interdependence based on the scope of each institution, its autonomy, its proximity to other institutions, and its ability to take active actions, rather than depending on others' recommendation on what to do, audit or investigate (Power & Taylor, 2011).

In the legislative branch, the *Senate* and the *Federal Court of Accounts* are the main institutions of approval, control and auditing of financial bills and regional and federal budget plans. The *Ministério Público Federal (MPU) (Public Prosecutor's Office)*, an independent body with judiciary functions, plays an important part in controlling cases of corruption and money laundering in the judiciary branch. The office, with federal and regional representatives, is responsible for red-flag official reports, and choose which ones should be investigated in-depth by the *PF*. The *PF* is one of the main bodies from the Executive branch in preventing, investigating and controlling corruption in federal and regional levels. Along with the *PF*, the *Banco Central (Central Bank)*, the *Conselho de Controle de Atividades Financeiras (Council for the Oversight of Financial Activities)*, the *Ministério da Justiça (Ministry of Justice)*, and the *Controladoria-Geral da União (Comptroller General of the Union)* are also important maintenance bodies of accountability and control, being the main actors in the case that will be shortly analysed (Power & Taylor, 2011; Furtado, 2015).

Institutional developments in all these three branches are evident since the 2000s, and the focus on accountability and compliance has contributed to investigations related to

the offense of corruption. The frequency of effective measures against crimes of corruption are constant since 2012, although still insufficient. In 2012, 19,897 corruption-related lawsuits were reported in the judiciary branch. In 2013, this figure increased to 24,600 cases, but dropped for 23,264 cases in 2014, and 20,759 in 2015 (MPF, 2016d). These numbers indicate that the corruption in the country remains a significant issue, not necessarily meaning that there is more corruption than ever before or that the judiciary branch has been investigating cases of the offence more incisively, as the variation across years is not drastic.

The history of corruption in Brazil brings to the spotlight critical features for the literature of corruption. Firstly, it highlights how the offence might be entrenched in Brazilian social and cultural roots since its establishment as a country. This trend has fostered an aligned development between institutions and corruption. Secondly, it indicates how the media have exerted influence over perceptions of the representation of corruption.

6. METHODOLOGY

This study attempts to understand the dynamic through which representations of corruption and corrupt politicians have been widespread throughout Brazilian population and the media. After the launching of Operation Carwash, both the media and their audience have brought to the spotlight the representation that corruption is more present than ever before, fostering a widespread concern that corruption has been endemic, and that politicians, in general, are a group of untrustworthy individuals that

are responsible for such scenario. As a consequence, the research question that steers this study is:

To what extent has the representation of corruption in Brazil been perceived by citizens and the media as concerning enough to trigger a mass panic?

This question also stirs parallel issues: If we can presume that corruption in Brazil is a matter of mass panic, what is the role of the media in framing such representation? How do citizens react when exposed to narratives of corruption on social media? How do the media create (or inflame) the narrative of corruption as a social threat? How is the relation between the media and the audience in such context? What is the impact of digital platforms, a new and significant expression of mass media, in the empowerment of users as the major players in the creation and widespread of the potential mass panic? If corruption in Brazil is, indeed, a case of mass panic, how have politicians been framed in this narrative?

Considering the position of social media as one of the most influential channels of mass communication nowadays, being able to change social spaces and to shape the audience's political participation (van-Dijck & Poell, 2015), this study uses Facebook as the environment for collecting data. Posts from accredited media profiles, as well as comments from the public on each of them, are, hence, the units of analysis. Two main methodological approaches are used to retrieve data and analyse the information provided. Firstly, a brief narrative analysis aims to demonstrate how news producers have described political corruption in Brazil, and reproduced the myth of such crime as a social threat: who is involved, who is out of the narrative, and how are these framed in the narrative of political corruption as a moral panic.

The second methodological approach, which aims to understand how Facebook users react when exposed to posts related to political corruption in Brazil, is the *Social Media Sentiment Analysis (SMSA)*, or opinion-mining approach. It consists of the use of technological interfaces to measure and understand users' reaction and opinions towards a particular issue or post on digital platforms (Prichard, et al., 2015). This approach also deals with information available online that is under constant and instantaneous change, presented under different content formats – as texts, videos, audios, GIFs, and so forth – , and accessed in global scale, with users from all parts of the globe (McAfee & Brynjolfsson, 2012)

The *SMSA* is a low-risk methodology to studies on the matter of crime and criminal justice in digital platforms because it does not require the recruitment of participants, as all information retrieved is public⁹. This method is under-explored within criminology, although there is a consistent literature regarding the intersection of social media and public attitudes towards crime and criminal justice. (McAfee & Brynjolfsson, 2012)

Furthermore, the analysis of users' sentiment over the matter of crime and criminal justice is a turning point in studies in the field of criminology because it stimulates a dialogue between mainstream approaches on social sciences and the field of IT (Prichard, et al., 2015). Prichard et al. (2015) also recognise the main drawback of this approach: the coverage error¹⁰. The *SMSA*, as any online-based research, limits the participant range to only those who can use and interact with digital platforms, excluding a set of vulnerable groups, as detainees, the homeless or those without access to the internet. Despite this, the approach is still useful to understand dynamics of representation and public opinion on crime, particularly in the context of the spread of digital information and social platforms.

This study analyses two news pages on Facebook. The first is *Folha de São Paulo*, the digital news platform with the biggest amount of followers in Brazil (5,570,618 followers by 30 June 2016, when this research started). The second public profile is *Jornal Nacional*, which is the digital platform of 'Jornal Nacional', the most influential primetime news program aired in the country. Owned and transmitted by the company Globo Network, *Jornal Nacional* has the highest audience in Brazil, regardless of the genre (Secretaria de Comunicação Social da Presidência da República [SCS-PR], 2014). The use of this source aims to overcome another drawback in the present methodology: 97% of Brazilian citizens still affirm they use the TV as the main source of information (SCS-PR, 2014). As *Jornal Nacional's* platform on Facebook usually posts the same material broadcasted on TV, and it has a significant figure of followers (7,784,855 followers by 20 June 2016), it is possible to get crucial information from this profile.

⁹ Besides the very low risk of investigations that use this approach, the approval of the Ethical Committee was not necessary because it did not retrieve any private information from Facebook users. In addition, names in all the samples analysed here were hidden in order to respect the principle of confidentiality and privacy in social sciences research

¹⁰ A coverage error occurs when a particular survey or a sample-based research does not allow some target groups to 'participate' in the study. As an example, surveys conducted with mobile phone users exclude a significant set of landline-only users, attributing a possible bias to the research (Hillygus, 2011).

The timeframe is fragmented into three parts, which provide a broad landscape before and after the launching of Operation Carwash. Such delimitation is necessary to analyse the rise and evolution of the problem of political corruption in the sources mentioned before.

- i. From 12 March 2014 to 01 March 2015: Time range of 15 days before and after the launching of Operation Carwash (17 March 2015).
- ii. From 12 March 2015 to 01 March 2016: One year after the launching of the operation.
- iii. From 15 March 2016 to 15 March 2017: Includes one of the most remarkable deployments of the Operation – the disclosure of police’s wiretap conversations involving former President Lula and President Dilma –two days before the approval of Dilma’s impeachment process in the Lower Chamber of the National Congress. The process of impeachment itself does not have a significant importance in this research, which explains the final date of the third timeframe.

This research examines posts from both sources regarding political corruption ($n=100$), and the public's comments to them ($n=60,839$). The material retrieved on Facebook is the result of an advanced search on the platform using the keywords *corrupção* (corruption), *investigação* (investigation), and *Lava-Jato* (Carwash). In the first stage, the content of each post will be carefully analysed to understand the narrative provided by both sources. Next, with the support of the NVivo software, all references will be coded to retrieve the ten most cited word in each timeframe. Despite the most cited word in each timeframe, which was unfiltered, the set of most cited words is filtered to have only nouns. Next, I analyse the content of comments related to each post, making use of coding tools and word trees from NVivo. This study also considers the frequency of words, since quantitative information might also enrich the credibility of the data, clarifying eventual methodological gaps likely to occur when a single methodological approach is used (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

This research design is an ambitious approach that aims to understand how media and crime interact and represent social realities in the public space of social media. As expected, some challenges are faced, due to the difficulties in retrieving posts from 2014 and 2015 accurately, and having a systematic tool to tag each post and comment into an algorithmically organised table. However, the strategy used here is still adequate

for understanding the object of analysis, and to provide notorious information to support the hypothesis mentioned before.

7. FINDINGS - THE NARRATIVE OF CORRUPTION IN BRAZIL

As showed in the previous chapters, corruption has been present in social, political and economic structures of Brazil since colonial ages. Institutional efforts are being constantly taken to tackle it, as well as to penalise politicians involved in scandals of corruption. However, structural changes were not enough to avoid the systematic scheme of corruption and bribery established between entrepreneurs and politicians

inside Petrobras. Operation Carwash is an important initiative to investigate the complex network of corruption in the oil company, and to identify and punish politicians and businesspeople involved in the case.

Although the history of corruption has been longstanding in the country, it is necessary to investigate how the Brazilian media and citizens have perceived the representation of corruption in the country since the launching of the operation. Hence, the research question “to what extent has the portrayal of corruption in Brazil been perceived by citizens and the media as concerning enough to trigger a mass panic?” is useful to measure the applicability of the moral panic theory in a case of white-collar crime, and to understand the dynamics through which the digital media and their users react when exposed to news of corruption in the country.

This chapter summarises the results of the data analysis related to 100 news stories and over 60,000 comments to these posts on Facebook during 12.03.2014 – 01.04.2014, 12.03.2015 – 01.04.2015, and 15.03.2016 – 15.04.2016. The narrative/content analysis focuses on how the media's production has shaped the narrative structure of corruption by creating characters and plots, whereas the *SMSA* traces an overview about how citizens react when exposed to posts about corruption in Brazil.

7.1 Narrative analysis

7.1.1 Characters

All timeframes indicate a pattern of characters in their posts. Firstly, the primary pattern of characters is related to ordinary politicians mentioned in documents from Operation Carwash as being potentially involved in the corruption scheme. Each character is usually spotlighted once or twice, particularly when they release statements denying any participation or affiliation with persons or companies part of the corruption scandal. In a significant part of references retrieved, these statements are contrasted with findings from Operation Carwash, or with previous events in which the character was involved, as an attempt to raise questions about the veracity of the politician's position. The news article titled “[Deputy] Lindbergh says he might have acted inappropriately, but not illegally” is a clear example of such pattern, as it contrasts the deputy's statement with accusations from the *PF*. News pieces regarding the deputies Edison Lobão, Antonio

Vargas, Gleisi Hoffmann, and others, also reproduce the image of such politicians as individuals who claim to be innocent, even though others, as the *PF*, claim the opposite. Secondly, prominent politicians and office holders, as President Rousseff, the former President Lula, ministers of the *Supremo Tribunal Federal (STF)* (Supreme Court), as Teori Zavaski and Ricardo Lewandowski, and the Minister of Justice, Eugênio Aragão, are recurring characters in news pieces, being framed as key characters in the narrative of corruption in the country. In nearly all news stories, their speeches or statements are contrasted with the main content of the news story, even if the piece is not related to any of them. The image of the former President Lula is more often recalled throughout all timeframes, as he is alleged to have participated in schemes of corruption and bribery after his mandate. Coincidentally, in all headlines that mention Lula, their story focused on his attempt to condemn investigations, or to delegitimise the Operation. The headlines "[Operation] Carwash is a pyrotechnic spectacle, says' Lula on an interview" (11.04.2016) and "Lula complains about selective leaking in Operation Carwash" (10.03.2015) illustrate such dynamics. Moreover, news stories whose headline cite President Rousseff highlight her official position against corruption. Incidentally, the news piece "'Corruption is an elderly lady', says Dilma after [public] demonstrations" (16.03.2015) is the reference with the highest amount of comments retrieved between all timeframes, with more than 4,300 comments, excluding replies to some of them.

Judge Moro is also a prominent character in news narratives. Whereas a few articles have a direct mention to him on the headline, other news stories frame Moro in the context of actions, decisions and speeches taken by others that might influence the Judge's conduction of investigations. Some articles also raised questions about the legitimacy of the Operation under Moro's leadership, particularly on the third timeframe. Two particular articles related to the judge are noteworthy. The first is related to a wide national demonstration against Dilma's government that occurred on 13 March 2016, with the presence of 6 million citizens on the streets across the country. This article's story – the only one related to the event – highlighted the Judge's gratitude over the demonstrations, where various citizens displayed banners supporting his actions, or used masks with his face.

7.1.2 Narratives

The references retrieved indicate three main narratives. Firstly, the most frequent content is related to politicians' positioning regarding investigations on the scope of

Operation Carwash, particularly those who deny any relation with companies or others politicians previously investigated during the operation. As an example, on 6 March 2015 the news article “Investigated deputies deny allegations from Operation Carwash”, based on a list of 49 politicians possibly involved in the corruption scandal released by the STF, comprises statements from 30 politicians who deny any involvement with the scheme and condemn the presidency of Mr Moro.

The other narrative found in the articles are the divergences between institutions about the conduct of the Operation. The plot in these articles refers, for instance, to STF's Ministers adopting decisions contrary to those taken by Judge Moro, or raising questions about his decisions. Additionally, it is also observed the coverage of criticism from other agencies, as the *Conselho Nacional de Justiça (CNJ)* (National Justice Council), and from lawyers hired by investigated politicians.

Thirdly, the consequences of the Operation are also briefly approached in some news pieces. An article published on 22 April 2015 highlights a record loss of R\$ 23 billion (around £6 billion) in Petrobras' income, according to findings from the investigation. Moreover, the article "Action plan from the MPF aims to increase the penalty and turn corruption into a heinous crime" (20.03.2015) highlights the institutional effort taken by the *MPF* towards a rougher penal regime against corruption, in response to public demands observed during wide national demonstrations on the previous week.

In contrast to these main narratives, one narrative is somehow missing in the media's coverage: reactions to public movements, notwithstanding they are pivotal for the narrative. Demonstration on 15 March 2015, for instance, took place in all 27 state capitals, Brasília, and at least 160 cities, with a total of two million participants (G1, 2015). However, the only article in my sample that mentions the demonstration, nevertheless fairly briefly, focuses on the President's speech regarding governmental efforts to combat corruption (figure 2). Coincidentally, the same pattern was repeated after demonstrations on 12 April 2015, which took over 1,500,000 citizens to the streets (figure 3). A demonstration on 13 March 2016 has been the biggest anti-corruption public event so far, with an estimate of over 3,000,000 participants across the country (O Estado de São Paulo, 2016). However, as illustrated in figure 4, the source *Jornal Nacional* released only one brief note (less than 400 words), while the source *Folha de São Paulo* released an article about Moro's gratitude for having his work acknowledged, as mentioned above.

'A corrupção é uma senhora idosa', diz Dilma após os protestos

MARIANA HAUBERT
NATUZA NERY
DE BRASÍLIA

16/03/2015 17h48 - Atualizado às 18h05

Figure 2 - Sample's news story related to the Brazilian demonstration on 15 March 2015. Translation: "Corruption is an old lady", says Dilma after demonstrations".

Combater a corrupção é 'meta constante' do governo, diz Dilma

FLÁVIA FOREQUE
DE BRASÍLIA

12/04/2015 19h29 - Atualizado às 19h47

Figure 3 - Sample's news story related to the Brazilian demonstration on 12 April 2015: Translation: "Tackling corruption is a 'permanent goal' of the government, says Dilma".

poder

Moro diz que ficou 'tocado' com apoio e pede 'corte na carne'

DE SÃO PAULO

13/03/2016 16h43

Figure 4 - Sample's news story related to the Brazilian demonstration on 13 March 2016. Translation: "Moro says he 'got emotional' with the support [from the public]".

7.2 Social Media Sentiment Analysis (SMSA)

This second cluster aggregates and analyses the most frequent words used in the comments retrieved, as an attempt to understand how users framed political corruption and politicians, and how users usually react when exposed to news pieces about corruption in the country. The NVivo software automatically coded all comments retrieved in the timeframes analysed (n = 60,839). Due to the high volume of information, only the ten most cited words with three or more characters in each

timeframe were analysed (see Appendix A). Data retrieving in the second timeframe (12.03.2015 – 01.04.2015) indicated a considerably huge number of posts (57) and comments (36,372) when compared to other timeframes (10 posts and 5,033 comments in the first timeframe, and 33 posts and 19,435 comments in the third timeframe). Consequently, posts from *Folha de São Paulo* with less than 1,500 comments were discarded from the second sample, but not the posts from *Jornal Nacional*, since their posts are fewer and not as commented. The appendix B, referring to the word *cara*, one of the most cited words in the first timeframe, illustrates how NVivo provides words trees, which were essential for the contextual analysis of words.

The most cited term in comments during the first timeframe (12.03.2014 – 01.04.2014) is the negative clause *não* (no, not), mentioned 358 times. The broad nature of the word does not bring subjective meaning by itself, so a contextual analysis is also necessary in this case. The main finding is that users employed the clause mainly to express the absence of trustworthy politicians in Brazilian politics. In the article "‘There is a feeling of [more] corruption because it is no longer hidden under the carpet", says [the Minister of Health] Carvalho", the news story with the most references to the word in its comments, there is a significant number of comments as "it is no longer hidden because it does not fit anymore", or "because there is no carpet enough" (figure 5), which illustrate the perception of endemic corruption. Furthermore, the word is related to the word ‘carpet’, also highlighted in the word frequency table.

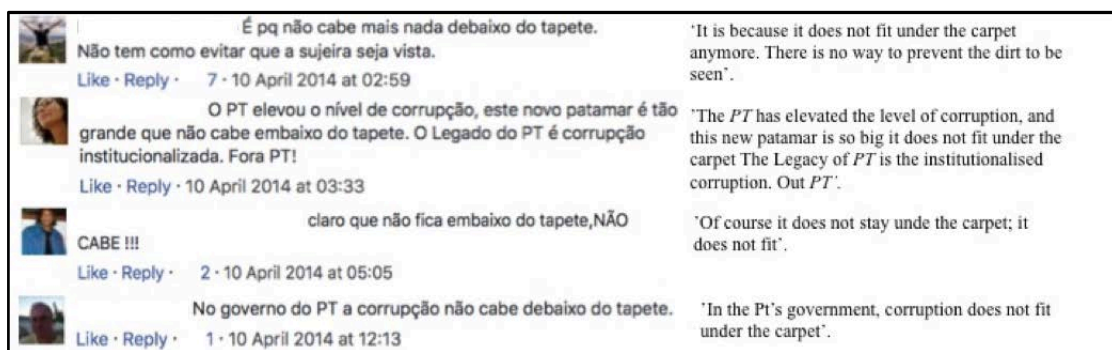


Figure 5 - Sample comments from timeframe 1 (12.03.2014 – 01.04.2014) related to the keyword 'não'.

There is also an interesting finding regarding the second most cited word, *cara*, which means ‘face’ and is also slang for ‘man’. The word tree indicates that this word is predominantly used as in *cara de pau*, which is a Brazilian saying attributed to someone who is shameless. Comments on the article from the Minister of Health highly used this expression, as a general attempt to affirm that he was deliberately lying in his

statement. The article "'I will face everything', says [the deputy] Vargas" (10.04.2014), in which the deputy reaffirms his innocence facing accusations of being involved in the corruption scheme, also has a high frequency of usage of the term, indicating a general perception that the deputy is lying about his innocence, although there was no evidence at that time to prove otherwise (figure 6).

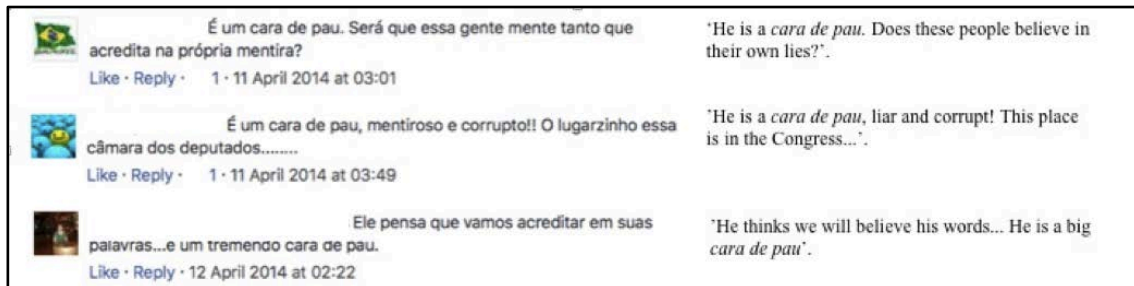


Figure 6 - Sample comments from timeframe 1 (12.03.2014 – 01.04.2014) related to the keyword 'cara'.

Finally, it is also noteworthy how the word *povo* (people, population) has been used to blame the population for corruption scandals in the country, either because of their votes in the last elections or because of they are incapable of demanding transparency and accountability. The comment "the country is rotten, and I am ashamed of the Brazilian population who has voted on these corrupt [politicians]" in the news piece about the feeling of corruption mentioned above, or the comment "the politicians from the PT are involved in everything related to corruption, and they keep stealing [from the public]. (...). The Brazilian population is the biggest bastard in the world, and does nothing to be better. They do not demand [for changes], only talk about football and complain about politicians, without thinking [on the situation]" in the news piece related to Deputy Vargas illustrates this.

In the second timeframe, *Brasil* is the most cited word in the comment retrieved, mentioned almost 1,500 times in 49 sources. The news piece "[defendants'] Lawyers say that the decision breaks actions of the judge Moro" (29.04.2015) presents the highest count of the word on comments – 233. The article refers to a decision from the *STF* to send nine businesspeople and employees of companies investigated from a previous pre-trial detention to a house-arrest regime. Because of this decision, argues the piece, lawyers of the released detainees praise the Court for the decision and condemn Moro for overlooking constitutional rights of self-defence and presumption of innocence. Then, the word is employed to condemn the decision of the *STF*, endorsing the general perception that corruption and impunity are also present in the Judiciary

branch. For instance, the most popular comment (673 likes) affirms that “this [the decision] was not only an outrage to Judge Sergio Moro but also a huge slap in the face of Brazil [referring to its citizens]. It is all rigged”. This comment received almost 40 replies from other users, some of them endorsing the opinion of the comment, which follows the pattern of criticism observed in other comments that mentioned *Brasil* (or *Brasileiro*, Portuguese word for ‘Brazilian’, as the software also looks for similar words) (figure 7).

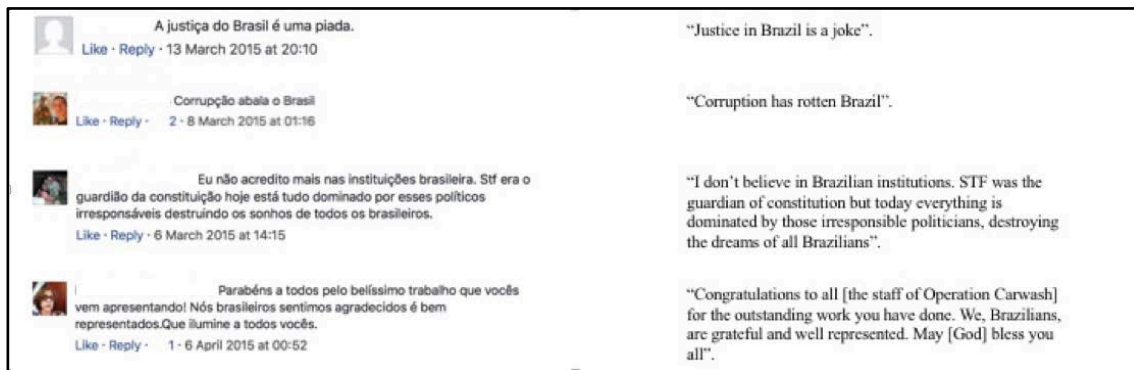


Figure 7 – Sample comments from timeframe 2 (12.03.2015 – 01.04.2015) related to the keyword ‘Brasil’.

The word ‘Lula’ is a reference to the former President and Rousseff’s right-hand man. The nature of the term is dual. On the one hand, users commonly demand that the former President is investigated, framing him as involved in corruption during his period in office (2002-2010) onwards, even though the *PF* has not found shreds of evidence of his affiliation with corruption schemes until when the post was shared on Facebook. The word is frequently used along with the term ‘Dilma’, as in the comments “the name of the leading duet of the gang, Lula and Dilma is missing”, and “where are the names of Lula and Dilma? What a shame! The name of the leaders [of the ‘gang’] are not listed”¹¹. Comments throughout 46 out of 49 posts in the second timeframe that have the term cited repeat the portrayal of Lula and Dilma as responsible for the endemic corruption in the country since 2002. On the other hand, it was also found that other users framed Lula as a symbol of morality, as there is no clear evidence so far that the former President has been involved in schemes of corruption. As a result, comments that fit this second pattern usually target Lula as a future runner (and the winner, according to these users) for the presidency in 2018.

¹¹ Although both words are often used together, the term “Lula” ranks as the 3rd most cited word in the second timeframe due to an article published on 10.03.2015 related to a controversial statement made by the former President, which has led to 186 mentions of the term.

The most cited word in comments on the third timeframe (15.03.2016 – 15.04.2016) is *povo* (people, population) – the same term analysed in the first timeframe, although some features here vary. Firstly, its use recalls the notion that Brazilian population, rather than being subservient to politicians as highlighted in the first timeframe, has been more aware of corruption in the country, assuming a proactive role towards the tackling of corruption. In the news piece “Quoted by [the investigated Deputy] Delcídio, [the 1994-2002 President of Brazil] FHC says that ‘even in the age of Jesus there were people who committed mistakes’” (16.03.2016), the comment "Corrupt and hypocritical, your time is to come [...]. Justice will be made, the population has committed many mistakes, but we are ready to revert this situation" illustrates such change. Moreover, the comment "[Corruption schemes] have fallen apart. Corruption might have destroyed the population, but we are stirring up” in another piece, as well as others similar, endorse the perception amongst users that something is being done to hamper corruption, particularly with Operation Carwash.

An analysis in the word tree for *povo* revealed another interesting finding. The term is often linked with the word ‘Moro’, as a reference to Judge Moro. The connection between the terms is twofold. Firstly, it illustrates that Moro has the support and admiration from the Brazilian population, since Brazilians have been aware of endemic corruption. Secondly, it indicates that Brazilians are hopeful about a change in the country's situation because of Moro and his team, who are trustworthy people. This pattern of gratitude and hope towards Moro is even repeated on comments in the post related to the news pieces "Moro was wrong to suspend the secrecy of wiretappings, affirm specialists" (21.03.2016), and "Moro is the target of 12 operations from the National Justice Council, which raise questions about his performance in the [Operation] Carwash" (22.03.2016). Figure 8 compiles some comments retrieved from various posts that illustrate such trend.

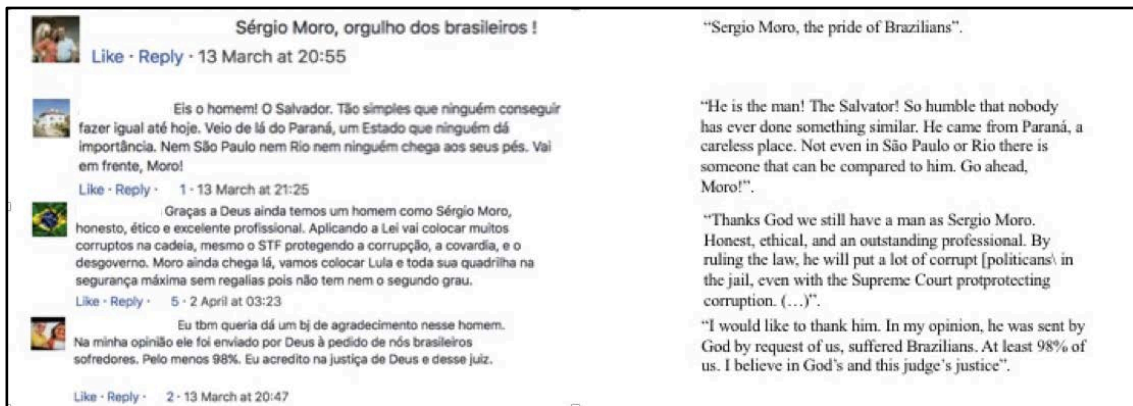


Figure 8 - Sample comments from timeframe 3 (15.03.2016 – 15.04.2016) related to the keyword combination 'Povo+Moro'.

The word *bandido(s)* (thief/thieves) also appears as one of the most cited words in this timeframe. The frequency of the word is what brings my attention. Whereas both the first and the second timeframes together account for 396 mentions to the term in the comments retrieved, the third timeframe has 711 mentions of the word. The news piece in which the word was most frequently used on comments is the “Minister of Justice says we will change the *PF*’s [investigative] team in case of leaking [of information]” (19.03.2016), which is an interview with the former Minister of Justice, Eugenio Aragão. The term *bandido(s)* is then used both about Mr Aragão himself – as an attempt to condemn him as a newly nominated Minister – and to all politicians, investigated or not in the operation.

Last but not least, two terms are also noteworthy, which are *cadeia* (jail) and “Globo”. The first one was used in nearly all references to encourage the continuity of the operation, and to condemn any performance that can somehow interfere in the investigations. Sentences similar to “jail is the right place for thieves”, “send them all to jail”, or “Brazil will not have enough jails for so many thieves” are repeated in all the 31 sources retrieved in the third period at least three times in each.

The second term, a surprising finding, is a reference to Globo Network, one of the main TV networks in the country. The term was used 501 times during the third timeframe in all posts retrieved from both sources (*Folha de São Paulo*, independent, and *Jornal Nacional*, led by Globo), as a reference to the network’s partiality facing the investigation, as shown in figure 9. According to a significant amount of the comments analysed, Globo Network has deliberately covered part of the investigation, putting only politicians from *PT* in the spotlight, and neglecting those from the opposition who are also involved. This term was frequently combined with the term *golpista*, which is a

word in Portuguese referring to a person or entity that provokes a coup against the government. In this case, the hashtag #GloboGolpista indicates users' perception that Globo is deliberately attempting against the government by only covering news on corruption related to PT's politicians.

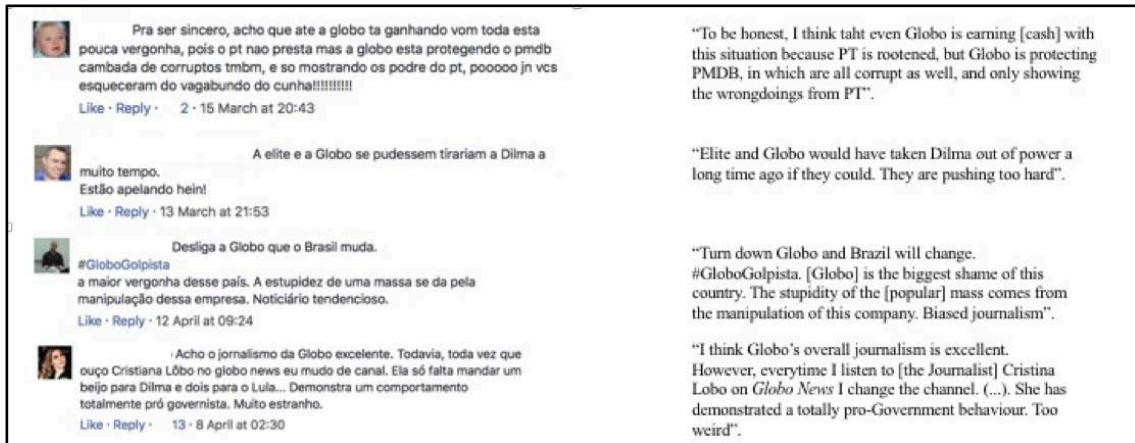


Figure 9 - Sample comments from Time frame 3 (15.03.2016 – 15.04.2016) related to the keyword 'Globo'.

In sum, this chapter has shown that narratives from the media, who produce stories shared on their pages on Facebook, and from the public, which express its reactions towards that production, present particular patterns and dynamics that indicate a widespread concern about corruption in Brazil. The analysis of posts' contents identified key characters and events in the narrative produced by the media, whereas the findings from the analysis of most frequent words in users' comments on these posts has provided a useful diagnostic about how users react when exposed to the issue of corruption, and about how they perceive representations of corruption in Brazil. The next chapter provides a further analysis of these findings, bringing to the spotlight the discussion of important questions related to the analyses and the pieces of literature on moral panic and corruption.

8. DISCUSSIONS

The data retrieved from Facebook brings fruitful insights about how the media and their audience perceive the representation of corruption in Brazil as a matter of concern. It is necessary, though, to acknowledge the drawbacks of this research before proceeding with further discussions. Firstly, it is a fact that the information retrieved does not statistically represent the general feeling of Brazilian population towards corruption and politicians. As mentioned in Chapter 5, the SMSA approach is susceptible to errors because this method automatically excludes groups that do not have access to the pages from the sample. However, digital spaces as Facebook and Twitter represent a new and vastly widespread platform for social interactions and interchange of knowledge, encouraging users to express their opinions related to a particular set of issues. Hence, although the Social Media Sentiment Analysis used here does not follow mainstream rules of random assignment and inferences, the research works as a ‘thermometer’ through which is feasible to understand social dynamics regarding the representation of corruption.

Additionally, the research does not provide geospatial and demographic information about Facebook users that have commented in the posts analysed. These information would contribute to trace with more accuracy the profile of participants in the platform analysed, potentially minimising pitfalls related to likely biased comments (fake profiles, users affiliated with political parties, spams, and so forth). However, the focus of this research is users' sentiment towards the exposition of posts related to corruption, and, therefore, demographic and geospatial information are not crucial for the analysis of findings.

It is also important to recognise the constraints of this project regarding both time and human resources (involving a single researcher where many mass media analyses bring together teams of researchers), challenging a deeper analysis of the big dataset retrieved (100 posts and over 60,000 comments). Further studies on the issue would be appropriate if conducted by more than one researcher, possibly bolstering the capacity of analysing and contrasting information with previous research. Additionally, a possible drawback created because of unfiltered comments, as spams, could also be avoided with more time and personnel available. Notwithstanding this drawback needs to be addressed in further research, this work is still reliable because of NVivo's use,

which has facilitated the process of coding and assessing information through word trees and nodes.

Having said that, several discussions arise when the findings from the previous chapter are contrasted with assumptions based on the literature review on moral panics and media studies. The narrative analysis described in the first part of Chapter 6 demonstrates how sources retrieved have framed the representation of corruption after the launching of Operation Carwash. The spotlighting of particular individuals as core actors in the narrative of the Operation, as Moro and the former President Lula, indicates that the media have performed a process of funnelling through which they determine the 'casting' of the narrative of corruption in the country, and shape what role each character would play on it. Several news stories, particularly those that mention Lula on their headline, lead the audience to believe that the former President is indeed involved in the corruption scandal, even though the investigative staff has not found evidence of that yet. On the other side, the representation of Judge Moro as the national 'hero' becomes evident, which was expected to happen based on the literature previously analysed. In the context that politicians, the primary representation of the 'moral barricade'¹², are framed as those responsible for the threat of morality in society – the 'folk devils' –, it was expected to find out the emergence of a new category of 'folk hero', in which Judge Moro takes place.

Still, regarding characters of the representation of corruption in the sample analysed, the framing of ordinary politicians as those who always claim to be innocent facing allegations from the PF, even when there is clear evidence of their involvement, is also an interesting finding for discussion. The media analysed do not create the narrative that politicians are always corrupt, but trigger such representation amongst readers. Since the SMSA stage indicated that users see corruption as intrinsic to politicians in Brazil, the media develop a technique of 'reverse psychology': by framing that ordinary politicians always declare themselves as innocent, regardless of the presence of evidence, leading readers to possibly conclude that politicians are guilty. This strategy indicates a pattern of amplification of concerns different than the traditional trend – the media have neither 'created' the mass concern about corruption nor the presence of a 'folk devil', but led the audience to do so. The same strategy was observed in news pieces whose stories were about Judge Moro's mistakes. In comments on these posts,

¹² See page 9 for the explanation of the concept.

the general audience focused on defending the Judge, framing him as the 'folk hero' whose role of saving the country from corrupt politicians is hampered by other characters.

The findings from the Social Media Sentiment Analysis also bring important features to the discussion. Firstly, and not surprisingly if compared with the public opinion polls mentioned before, users indeed see corruption as intrinsic to Brazilian politicians, at least in the samples retrieved. The feeling of trust in politicians in the comments analysed is almost null, particularly on posts focused on covering politicians' statements denying involvement in the corruption scheme. This observation endorses the discussion about the role of the media in creating a 'reverse psychology' towards the audience. Also unsurprisingly, all timeframes repeat this pattern of distrust, which endorses the argument that users perceive politicians as 'folk devils' in the narrative of corruption in Brazil. Secondly, the samples analysed also confirm the argument that there is a consensus amongst users that corruption is a widespread threat. Especially on the second timeframe, in which the word *Brasil* ranks amongst the most cited, it can be seen that Brazilian population has seen corruption as a threat to institutions and that it has rotten the country.

The relationship between the media and users is also a matter of discussion. The fact that users are sometimes sceptical about the media's veracity of information indicates that the audience has acquired an active role in the narrative of corruption, rather than being subservient to regimes of truth created by the media. This tendency is evident in comments related to the word *Globo*, in the third timeframe. The widespread feeling that news stories from Globo Network are biased symbolises the audience's perception that the media do not always perform the 'watchdog journalism', and, instead, attempt to manipulate the coverage of the issue, shaping what is told as real in the narrative. In an environment where participants can interchange opinions more easily due to their virtual detachment, the spread of dissident opinions against regimes of truth expressed by the media becomes notorious. The use of the hashtag *#GloboGolpista* symbolises how such platform facilitates the easy and fast spread of thoughts, some of them becoming viral amongst users. This new digital platform, thus, represents an attractive field of investigation about social interactions, whose dynamic is being extended to virtual dimensions. Still, a further study is necessary to explain why mentions to the

word *Globo* are predominant only in the third timeframe – perhaps comparing the findings with social events in the same period.

My overall conclusion is that, although there is no clear evidence that corruption in Brazil is a straightforward case of moral panic, it is possible to affirm that both Brazilian citizens and the media perceive the representation of the offence as concerning enough to trigger a potential mass panic. Elements that might instigate the representation of corruption as a mass panic were also found. There is a consensus amongst users that corruption affects Brazil in several spheres, and that something needs to be done to change this reality. There is also a (non-violent) hostility against politicians in general, due to the widespread perception that Brazilian politicians are intrinsically corrupt. Additionally, there is also a particular volatility in the framing of corruption as a massive threat, which can be seen in the variation of numbers of comments in the first (5,033), the second (36,372) and the third (19,435). The number of posts retrieved in each time frame also endorse that the volatility of this concern might exist: 10, 57, and 33 posts, respectively.

In this study, if the representation of corruption proved to be a case of mass panic, the source of panic would be the audience itself, rather than the media. Hence, Goode and Ben-Yehuda's (2009) 'grassroots' category on moral panics would be appropriate for understanding this bottom-up process, in which citizens play an active role in framing corruption as a mass panic, rather than a top-down flow led by the media and by the 'moral barricade'.

It is notable that the widespread concern about corruption already existed amongst users, and the media expressed it, rather than creating such concern. Indeed, comparative analyses across timeframes indicate that the general feeling that corruption is widespread in the Brazilian political system, and that politicians themselves foster the culture of corruption in the country, already existed in the first timeframe, and was persistent at the time.

Although the mainstream approach of moral panics has not been sufficient to understanding the case analysed, traditional segments in such narrative could be identified, despite some particularities. The presence of a 'moral barricade' that claims for institutional changes to refrain a particular social threat from taking place is blurred, as politicians are no longer framed as representatives of morality. Consequently, other agents and institutions, as Judge Moro and the *PF* are accredited to represent such

segment. This also leads to a flip in the traditional profile of a 'folk devil' and its opposite, the 'folk hero'.

The debate about the interaction between the media and their audience in perceiving and reacting to representations of crime and criminals also have important consequences to criminology in general, and to studies on white-collar crime, in particular. Firstly, it confirms the complexity of analysing dynamics and processes of white-collar crimes, which involve a different set of various actors and structures. Moreover, this case also illustrates how criminological theories contribute to understanding how certain criminal trends take place across time and space. The traditional model of moral panics has constantly been revisited since Cohen's seminal work to provide logical explanations to a broader set of criminal events. Nowadays, even white-collar crimes, which were naturally out of the scope of this traditional model, can be fruitfully analysed through such lenses, with theories providing limited tools through which a particular social event can be understood.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that, despite these results, this study could not prove its original argument: that representations of corruption in Brazil are a case of mass panic. However, it was possible to find elements that indicate such tendency. Further studies are needed to analyse: i) the frequency of news stories related to corruption versus those related to any other issue; ii) demographic and geospatial distribution of Facebook users that participate in debates about corruption via comments.

9. CONCLUSION

This master's research analysed how both the media and their audience in Brazil have perceived the representation of corruption in the country as concerning enough to trigger a mass panic. The locus of investigation is the digital platform Facebook, and both posts and comments retrieved in three timeframes (12.03.2014 – 01.04.2014; 12.03.2015 – 01.04.2015; 15.03.2016 – 15.04.2016) constitute the sample analysed. The original argument of this study was that the representations of corruption in Brazil, particularly after the launching of Operation Carwash, symbolise a case of mass panic and that there was a flip in the perception of 'folk devils' in the case, as politicians were framed as so.

The findings of this research were not sufficient to confirm the case as a matter of moral panic. However, several elements present in the narrative of corruption from both the media and the audience were found. Firstly, the findings indicate that, if the case indeed symbolises a matter of moral panic, the source of moral panic would not be the media, but the public. The perception that corruption is a widespread social threat that erodes democratic institutions and the 'dream' of all Brazilians has its origins in society long before Operation Carwash, as public opinions polls demonstrated in 2005. This narrative also indicates a flip in the characters of the 'folk devils', and their opposite, the 'folk heroes'. Politicians are no longer seen as the bastion of morality in the country because of corruption, and the violation of trust between them and their voters leads to the public framing of politicians as 'folk devils'.

In this case, the media would have inflamed the public concern about the issue through the setting of narratives characters, rather than creating it. The 'reverse psychology' made by them indicates a new scenario where the media is no longer able to freely

demonstrate regimes of truth, and in which the audience has achieved a crucial role in this narrative by raising questions about the media's function of 'watchdog journalism'.

Findings from this study also indicate that digital platforms, new virtual square of social interactions, have acquired a pivotal role in social sciences and criminology. Through analyses of this environment, it is possible to understand tendencies and patterns in the real world, in which social and cultural boundaries are more explicit. Hence, the analysis of the media's narrative towards corruption, and of users' reaction to it on Facebook nurtures a fundamental contribution to criminology vis-à-vis its ultimate goal: to understand dynamics of social interaction that reinforce or (re)create practices of crime and criminal behaviour. The Media 2.0 provides, then, a proxy of the social world through which it is possible to observe particular patterns of interaction throughout society.

Finally, this research raises crucial questions that might steer further studies about the issue. If politicians are indeed framed as 'folk devils' in the narrative of political corruption, what are the impacts on the legitimacy of institutions in tackling corruption-related offences? Political decisions represent the utmost symbol of the trust relation between voters and politicians in democratic regimes. Additionally, to what extent is political reform, as demanded by Brazilian experts, a useful tool for minimising corrupt practices amongst politicians, considering the structural background of corruption in the country? How can criminologists investigate in-depth the impacts of the lack of legitimacy from society towards politicians in the prevention of criminal offences, and on the endorsement of Rule of Law?

This research is an innovative study that brought together traditional and contemporary literature on criminology, offences not frequently tested with these lenses, and new spaces for social interaction, as digital platforms. As expected, it has some drawbacks that are a consequence of financial and human resources limitations, but it can still represent a turning point for further criminological studies on digital platforms.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Ten most cited words in each timeframe, with their respective translation into English, and word count.

First timeframe: From 12.03.2014 to 01.04.2014

	Original	In English	Word count
1	Não	No	358
2	Caras	'dudes'; face	125
3	Governo	Govern	83
4	Tapete	Carpet	82
5	Corrupção	Corruption	78
6	Brasil	Brazil	76
7	Povo	People, population	72
8	Pau	Wood	69
9	Frente	Front	54
10	Lula	-	48

Second timeframe: From 12.03.2015 to 01.04.2015

	Original	In English	Word count
1	Brasil	Brazil	1495

2	Caras	'dudes'; face	1180
3	Lula	Lula	897
4	País	Country	852
5	Dinheiro	Money	757
6	Brasileiro	Brazilian	656
7	Dia	Day	593
8	Idosas	Elderly	472
9	Contra	Against	451
10	Justiça	Justice	439

Third timeframe: From 15.03.2016 to 15.04.2016

	Original	In English	Count
1	Povos	People	1013
2	Bandidos	Thieves	711
3	Juizes	Judges	687
4	Brasileiro	Brazilian	632
5	Contra	Against	522
6	Bem	Good; well	500
7	Globo	Globo [the TV channel]	498
8	Cadeias	Jails	492
9	Corrupção	Corruption	479
10	Lava-Jato	Carwash	420

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