

“What’s blindness got to do with it?”



Master's thesis in Nordic Media

Linn Martinussen

Department of Media and Communication

University of Oslo, Norway

10.11.2014

Abstract

In this piece of work, I have posed the following questions:

- How was blindness made part of the Blunkett scandal?
- What significance did the Blunkett scandal have in an African context?

My conclusion is that Blindness was not given that much attention in the coverage of the scandal. Thus it did not affect the outcome, something which is positive for equality.

However, it was given the attention any “anomaly” would have done, something we see in one of the articles analysed, “What’s blindness got to do with it?”

With regards to the second question, I have concluded that although the Blunkett scandal was not that significant, and even less so in an African context, it played a big role in the debate around an African democracy. I am therefore arguing that it had a great symbolic significance. This is concluded from the article “What if Blunkett were African?”

The thesis starts with a chapter outlining why I chose to look closer into the Blunkett scandal and the chapter also discusses the two elements I am looking at throughout the thesis: Scandal and disability. In chapter two, we take a deep dive into scandal theory, in chapter three, disability theory, how is disability covered in the media? Chapter four gives us a short biography of David Blunkett as well as looking more in depth into the scandal. Chapter five is the methods chapter and in chapter six, I analyse the previously mentioned articles and provide answers to the research questions. Chapter seven sees the conclusion to the thesis.

© Author

2014

“What’s blindness got to do with it?”

Linn Martinussen

<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

Print: Reprosentralen, University of Oslo

Foreword

Imagine that you've got to choose between two challenging tasks.

1. Tame a lion,
2. Make a journalist and fiction writer into an academic.

Which would you choose?

I heard you say the lion. And I honestly do not blame you. To say that writing this piece of work you're about to read has been hard is an understatement. When I'm not making endless cups of tea, and emerging into the mystical world that is academia, I make endless cups of tea and write for a few lifestyle magazines and I am a song and fiction writer as well. Writing for me is playing with words. Finding unexpected twists and turns for my characters, be creative with rhymes and coming up with cliff-hangers that will leave the readers screaming for MORE! But academic writing isn't like that. And I have had many angry outbursts, slammed with doors and made up creative swear words when I, yet again, didn't get it.

But writing this thesis hasn't just been horrible. I have enjoyed every bit of the research process. And I do not, for a second regret my decision to get a masters' degree. And I have learned a lot both about studying, scandals, disability theory patience and maturing in the process. My doors are still intact, I still have a social life and I just about kept my sanity.

First and foremost, I need to thank my thesis' subject, David Blunkett, who kindly granted me an interview in his Westminster office. I got some insights into the happenings of 2004 and 2005 I wouldn't otherwise have got. His open and honest answers to my questions have coloured my analysis chapter a great deal. This piece of work would only have been half as good without his input.

My Supervisor Anders Olof Larsson has given me useful feedback and constructive criticism throughout the process. Then there's Elisabeth Nymann (aka Miranda Priestly¹), my secretary who has done the proof reading and physical layout. She also reminded me that there are things like fashion, make-up, skin-care and wine when I had been sitting around in my tea spotted house clothes and unmade-up face, writing for longer than what's humanly healthy. She has also become a very dear friend. My cousin Elisabeth (EMO) for taking me on long walks so my brains got some fresh air. My little sister Lisa-Marie for brain storming my thesis ideas with me and for being an awesome sister. Gideon Goldberg and his colleague Theresa for a tour of the Guardian offices. And of course my course mates. Without us encouraging each other throughout, this I might have gone mad. Thanks too to the crew at Grimstad Library to provide both academic literature and other books I could enjoy when I was taking a break.

And then, thanks to the Slim Entertainment Crew and particularly to man and manager Olawale. Thanks to you I actually have a job when this piece of work is handed in. Luv ya!

¹ The notorious Editor in Chief in the movie and book «The Devil Wears Prada».

And finally, I would like to dedicate my thesis to my late father Egil Martinussen. You encouraged me to contact David Blunkett to ask for the interview. And despite not living to see the finished product, I'm guessing you're spying on me from the spirit world with mum and that you've both read every word

Oslo, November 2014

Contents

- 1. Background..... 10
 - 1.0 Introduction..... 10
 - 1.1 Two elements of study 10
 - 1.1.1 The scandal element 11
 - 1.1.2 The disability element 12
 - 1.2. Research questions..... 14
 - 1.3 Thesis outline..... 15
- 2. Scandals..... 15
 - 2.1 Etymology and history of the word ‘scandal’ 15
 - 2.2 Sex, money, power & talk - four types of scandals 17
 - 2.2.1 Sex: The Profumo affair 17
 - 2.2.2 Financial scandals: Sahlin, Berlusconi and Mandelson 18
 - 2.2.3 Power scandals: The Watergate affair 19
 - 2.2.4 Talk scandal 19
 - 2.2.5 Scandal types and the Blunkett scandal..... 20
 - 2.3 The scandal characteristics..... 20
 - 2.3.1 The first characteristic:..... 21
 - 2.3.2 The second characteristic:..... 22
 - 2.3.3 The third characteristic: 22
 - 2.3.4 The fourth characteristic: 23
 - 2.3.5 The fifth characteristic..... 23
 - 2.4. The mediated scandal 23
 - 2.4.1 Mediated versus localized 23
 - 2.4.2 The rise of mediated scandals 24
 - 2.5 The structure of mediated scandals 25
 - 2.5.1 Pre-scandal phase..... 25
 - 2.5.2 The phase of the scandal proper 25
 - 2.5.3 The culmination phase 26
 - 2.5.4 The aftermath..... 26
 - 2.6 Scandals and democracy 26
 - 2.7 Front region versus back region 27

2.8 Final comment to chapter two	28
3. Disability portrayal in the media	28
3.0 Introduction.....	28
3.1 Word definition	29
3.2 The language of disability.....	29
3.3 A history of oppressive and negative representation	31
3.3.1 Disabled people as pitiable.....	32
3.3.2 Disabled people as objects of violence	33
3.3.3 The disabled person as sinister and evil.....	33
3.3.4 The disabled person as an object of curiosity	34
3.3.5 The disabled person as ‘supercrip’	34
3.3.6 The disabled person as an object of ridicule	35
3.3.7 The disabled people as their own worst and only enemy.....	35
3.3.8 The disabled person as a burden.....	36
3.3.9 The disabled person as sexually abnormal.....	36
3.4 Present portrayal.....	37
3.5 The disabled celebrity as normal.....	39
3.5.1 David Blunkett	39
3.5.2 Oscar Pistorius, Blade Runner	39
3.5.3 Cato Zahl Pedersen.....	40
3.6 Conclusion	41
3.7 Final comment to chapter 3.	42
4. David Blunkett biography	42
4.1 Early life	42
4.2 Political career	44
4.3 The Blunkett scandal	45
4.3.1 Kimberly Quinn	45
4.3.2 The scandal develops	46
4.3.3 Allegations	47
4.3.4 First resignation.....	48
4.3.5 Returning to government.....	48
4.3.6 Sally Anderson	48
4.3.7 Second resignation	49
Chapter 5 Methods.....	49

5.1 Introduction.....	49
5.2 Case study.....	49
5.2.1 Single case study	50
5.2.2 My case for the case study	50
5.2.3 Selecting the articles	51
5.3 Why the Guardian and the BBC?	53
5.4 Additional analysis material	54
5.5 Methods of analysis.....	55
5.5.1 Issue analysis	55
5.5.2 Description analysis.....	55
5.5.3 Hermeneutic analysis	56
5.6 Conclusion	56
6. Analysis.....	56
6.1 Introduction.....	56
6.2. “What’s blindness got to do with it?”	57
6.2.1 The headline	57
6.2.2 Teaser	58
6.2.3 What Blunkett says.....	59
6.2.4 Judgment and blindness.....	60
6.2.5 What’s blindness?	62
6.2.6 How blind people are passing judgment through voice.....	63
6.2.7 How blind people pass judgment through touch.....	63
6.2.8 Finding a partner, Blind vs sighted	64
6.2.9 Other effects.....	65
6.2.10 Conclusion	68
6.3 “What if Blunkett were African?”	70
6.3.1 It’s a reflective matter	70
6.3.2 The matter of reflection	71
6.3.3 Big boss.....	73
6.3.4 The differences in operation.	77
6.3.5 ‘The times they are a changing’?.....	79
6.3.6 Conclusion	79
7 Final discussion and conclusion.....	80
7.1 Sex and power	81

7.2 Disability portrayal	81
7.3 “What’s blindness got to do with it?”	83
7.4 “What if Blunkett were African?”	83
7.5 Final conclusion	85
References.....	87
Appendix 1.....	92
Appendix 2.....	104
Appendix 3.....	106

1. Background

1.0 Introduction

In the autumn of 2004, the topic of the British Home Secretary David Blunkett was hot within the blind communities. It seemed every blind person I came across had something to say about him. It was clear to me why he was a hot topic. He had been accused of fast-tracking the renewal of his ex-lover's nanny's work visa. In other words, he had been accused of corruption, which is serious in a democracy such as the UK. Blunkett's government position didn't make the allegation any less serious. But why he was such a hot topic among the blind was puzzling to me, a new arrival in the UK. So I asked a blind friend the reason for this.

"He's blind of course. Didn't you know that?" was her answer.

I had no idea that he was blind. It had not been mentioned in the news reports I had read and listened too, something I found very intriguing as I, from previous experience, would have expected to have read that somewhere.

I am blind for the same reason as David Blunkett. Due to a detached optic nerve. And I found it very accelerating that I hadn't read anything about his blindness, and that nobody in the media seemed to marvel at the fact that blind people can make mistakes. Let alone be in senior government.

So when I was faced with writing the thesis, I thought it would be interesting to look closer at the Blunkett case.

1.1 Two elements of study

I have identified two elements which are interesting in the Blunkett case. Firstly, there's the scandal element, and secondly the disability element. It would perhaps have been easier to focus on one of these elements. How big was the Blunkett scandal? And did Blunkett's blindness have any impact in the media coverage of the scandal and the outcome, namely Blunkett resigning? But my main reason for focusing on both elements had to do with the nature of how the study was going to be carried out. I was eager to do a qualitative study, as I knew a quantitative study would bring forth accessibility challenges I wasn't sure I would be able to satisfactorily solve within the time frame I had to write the thesis. (See further discussion about this in the method chapter.) This left me with very little to analyse. One good article "What's blindness got to do with it?" from the Guardian online. I felt it was insufficient. I also thought that the scandal element was equally, if not more important and interesting to me, because after all, I was looking at whether Blunkett's blindness had anything to do with the media coverage and the outcome of the scandal. So leaving the

scandal element completely out of the study was impossible. And when I found an article which shed light on the scandal in a way I had never thought of previously. Namely “What if Blunkett were African?” from the BBC Africa website, I had my study laid out.

1.1.1 The scandal element

For a scandal to be a scandal, a person, usually somebody in the limelight, a politician, a celebrity etc. needs to commit a transgression that is known about by someone who is not directly involved. That somebody will need to be shocked or horrified by the scandal to the extent that he wishes to expose the scandal to the public, who, will also likely be horrified by it. The Blunkett scandal contains all these elements, but is a relatively minor one compared to other scandals in British and international history, such as for instance the Profumo scandal and the Watergate scandal which we’ll talk briefly about in chapter 2. None of the transgressions the allegations claimed he had committed were neither all that serious to begin with, nor could they actually be proven according to Blunkett who had suggested an enquiry into the matters. (Blunkett 2014) But it became a scandal because Quinn cleverly packaged the incidents within a scandal framework. As a magazine publisher, she knew how mediated scandals worked and she had some key elements to work with that would, with some tweaking, appear scandalous. And as for the allegations, they had come from her, according to Blunkett himself and his biographer Stephen Pollard. I was fortunate enough to be granted an interview with David Blunkett in his Westminster office on January 21st 2014, where he also stated that the investigation into the visa renewal allegation as worst was inconclusive. Thus it seemed his resignation was unnecessary other than to ease the pressure on the rest of the government. He was assumed guilty at the time, as is clear from reading press cuttings. But even though it’s not the worst scandal in history, the scandal had some significance as one of the two articles I will analyse is an example of. “What if Blunkett were African?”, discusses Blunkett’s resignation following the visa renewal allegation in an African light, and questions what would have happened if Blunkett had been African would he have resigned? I will therefore argue that the scandal had a more symbolic significance than an actual political one. And that fact still makes Blunkett’s case an interesting study.

Scandals have a long history. And where there is human civilization and democracy, scandals in one form or another are inevitable. However political and mediated scandals as we know them today seem to have been on the rise for the past century and especially post World War

II. The cause of this is that the political scandals in the modern form are inextricably linked with the news media and modern, digital forms of publication. (Allern & Pollack 2012:9). As discussed in the next chapter, mediated scandals are not pre-packaged events ready to be published, but played out in the media before an inquisitive, story hungry audience. (Bird as cited in Lull and Hinerman 1997, Ekström & Johansson 2008) One can compare the mediated scandal to a modern improvisation play: You've got the actors and a rough outline of what kind of story should be played out, but the audience influences greatly how the end result will be. Rather than the actual public audience however in the case of the scandal its likely people who are a little closer involved with the main actors of the scandal who is taking that improvisation role, from journalists, to party colleagues and family members. The Blunkett scandal is, despite of its relative insignificance in scandal history, a great example of how a mediated scandal is played out, with new voices and angles being examined up until, and after his resignation to shed more light on why the scandal happened. This mediated paying out, is also a reason to argue that the Blunkett scandal is an interesting case.

The two articles I will analyse, "What's Blindness got to do with it?", and "What if Blunkett were African?", are two of the different twists on this playing out of the scandal with one twist representing each elements. And the journalists of these articles represent two of the actors in this improvisation play.

1.1.2 The disability element

As previously mentioned, Blunkett's disability was hardly given attention in the media coverage of the scandal. It is therefore unlikely that his blindness had any impact on the media coverage and the outcome. Although one could argue that a conclusion like that provides grounds for leaving the disability element untouched the mere fact that that it wasn't emphasized is what makes this element such an interesting one. The social science of disability has not been study to the same extent as that of other minority groups (Hartnett 2000). And seeing as most of the population will, at some point in their life, be disabled, further studies into the field are important. The studies conducted are also focusing a lot on historical portrayal of disability. And as (Harper 1992) suggests, the disabled person portrayed as normal in the media, i.e. not as pitiable, supercrip, evil avenger or an object of ridicule (see chapter 3) is rather recent. It is thus arguably easy to assume that Blunkett's blindness, if not having a direct impact on the scandal coverage and outcome, may have been hyped up a lot more than what was the case. Blind people have historically been portrayed to

have super senses such as being able to feel the difference between warm and cold colours, and otherwise have super sensitive hearing like Dare Devil (see chapter 3). I am not posing an exclusive research question on why Blunkett was portrayed as Normal, but in the subsequent discussions in later chapters as well as in Appendix 1, Interview with David Blunkett, he states that he himself wished to be treated like everybody else. The politics was the reason for him being in the media, so the blindness came second. And the politics was then what the spin doctors would focus on as they would with other politicians. When conducting initial research into the Blunkett scandal, I read a wide variety of articles from various press sources and found that most of them, including the interviews with emotional terms such as “a career broken” “A dad loving his son”, and “A spurned lover in tears” and so on, only tended to mention the blindness for the most part, as biographical fact. These articles were contenders for the analysis chapters, but the blindness wasn’t mentioned enough that I chose to include them. I wanted to look at material that exclusively discussed his blindness, and would thus have required the articles to give more than a passing reference. I was also advised early on in the thesis process to compare coverage from two similar media sources. I had already chosen the BBC and the Guardian and this aided me further in selecting only the two articles I will analyse. Random statements, quoting that Blunkett had said that a blind man could not be the Prime Minister for security reasons, the most interesting article I found, was “What’s blindness got to do with it?” So although mostly overlooked, there was clearly a need to cover that aspect too. However, that aspect would likely have been covered had Blunkett belonged to an ethnic or sexual minority and can thus not count as being treated differently by the media unless one argues that covering such things at all can be seen as different treatment however small.

This study is the first of its kind, because there have not been many disabled politicians in senior ministerial positions, such as David Blunkett. Let alone disabled senior ministers who have been the centre of a scandal. It is therefore quite logical that a study looking at how disabled politicians are being treated when they are the main participants of a scandal has not been conducted. It is of importance however, because it provides more aspects to study the social science of disability. Seeing as other minority groups as well as women, have had more studies devoted to them, aspects such as differences between how these groups are treated in different situations, including scandals have been done. And it is only fair and right to do the same with regards to the disabled minority. Because this is a study of only one politician and one case, it also can’t be compared to other politicians in similar predicaments. This can only

happen when more disabled politicians get elected in parliament and when they commit transgressions that develop into mediated scandals. And only then can a pattern be discerned as to how much disability plays a part in scandal media coverage and outcome. Such as for instance, whether disabled politicians feel more or less responsibility to publicly apologize for their actions, or defend their image differently to able-bodied politicians. A recent study by Elin Strand Hornnes on how female politicians have been treated in the media in relation to a scandal, has concluded that female politicians felt more obliged to publicly apologize for their transgressions than their male counterparts. (Hornnes 2014) And had there been sufficient material, a comparative between how female politicians and disabled politicians are treated in the media during a scandal would have been highly interesting. Or even comparing how David Blunkett was treated in the media to how a politician from an ethnic minority had been treated in a similar situation. But I wanted to focus solely on disability for this study. Both because it is a field that has received so little academic attention outside of the medical field, and because it is a field in which I as an author have first-hand experience.

The good news so far, is that David Blunkett, other than some mentions and “What’s blindness got to do with it?” was otherwise treated the same as his peers would likely have been. And if this is the case for all disabled politicians, i.e. if all disabled politicians who are and who come to power can separate their public persona from their disability in a way David Blunkett did, having a disability doesn’t mean different treatment by the media during a scandal. Both Blunkett’s supporters and opponents respected him a lot for having reached the position he did. He was, as discussed in chapter four, originating from a poor background. And even though his blindness didn’t stand in the way of his reaching the Home Secretary position, it is safe to say that being blind did create extra challenges along the way. These included everything from bad attitudes from his teachers who said he’d be a wood worker (Pollard 2005) and material not being produced in Braille or audio when needed.

1.2. Research questions

The research questions posed for this work will reflect the two previously discussed elements of scandal and disability. The first question will be:

- *How was blindness made part of the Blunkett scandal?*

And the second question will be:

- *What was the significance of the Blunkett scandal in an African context?*

The questions shall be answered in the two-part analysis chapter, in which the articles “What’s blindness got to do with it?” taken from the Guardian online and “What if Blunkett were African?” taken from BBC Africa online will be looked at. Both chapters will also contain material from my interview with Blunkett.

1.3 Thesis outline

In the next chapter, we will make a deep dive into the theory of scandals, what constitutes for a scandal, the scandal characteristics and phases and discuss why scandals are positive for democracy. In chapter three, we shall take a theoretical look at disability in a similar way to what we have done with scandals in chapter two. In chapter four, we shall properly acquaint ourselves with David Blunkett and the actual history that culminated in the scandals before we go to method (chapter 5) and the subsequent analysis (chapter 6). Finally, in chapter 7, the initial questions will be discussed and concluded.

2. Scandals

This chapter will aim to define what a scandal is by defining what is required to make an event scandalous, the characteristics of a scandal, the four main types of scandal, differences between mediated and localized scandal and why scandals are important for the democratic process. I will contextualize the Blunkett scandal with the various scandal aspects we will get acquainted with throughout the text.

2.1 Etymology and history of the word ‘scandal’

Today, a scandal is something we have often come to associate with a public persona committing a form of transgression, publicly unacceptable behaviour in one way or another, which causes uproar in the media. While this is true, this is only partly describing the meaning of the term scandal. And scandals do not always need to have a public persona at the centre

The word ‘scandal,’ most likely has its etymological root in the Indo-Germanic word ‘skand,’ which means either to spring or leap. (Thompson 2000:12) Early Greek derivatives such as ‘skandalon’ were used figuratively to signify moral stumbling blocks, traps or obstacles, such as in the Greek version of the Old Testament. The Greek substantive has a related verb,

‘skandalizein.’ (Allern & Pollack 2012:11) In Early Christian tradition, ‘skandalon’ also came to mean something which made an individual stray from the path of salvation. The Oxford English Dictionary also translates ‘skandalon’ as snare or stumbling block. Today those moral stumbling blocks tend to signify something secular unless we are talking about scandals in the religious community. The word got even further religious connotations from its Latin derivative ‘scandalum’ and subsequent entry into the Roman languages, Spanish, Italian, French and Portuguese...

The word ‘scandal’ first appeared in the English language in the sixteenth century around the same time the Roman languages also started taking the word in use. Scandal was still used with religious connotations, such as when somebody, a religious person committed a moral transgression or if someone discredited religious faith, for instance as in Francis Bacon’s phrase of 1625 ‘Heresies and Schismes, are of all others, the greatest scandals’. (Thompson 2000:12)

Scandal was also used in a more secular context referring to anything from an immoral act against what was deemed common decency to defamatory statements. And as such, the meaning of ‘scandal’ was much closer linked with slander, which is the common English term of today to describe any defamatory statements. ‘Scandal’ and ‘slander’ derive from the same origin, slander being a direct derivative from the old French word ‘esclandre,’ which again derives from ‘scandalum.’ (Thompson 2000:11-13) As Thompson also points out however, there was one important difference between ‘scandal’ and ‘slander’: ‘Slander’ usually implied and still implies that a defamatory allegation is false, whilst ‘scandal’ did and does not.

In using the word ‘scandal’ to refer to discreditable actions, the word got a new and very important connotation. Whereas in a religious context it was used to describe damage between a believers wavering belief in religious doctrine, and in the case of defamatory statements, one or more individuals accusations against another. But this third connotation suggested that one of more individuals could commit an act that would not only offend a few individuals, but a whole society. The latter is what ‘scandal’ has come to mean today.

This can be backed up by looking at modern dictionary definitions of the word scandal. Longmans Dictionary of Contemporary English defines it as “an event in which someone, especially someone important, behaves in a bad way that shocks people”. (Allern & Pollack 2012:10-11)

2.2 Sex, money, power & talk - four types of scandals

Not every shocking revelation is a scandal. Something's, like someone receiving a parking ticket, is too small to constitute a scandal although it may be the start of a developing scandal. On the other hand, genocides like the Holocaust or the Rwandan mass murders of the Tutsi population are too big and serious to be mere scandals. So offenses deemed appropriate for the title scandal, lies somewhere in the middle of the two extremes and vary in seriousness. What is and isn't a scandal, depends to a large degree on the cultural context in which it happens be it time era and country.

Thompson (2000) distinguishes between three main types of scandals. They are sex scandals, financial scandals and power scandals. Ekström & Johansson (2008) have also identified a fourth type of scandal, the talk scandal.

Sex scandals, talk scandals and financial scandals need not exclusively be related to political matters, but can be found in any aspect of society such as for example in schools and churches, or related to celebrities. It is slightly different when it comes to power scandals, as this type of scandal involve the abuse of political power. A specific scandal need not belong in just one of the four categories, but may be rooted primarily in one, and secondarily in another. For example, a scandal with corruption at its centre may have elements of a financial nature which then is secondary to the scandal. (Thompson 2000:120)

The types of scandals which are most interesting in relation to David Blunkett, are power scandals and sex scandals because the scandal was a question of misusing political power based on a sexual relationship. Let's briefly look at some relatively well known scandals, all belonging in the four different categories to get a better feel for them.

2.2.1 Sex: The Profumo affair

Sex scandals appear to be particularly prevalent in Britain and America, or what Hallin and Mancini (2004) have defined as liberal countries. This is not because these types of scandals are more frequent there than any other places, but because sexual transgressions are deemed much more serious within a political context than in other parts of the world. In most of Europe, a political sex scandal tends to involve either minors, prostitutes or both. For instance, when Silvio Berlusconi was revealed to host Bunga bunga parties where minor prostitutes were present. And apart from the recent scandal with France's president Hollande leaving his living-in partner for his mistress, France is known to be a society accepting of

politicians and other public personas engaging in extramarital activities. But in the liberal countries, it is often sufficient that a politician who publicly stands for Christian family values and as a loving father and devoted husband has a mistress, or even a male lover as was the case for Jeremy Thorpe (Thompson 2000:138-141).

The Profumo scandal is perhaps one of the most famous political sex scandals in modern Britain. Jon Profumo was the minister of defence in Harold McMillan's government, when he met Christine Keeler in 1961. Unknown to Profumo, Keeler was also sleeping with Soviet naval attaché Eugene Ivanov. MI5 got to know of Keeler's multiple affairs and sent a representative to inform Profumo that his involvement with Keeler might be a security risk to Britain given his ministerial position. The affair officially ended in December 1961, but it was only in March 1963 it became a media story. Profumo was forced to make a statement in the House of Commons where he stated that "there were no improprieties in my dealings with Miss Keeler". In June 1963, after it was brought to PM McMillan's attention that Profumo might have lied, Profumo broke down and admitted to having lied in the House and then handed in his resignation.

2.2.2 Financial scandals: Sahlin, Berlusconi and Mandelson

According to Allern & Pollack (2012) financial scandals are the types of scandals that tend to mostly flourish in countries subscribing to what Hallin & Mancini (2004) call democratic corporate countries. These countries, which encapsulate the Nordic countries as well as Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Holland and Belgium, are countries with well-developed welfare systems, which means that if a politician takes liberty with his/her finances, it is paid out of the tax payers pockets. (Allern & Pollack 2012: 33)

In 1995, when Mona Sahlin became deputy Prime Minister of Sweden, it was revealed that over a period from 1990 to 1991, she had taken a rather relaxed approach to a work credit card and used it to cover private expenses amounting to 53.174 SEK. These included the purchase of two Toblerone chocolates, giving the case the name The Toblerone affair. (Allern & Pollack 2012:16) Her acts caused uproar in the media because the actions were highly inappropriate.

Financial scandals are by no means limited to the democratic corporate countries. In 2012, Silvio Berlusconi was convicted for tax evasion and is no longer allowed to take the front seat in politics.

The liberal countries, North America and the UK, have also had their fair share of financial scandals. One, which is often compared to the David Blunkett scandal, is the Peter Mandelson scandal. Like Blunkett, Mandelson resigned twice. Mandelson's second resignation happened after allegations that he had used his position to influence a passport application for an Indian business man, a power scandal. However, the first resignation, was because he had failed to declare an interest free loan of 373 thousand pounds for the purchase of a private property in Notting Hill in 1996. Mandelson was Secretary of State for Trade and Industry at the time and had taken the loan from Geoffrey Robinson, a millionaire labour MP who was also in government and who, was subject to an enquiry by Mandelson's Office about his business dealings. (Thompson 2000:175)

2.2.3 Power scandals: The Watergate affair

Power scandals are the purest form of political scandal, because they involve transgressions of a nature which someone only in power can commit on account of their position. Power scandals can involve both sexual and financial transgressions, but this is not always the case. As far as power scandals in the west goes, Thompson (2000) claims that it is in America, with its large political structure and room for secretive organizations to operate, that we find the most serious power scandals. In Britain, the political structure is a lot smaller and there is less room for secretive business, but, power scandals also happen there. Perhaps the best known power scandal is the Watergate affair.

The Watergate scandal began in 1972 with the arrest of five burglars who broke into the Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate building on June 17th. Republican Richard Nixon, who was president at the time, did what he could to cover up his administration's involvement into the break-in. Today, the term Watergate, has also come to refer to the Nixon administration's illegal activities such as wiretapping the offices of political opponents and recording their conversations on tape, which became the heart of the developments that followed the arrest.

2.2.4 Talk scandal

A talk scandal has, as the name suggests, at its centre a speech act. (Ekström & Johansson 2008:61) This speech act can be something a politician says which is taken out of context by the media to stage a scandal, a politician uttering something altogether inappropriate,

somebody leaking something politicians said in a private context to the media, or accidentally sharing classified information in an interview. (Ekström & Johansson 2008, Mancini 1993)

An example of a talk scandal is an utterance the Swedish Minister for trade and Industry Björn Rosengren made after an interview with the public service News program about the negotiations to fuse the telecommunications company Telia in Sweden and Telenor in Norway. It had caused a lot of discussion in the two countries and was in some ways a slightly contentious issue. His exact words, according to Ekström & Johansson (2008:67) were “You know, the Norwegians are really a last Soviet state. It is so nationalistic, everything is politics.” He was just making small talk with the journalist, however, the cameramen had not turned off the camera and it became quite a scandal.

2.2.5 Scandal types and the Blunkett scandal

I will argue that the Blunkett scandal was primarily a power scandal because the fast-tracking of his ex-lover’s nanny’s visa is something he would have been able to do because he was the British Home Secretary.

Secondarily, it falls into the sex scandal category as the allegations of the fast-tracking, i.e. the power scandal element, are based on a sexual affair between Blunkett and the married Quinn who conceived a child. And it was this child’s nanny’s visa which was at the centre of the allegations. What scandal category the Blunkett scandal belongs in, however, does not play a big role in the study other than applying what we have learned about scandal to this case.

2.3 The scandal characteristics

In order for a scandal to be a scandal, it needs to be recognized within five scandal characteristics as identified by Thompson:

1. Somebody commits a moral transgression in secrecy.
2. The transgression which contains one or more elements of secrecy, is known, or strongly believed to exist by somebody else, which Thompson refers to as “non-participants”;
3. Non-participants who are offended by the transgression make the transgression publically known.
4. Non-participants who are offended by the transgression denounce it publicly.
5. The reputation of the person who committed the transgression may be destroyed by the revelations and condemnations, but not always. (Thompson 2000:15)

2.3.1 The first characteristic:

The first characteristic has already been discussed quite a bit previously and should thus be clear. A scandal starts when somebody does something that is against certain set moral values. It is often a person in the public eye who has committed the bad act if it becomes a proper scandal. Even if people who are not previously known to the public may be found in a mediated scandal, on a global or national level, the participants tends to be actors, politicians, musicians, sports personalities, or religious leaders. On a local level, it can be somebody who holds a public standing within a town, parish or village, such as a mayor or a priest. Everyone may be equal in the court of law, but not in the court of scandal. (Thompson 2000:15) Public figures are therefore much more prone to scandal than the average citizen.

In the Blunkett scandal, the participants were both well-known, high profile people. David Blunkett was the British Home Secretary and Quinn the publisher of Spectator Magazine. They had an affair despite Quinn's marital status. Later, Blunkett was accused of having fast-tracked the visa of Quinn's, and subsequently his son's nanny. In this scandal, one cannot say that a transgression as such was committed. The affair and even the child which was the result of the affair, would not damage Blunkett's career. Not even in Britain's strict court of sex scandals. But the way Quinn packaged everything to the media, from revealing the affair to put forward the other allegations; one can say that the incidents had the appearance of transgressions.

Scandals are often messy affairs, because people, who find themselves at the centre of a scandal, may lie in public to save their job or reputation. These attempts to cover up the first-order transgressions then become what Thompson defines as second-order transgressions. These often cause more damage than the first-order transgression as we saw in the Watergate and Profumo scandals, i.e. the cover-up was more serious than the breaking in to the Democrats offices. And had Profumo not lied in the House of Commons, he would perhaps not have had to resign.

In the Blunkett scandal, it started with the affair which was packaged to the media and given the appearance of a first-order transgression. This alone would not have led to Blunkett's resignation and indeed the story died down pretty quickly. But because Quinn again went to the media with the visa and other allegations, it escalated to a possible corruption case. The visa allegation in particular, had the appearance of a second-order transgression. Particularly because it was concerning the visa of their son's nanny. Thus indirectly it built on their affair.

As David Blunkett stated in our interview, he was innocent of the accusations. However, the reason he resigned was to preserve the Blair government. And he could clearly see that if he remained, the government would be drained. The media scandal was, according to Blunkett, an attack on Tony Blair through Blunkett, who was Blair's key supporter and second in command by position of Home Secretary. Quinn, being the publisher of the oppositional magazine Spectator, was an opposition figure who used that against him to spin what we in hindsight can name a true mediated scandal because the transgressions were entirely played out without any real grounds.

In the case of talk scandals, the first characteristic is unnecessary since talk scandals for the most part, originate as speech acts in the media. (Ekström & Johansson 2008:62) And is thus not an act carried out in secrecy.

2.3.2 The second characteristic:

A transgression which is not known to a non-participant and thus carried out in complete secrecy won't become a scandal. (Thompson 2000:18-19, Allern & Pollack 2012: 11)

Had Quinn not gone to the media to reveal Blunkett's and her affair the way she did, it would probably not have become a scandal. Particularly since Blunkett mentioned that before the revelation, their affair was "hidden in public view". As for the other allegations, they too would not have led to anything had Quinn not put them forward.

2.3.3 The third characteristic:

A scandal does not only pre-suppose public knowledge, but also public disapproval or sometimes public shock, although this is not so much the case in the Western world today where moral boundaries are relatively lenient. (Thompson 2000:19-20) For the media to report on something that isn't likely to cause uproar or strong public reaction is pointless. More than one non-participant therefore should feel offended in some way or another by the transgression.

The visa allegations Blunkett were accused of, elicited wide media coverage. Britain is a relatively transparent society and bribes and corruption is not fluctuating within British politics. It was therefore predicted by and quite rightly so, that the public would be upset to hear that such corruption had been committed by such a senior minister.

2.3.4 The fourth characteristic:

A scandal dies down pretty quickly if there is nobody to fuel the fire. Political commentators, other non-participants directly or indirectly affected by the scandals are valuable to the media organization to keep the dramatization of scandals going. These can be straight facts, such as the revelation of Blunkett's affair with Quinn, or of a more opinionated pieces looking at Blunkett's "misdeeds" from various angles. The articles which will be analysed in chapter six are good example of non-participants reacting to the Blunkett scandal. "What's blindness got to do with it?" is written by a journalist who presumably has been asked to analyse whether David Blunkett's action could at all be attributed to his lack of sight. And "What if Blunkett were African?" is a journalist reflecting on the scandal from a global perspective as well as readers reaction to the allegations.

2.3.5 The fifth characteristic

Lull & Hinerman (1997) discuss the fact that exposure and condemnation of transgressions can destroy the reputation of public personas. But very often this is not the case. David Blunkett for instance remained an MP for Sheffield Brightside until June 2014 when he stepped down of his own free will. And a quick Google search reveals that the 2004 scandal has more or less been forgotten. However, it will always be preserved in online and offline press and media archives and may be dusted off in contexts where the press finds that it needs to be. For instance, it was mentioned in relation to Blunkett stepping down in June 2014.

2.4. The mediated scandal

What many mediated scandals have in common is that they are revealed, usually by non-participants, through some form of media. (Lull & Hinerman 1997) And by media, we are not talking about transgressions being revealed directly to a newspaper or television station, but media in the form of pictures, video tapes, letters etc. For instance, the Smoking Gun tape in the Watergate scandal and the letter to Christine Keeler written on War office stationery. This wasn't the case in the Blunkett scandal where Quinn, a participant, fed the media.

2.4.1 Mediated versus localized

Mediated scandals are, as the name suggests, scandals which are primarily covered in the media. But not all scandals are mediated. Scandals in a certain community may just stay in

that community because it's irrelevant to anyone outside. It may go as far as to be covered in that community's newspaper, radio and TV station making it mediated on a local level, or locally mediated. In some cases, localized scandals may become nationally or internationally mediated if they are significant.

2.4.2 The rise of mediated scandals

Mediated scandals, as we know them today, came to exist in the nineteenth century with the rise of newspapers and especially with the penny press, which were the forerunners for today's tabloids. Newspapers had previously been expensive and thus reserved for the elite, but the penny press made the newspaper experience possible for people of the lower and working classes. Unlike the high market newspapers, read by the upper classes which focused on news and financial matters, these lower end papers focused on human stories. The scandalous misdeeds of those in power and other public figures, such as their buying favours from prostitutes, were prevalent topics alongside stories of poverty and crime. (Thompson 2000:40) These papers didn't just become popular with the lower classes. One such paper: The London Post enjoyed popularity also in the middle and upper class populations. (Gripsrud 1992:84) It is therefore safe to say that mediated scandals have always sold well.

In Britain today, there is still a distinction between the elite, mid-market and popular press. (Gripsrud 1992:842, McNair 2000 ch.2) At the lower end of the scale, we find the tabloid press such as The Sun, the Mirror and so on. The mid-market press encapsulates among other the Guardian and the Daily Mail, while papers such as The Times enjoy a high market status. Scandals tend to be mainly human interest stories and are therefore a popular feature with the tabloids that tend to hype them up more than the elite and mid-market press. Even so, reporting on scandals, and reporting on political journalism in general, sees a cross over between traditional news journalism and commentary. (McNair 2000, Allern & Pollack 2012) The scandals are based on facts – the transgressions committed – but as political pundits form their own interpretation of the goings on in the parliament, (McNair 2000) so do the reporters of a scandal when the reporting has reached the phase where new allegations get exposed or new evidence presented. Scandals are thus not pre-packaged events, but they are structured and dramatized in the media before an inquisitive public. (Allern & Pollack 2012, Bird 1997, Ekström & Johansson 2008)

The challenge when reporting on media scandals is that, as Mancini (1993) argues, no two media will report a story in the exact same way. First of all, it depends where the bias of a

particular newspaper or broadcaster lies. McNair (2000) and McNair (2007) mention The Sun's switch to supporting New Labour Party after Tony Blair got elected leader in 1994. Any party supported by a newspaper would arguably handle a scandal within that party in a more favourable manner than a scandal within the party not supported by that particular paper. Another important factor is a journalist's relationship with a particular source, which will have a great influence on how individual political matters are reported on. (Mancini 1993) The journalist is interested in carrying on an exclusive professional relationship with a certain source, and the source may have his or her own agenda.

2.5 The structure of mediated scandals

Mediated scandals unfold in the media over a certain time period. Granted that they become fully fledged scandals, Thompson (2000) states that they will be in the media for more than a day, but they will cease to be of interest at some point. How long that takes, depends entirely on the size of the scandal. It can be newsworthy for weeks, months and even years. They usually disappear from the media when a confession or resignation occurs, or when public interest wanes.

Since public scandals are news mixed in with narratives, Thompson identifies four distinct phases in the reporting of most mediated scandals. However, these can often only be distinguished properly in hindsight as media scandals are messy affairs that turn out completely different because no two scandals are the same. These phases are: pre-scandal phase; the phase of the scandal proper; the culmination; and the aftermath. (Thompson 2000:73)

2.5.1 Pre-scandal phase

As we have established, a moral transgression lies at the heart of every scandal. And the pre-scandal phase starts with the media revelation of said transgression. In the Blunkett scandal, the pre-scandal phase was the publication of the visa allegations.

2.5.2 The phase of the scandal proper

It is during this phase the mediated scandal is quite literally played out. (Thompson 2000:74) The original transgression is by this phase, well-known facts. The second-order transgressions are usually committed during this phase as pressure is mounting on the scandal participants.

This was arguably slightly different in the Blunkett scandal as the second-order transgression what was brought the scandal to light. The first-order transgression would likely not have been seen as a transgression had the visa allegations not been put forward as Blunkett was an unmarried politician and thus did not cheat on his spouse. The revelation of his affair with the married Quinn may only have elicited some media interest without really making it into a scandal. I will therefore argue that based on Thompson's definition, the scandal proper phase in the Blunkett scandal happened in the days leading up to his resignations where smaller transgressions such as giving Quinn the train ticket, something Blunkett admitted to and using the work car to go on holiday got media attention.

2.5.3 The culmination phase

This is the phase where the scandal is brought to its head, or the climax of the scandal. This can mean dramatic things such as resignations, trial verdicts, results of public inquiries or final confessions which may put a stop to the reporting and speculations. In the Blunkett scandal, this phase was marked by the resignation of David Blunkett.

2.5.4 The aftermath

In this phase, the scandal will have mostly died down. There is at least a very low likelihood of new transgressions happening, or new things coming to light. In the Blunkett scandal however, the aftermath was what happened off the back of the previous year, namely the coverage of the Family Court case to grant him access to his young son, Sally Anderson's lies about a sexual affair and accusations that Blunkett had irresponsibly taken up investment and employment with Bioscience, which was said to conflict with his political position and public interests. He was cleared of this after a formal investigation. But he had by then resigned a second time. This may seem like small scandals in their own right; however, as Blunkett pointed out in our interview, these things would not have happened had it not been for the previous year's scandal.

2.6 Scandals and democracy

For political scandals to become mediated scandals there needs to be a certain degree of press freedom. In countries with a totalitarian regime such as North-Korea, reporting on a transgression committed by "The Great Leader" would be both dangerous and impossible. The ordinary North-Korean have extremely limited, and for the most part, no access to news

from outside their country. The type of scandals North Koreans are likely to hear about is of some prominent person, like Kim Jong Un's uncle Jang Song Thaek, who was executed by his own nephew on charges for attempting to overthrow the communist regime, as well as all Jang's direct relatives including women and children (Fredericks 2014).

I will argue that social media as we use it today have the potential to further aid the democratic process and create more transparency around the world. Whereas the media still has a role as the fourth estate, (McNair 2007:44) the social media goes beyond that, and let us engage with people of power on an almost personal basis. Most politicians have Facebook pages, twitter accounts or both, (McNair 2007) and are largely expected to update the public on their work and engage in public debates and discussions online. But though the potential for this development is there, and has taken place to some extent, studies have revealed that politicians have not fully embraced all the options social media has the potentials to give them. The so called politics 2.0 still seems to be a notion rather than common practice. (Larsson 2013) But as well as allowing for greater transparency in the democratic process this also provides for a greater ground for scandal. In particular talk scandals by way of inappropriate posts, tweets or reactions to a comment from a member of the public. (Ekström & Johansson 2008)

I will thus argue that scandals play an important and even positive role in democratic societies, because they, through being relatively easy for the media to get access to, is a sign of a society with political transparency and a healthy debate. (Allern & Pollack 2012:10, Bowler & Karp 2004, Ekström & Johansson 2008, McNair 2000)

2.7 Front region versus back region

We have looked at different types of scandals, the essential characteristics, the scandal phases and why scandals are important and even positive to democracy. And we shall now look at another theory we can connect to scandals, front region versus back region, a term coined by the sociologist Erving Goffman in his 1959 work, *The presentation of self in everyday life*. What separates the front region from the back region is a barrier. (Goffman 1959:109) This barrier can either be a physical one, if we are talking about a place such as a restaurant, or a mental one, if we are discussing human behaviour. The front region is the part we like to present to others, while the back region is a more private place most people are excluded from unless they have some reason to access it. It may also be a something they'd never wish to

expose to others. The front and back stages are also referred to as public and private regions. A scandal is likely to occur when the private regions of someone's life is expose to the public, and when that back region behaviour doesn't correspond with the front region behaviour. To illustrate this, we only need to look at some of the examples already mentioned. Particularly relevant, is the Rosengren talk scandal. He thought the camera was off, so he engaged in small talk with the journalist who interviewed him. He let slip his opinion about the Norwegians he certainly did not plan to expose in the media, otherwise, he would probably have expressed it during the news broadcast. But unfortunately, the cameras were on, exposing a glimpse of his back region behaviour.

In the case of Blunkett, it wasn't so much a glimpse into back region behaviour that caused the scandal. It was a part of his back region/private life that had been misidentified or even misconstrued by the media, and subsequently they were aggrieved about this. (Blunkett 2014) Blunkett described his relationship to Quinn as hidden in public view. "Everybody knew we were friends, but not that we were lovers." (Blunkett 2014) and this revelation of his private life, different from what they earlier supposed, was what caused the media to be hungry about the story. (Blunkett 2014)

2.8 Final comment to chapter two

The Blunkett scandal has two components. The first one is the scandal aspect and in this chapter, we have taken a close look at what a scandal is and what constitutes a scandal, while all the time weaving the Blunkett scandals in to concretise the theoretical concept. But the fact that Blunkett is blind and the fact that one of my research question focuses on how Blunkett's blindness was made part of the scandal, calls for a look at the disability aspect which shall be addressed in the next chapter. This aspect is equally important to the scandal component because half of my analysis chapter builds on the disability component in discussing what part blindness played, or was made part of the Blunkett scandal.

3. Disability portrayal in the media

3.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we got acquainted with various aspects of the mediated political scandal. And it is now time to turn to the other subject of what we are later going to analyse: Disability. More specifically this chapter aims to give a brief account of how disabled people

are portrayed in the media, something which has been given much less attention than the portrayal of other groups such as women, gay, or black people. (Hartnett 2000:21)

Historically, this coverage tended to be unfavourable. Barnes (1992) has identified 11 different categories of historical portrayal and we shall discuss them individually and compare it to today's media portrayal, which, still not as flattering as it could be, has shifted towards being more positive.

After that, we are going to see that in some cases; disabled celebrities do get extensive media coverage without extensive mentioning of their disabilities by comparing David Blunkett with Norwegian Cato Zahl Pedersen and South African Oscar Pistorius.

3.1 Word definition

The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'disability' as "A physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities." And "A disadvantage or handicap, especially imposed, or recognized by the law."

Typically, we categorize disability into three categories.

- Physical impairments: This includes people who are using a wheel chair, crutches, or have general difficulty moving around. For instance, a person with Cerebral Palsy (CP) is physically disabled, even though one person's ability to move differs greatly from another.
- Sensory impairments: This includes people who are deaf or blind.
- Mental impairments: This includes a whole range of mental health issues from bipolar to schizophrenia and Down syndrome.

3.2 The language of disability

In the world of disability and media professionals, the discussion of whether to say 'disabled people', or 'people with disabilities', is always topical. Based on the Oxford English Dictionary definitions above, I will argue that both are correct, but they imply slightly different things. Those in favour of 'people with disabilities', feel that disabled people let the disability take over completely. Whilst those in favour of 'disabled people' argue the opposite, and say that it is the people who are being disabled by the society. I agree with the latter, backed up by Pointon (1999) who states that "Disability could be changed or reduced by changing society, including changes to the environment, to institutional structures and in the provision of technical aid and personal support." (Franklin 1999:225) (Michalko &

Titchkosky 2001) For this reason I will use the term ‘disabled people’ throughout the text unless I am referring to initiatives using the term ‘people with disabilities’.

Other definitions concerning the reporting of disability issues, has to do with the language used to describe someone’s circumstance. ‘Wheel chair user’ and ‘wheel chair bound’ is a very good example of this. For a walking person, a wheel chair can seem like a boundary because it makes accessing some public places difficult, whilst for a wheel chair user, the chair signifies freedom to go out and about. This is backed up by Hartnett (2000) in her discussion of the film *Boyz in the Hood*, where one of the characters is using a wheelchair. “Chris, I would argue, is certainly not ‘wheelchair-bound’”. (Hartnett 2000:24)

Concerning blind persons, there are no directly negative terms, however, particularly charities for the blind refers to blind people as people who live with “sight loss”. While this is true for some blind people, it’s incorrect if you’re born blind, like David Blunkett. ‘Suffering from’ is another good example of a term which needs to be unemployed by the media. David Blunkett may have suffered during the 2004 scandal, but not due to his blindness.

Changing this term to a simple description of the subject’s disability is sufficient, if the disability need to be mentioned, for the coverage to be fairer and more positive. Barnes (1992: Part II) also identifies that certain reporters dehumanize disabled people by using terms like ‘the disabled’ or ‘the handicapped’.

Disability charities can be blamed for this linguistic usage, by the way they choose to present themselves. Franklin (1999:223) talks about the “The ‘ofs’ and ‘fors’”. A charity that is ‘for’ a disability, suggest an in terms that the disabled the charity is aiming to help are pitiable and not able to speak for themselves. While a charity ‘of’ a group, give more of a campaigning feel. The RNIB for instance, used to be called Royal National Institute for the Blind. However now, it’s changed its name to Royal National Institute of Blind People.

Images as well as language help changing the way disabled people are being portrayed. The Mencap (The voice of learning disability) changed their logo of tearful ‘Little Stephen’ to a more abstract one showing the name of the charity with a speech bubble around the “Me” part of the name. And the RNIB also changed their logo in 1995 to reflect a more positive image. (Franklin 1999:235)

Words like ‘crips,’ ‘blindies,’ ‘spastics’ and ‘midgets’ are hardly found in today’s media. And charities with unfortunate sounding names, such as The Spastics Society, have changed their name to the more professional sounding Scope. (Franklin 1999:235) But in content produced by and for disabled people, these terms are being used in a humorous way. The *Ouch* Podcast from the BBC is a good example of a platform where disabled people make fun of both their own, and each other’s impairments, as well as some able-bodied people’s awkwardness when it comes to talking to and about them. Their original podcast theme tune has it all covered:

“You’re so special we’ve made a podcast for you.

Disabled people can have fun to,

They can do anything we can do,

Say thank you to the BBC. Dry your eyes and listen in, to people just like you.

Confined to our website, the Ouch podcast.”

BBC *Ouch* also uses terms like ‘crips,’ ‘spastics,’ ‘wobbly’ etc. in the podcast and the non-news writing.

3.3 A history of oppressive and negative representation

The history of portraying disabled people, according to Barnes (1992: Part II) is one of “oppression and negative representation”. He has identified 11 ways in which disabled people tend to be portrayed in the media.

- As pitiable and pathetic
- As an object of violence
- As sinister and evil
- As an object of curiosity
- As super cripple (a ‘supercrip’)
- As an object of ridicule
- As their own worst and only enemy
- As a burden
- As sexually abnormal
- As incapable of participating fully in public life
- As normal.

Barnes (1992) notes that the reason for the negative media coverage is due to how disabilities have been institutionalized. And as he notes, it did not help that medical professionals used generalizing statements about disabilities for it to remain this way to some extent. Like saying that many disabled people are poor, because their impairments prevent them from achieving a good living standard for themselves. (Barnes 1992) The problem is rather, social attitudes. (Briant, Watson & Philo 2011). The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) was implemented in 1995. This act should ensure equal civil rights and end discrimination for disabled people. But although rights are ensured by the DDA and also the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, society and subsequently media have some way to go before a majority of disabled people can enjoy a prejudice free life. (Briant, Watson & Philo 2011:70) However, according to Parashar & Devanathan (2006), abled-bodied people today hold a more favourable view towards disabled people than before.

The media can't be solely blamed for a generally negative view of disabled people, but just as media has an influence when it comes to everything else to some degree, so it has when it comes to how the general public view disabled people. Barnes (1992) and arguably, the media again has been influenced by charities which I will argue are significant in shaping the social model of disability as discussed earlier.

3.3.1 Disabled people as pitiable

This should already be quite evident from things we've touched on previously in this text, but there are a few more points we need to look at. Let's turn to charities again. Giving to charity is an act which many would define as a good deed. And charity shows such as Children in Need, and Comic Relief, which are huge celebrity-filled events, designed to make it attractive for the public to donate, often feature disabled children, or a child carer of a disabled parent who will benefit from a donation. (Barnes 1992) And although charities are now portraying disabled people in a more positive light according to Barnes (1992) these shows still do exist. In ads, disabled people also tend to be portrayed less favourably than any able-bodied person that might be with them. This can for example be by highlighting a physical deformity such as a deformed limb, and use less sharp colours than is given their able-bodied carer, friend and so on. (Barnes 1992) When it comes to fashion related ads, Parashar & Devanathan (2006) notes that the disabled people who are being portrayed are few and usually invisibly disabled. (Parashar & Devanathan 2006:15) As both Barnes (1992) and Parashar & Devanathan (2006) note, the disabled person do not fit the media ideals in terms of looks, and would arguably

therefore not make a fashion item or product seem attractive if their disability was too visible, or visible in the wrong way. As we shall discuss later, Oscar Pistorius have been used in ads for iconic brands such as Nike, Lloyds TSB and Thierry Mugler and his prosthetic legs are visible in all the ads. However, his successful career as a sprint runner has given him sufficient fame to make his disability a selling point.

But portraying disabled people as pitiable has a longer history than the existence of charities. It in fact started in Greek classic plays from the antique period. (Barnes 1992, Franklin 1999)

3.3.2 Disabled people as objects of violence

Being thought of as utterly helpless and an object of pity, it's perhaps not surprising that a disabled person also gets portrayed as a victim of violence. Through the history, disabled people have been perceived as evil (Barnes 1992) and Martin Luther, the leader of the Protestant reformation movement, is said to have demanded disabled children killed because the devil resided in them. Such practice has fortunately ceased in the West, but on other continents this is still happening.

Disabled people have also been the subject of hate crime, some that was covered extensively in the British Press in the mid-2000s. So taking advantage of somebody's disability or impairment seems to still be alive and well today.

3.3.3 The disabled person as sinister and evil

The points we have discussed so far, are not just illustrated in the mass media, but are also prevalent in popular arts and literature. And this is especially true when it comes to seeing the disabled person as somebody who is evil. Norden (1994) as quoted in Hartnett (2000) coined the phrase "evil avenger" to describe the "disabled baddies who are seeking revenge for the bad deal they've been dealt in life." (Hartnett 2000:21)

The Bible first and foremost talks about healing the sick, often disabled people who are not just sick in their bodies, but also in their minds. And that is to a certain extent also being done in popular movies such as the *Bond* and the *Batman* movies, where the physical deformity of the villains is an easy way for the viewer to identify their twisted insides. Hartnett (2000:21). Other popular references in the literature can be found in Shakespeare's Richard the third, who was "twisted in both body and mind". (Barnes 1992, Hartnett 2000). In *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, it's of course the Hunchback who is the evil character. And it is even found in

children's literature such as *Treasure Island* and *Peter Pan* where both captains are evil and have artificial limbs.

In religious contexts, as previously mentioned, disability and subsequently disabled people, is seen as something God never intended. Some Christian congregations explain disability by claiming those who are afflicted, are inhabited by evil spirits, such as the spirit of deafness, or the spirit of schizophrenia.

3.3.4 The disabled person as an object of curiosity

In the old days, freak shows were a popular feature of travelling circuses and although they are mostly non-existent now, they still happen in America despite campaigns to eradicate them. (Barnes 1992) Typical freak show characters include bearded ladies, Siamese twins, someone with missing limbs or hermaphrodites.

3.3.5 The disabled person as 'supercrip'

Describing a disabled person's escape from their impairment is also popular in literature. That can be a dyslectic who becomes a writer, a cripple who learn to walk or a blind person who get their sight back. Hartnett (2000) suggests that the most damaging aspect of this type of portrayal is that it implies that a disabled person is not good enough, or unhappy with their impairment. This becomes especially apparent in films where the disabled main character starts off as being shunned by their families and then welcomed with open arms when he's no longer disabled, or have overcome their impairment so that it no longer stands in the way, or in a way which has made them famous. In cases where somebody acquires impairment such as *Daredevil*, it is being compensated for, by giving them other super powers. *Daredevil* lose his sight, but has superb hearing. Couser (2001) argues that although stories of overcoming obstacles in life caused by the impairment be it a physical or constructed one, those supercrip stories are inaccurate in terms of good representation. (Couser 2001:80)

In their 2001 essay 'It is not a joking matter', Rod Michalko and Tanya Titchkosky are describing a conversation with a soon-to-be colleague of Rod Michalko - who is blind - at the university where Rod Michalko has acquired a teaching position. This colleague, referred to as Harry, explains how the university discourage the 'handicapped' from going there, because there is another university nearby which is a lot more accessible. Michalko & Titchkosky

(2001:200-201). Harry then goes on to talk about the fact that Braille marking is not available in the lifts and when Rod suggests sound indicators so that a blind person could tell which floor he's on, Harry replies that this is not necessary: "...the blind student on the elevator could tell the numbers of the floors on the elevator pad since they were slightly embossed" (Michalko & Titchkosky 200:201) This assumption suggests three things. First and foremost that all blind people have superb sensitivity in their fingers, probably as a result of 'supercrip' portrayal, that nobody else presses the lift whilst they're going up, thus confusing the blind person's knowledge of what floor he's on and that they know what printed numbers look like. It is typically assumptions like the one Harry made about the raised numbers that account for not enough information being made accessible in Braille for instance. (Barnes 1992)

3.3.6 The disabled person as an object of ridicule

People could perhaps be forgiven for making fun of disabled people on account of their impairments in the old days, when visiting mental institutions was a source of entertainment, and joke books containing jokes about people with various impairments were in circulation. (Barnes 1992) But today, people ought to be more 'enlightened'. However, I will argue that this is difficult as there is a fine line here. As we have seen, disabled people regularly make fun of themselves. But able-bodied makers of sketches such as Monty Python and their sketch about the minister for funny walks, and cartoons, such as Mr Magoo, who is a blind man stumbling through life, ought to think twice before producing this sort of content. It is not nice for a blind person for example to be compared to the Mr Magoo character, although it is perfectly fine to create humorous content containing disability jokes as long as the group being made fun of is done so in a fashion that isn't ridiculing the disability. Disabled stand-up comedians like Lawrence Clarke, Francesca Martinez and Liz Carr draw out funny points of episodes in their lives that have to do with disability. And as for able-bodied people to make fun of disability, this is fine and done in satire. There is a distinction between making a point using comedy and ridiculing somebody for being disabled, e.g. see Francesca Martinez on Russell Howard's Good News Extra S7 Ep12 BBC 3 (15/12/12).

3.3.7 The disabled people as their own worst and only enemy

This is more and more prevalent in the news media where disabled people have been portrayed as 'benefit scroungers'. (Briant, Watson & Philo 2011:56) This has a very negative effect on truly disabled people who are not able to work, or want to work, but cannot get a job

because of discrimination or unwillingness from employers to make the job accessible.
(Briant, Watson & Philo 2011:56)

I will argue along with Barnes (1992) that equal to black people being blamed for racism among the white, and gays and lesbians for heterosexism among the straight, disabled people have been blamed for disablism among the able-bodied. It is all a result of being discriminated against for something one cannot do anything about.

3.3.8 The disabled person as a burden

This stereotype is based on the belief that all disabled people need so much care it would totally drain the able-bodied society if they were to receive adequate levels of care. But with the appropriate support, disabled people can contribute equally to society by getting into jobs. They would thus contribute to an economy from which they would also be given support, such as Disability Living Allowance, or other economic contributions to special software, personal assistance and so on. At least in welfare societies. However, a disabled person anywhere in the world will get far with the support and encouragement from the family. This will equip them to better fight for a more equal life to their abled-bodied peers.

3.3.9 The disabled person as sexually abnormal

Disabled peoples sexuality have also come up in TV and newspaper debates in many European countries where discussions of whether disabled people who are too physically impaired to go out and meet people should be allowed to use sex workers.

Disabled men have been portrayed as sex starved and disabled women as a-sexual in literature and these assumptions have also entered real life. However, not all disabled characters are portrayed as sexually abnormal. The blind character Clara in *Shadow of the Wind* by Carlos Ruiz Zafon is portrayed as fond of both sex and men, although she is also portrayed as rather vulnerable. And men who have acquired a light physical impairment during war, such as for example Lord Nelson, or Detective Cormoran Strike in Robert Galbraith's (aka J. K. Rowling) novels are seen by the able-bodied society as sexy.

This stereotype has far from disappeared, but the fact that disabled people have sexuality is being more and more recognized, for example, in the stand-up section on Russell Howard's TV program *Good news* (BBC Three), comedienne Francesca Martinez talks about not being

able to put a condom on her boyfriend because “my hands are shaking so much that the action’s all over by the time I’m done”.

3.4 Present portrayal

The portrayal of disabled people in the media has improved in later years and there could be many reasons for this. Likely, it has to do with implementations such as the DDA which have forced public institutions to take into account that disabled people are active participants in their communities from going grocery shopping and enjoying a meal or drink with friends to the aspects of school, education and professional life. And the general public’s exposure to disabled people could also be an important factor. Family members no longer hide away their wheel chair using son, and technology is allowing disabled people to both be independent and part of their community.

It is also therefore I have chosen to fuse the two final stereotypes Barnes (1992) identified. Previously, disabled people have not been portrayed as active in their community and as somebody who cannot contribute. Looking at the portrayal as pitied that we’ve seen previously, and as somebody who needs to be cared for, this point is in some way self-explanatory. The DDA however, was made on the assumption and nudging from the disabled community that disabled people too are active, live independently and need the society to become more accessible. Thus, we see that the disabled person as not active in their communities is a decreasing stereotype.

And finally, we are now seeing a shift towards portraying the disabled person as normal. It has been done before this decade, such as for instance in the 1989 movie *Boyz in the Hood*, where the character Chris, played by Reg Green was a wheelchair user. His disability was apparent in that one could see the wheelchair, but rather than being one of the film’s themes, it was more a case of him co-incidentally being disabled. (Hartnett 2000:22) Hartnett (2000) argues that the same can be said for the movie, *Four weddings and a funeral*, where one of the characters happens to be deaf. In one scene, he uses sign language to try and convey to the congregation during his brother’s wedding, that his brother might be in love with someone else. (Hartnett 2000:22) But apart from that, he is just one of the characters. We have already mentioned several disabled stand-up comedians throughout the text, and all the famous soap operas and TV series have employed disabled actors, such as in *East Enders*, in *Silent witness* and *Emmerdale*. Like with *Boyz in the Hood*, one can clearly see the various disabilities of the

actors, but the disability is not always a theme in one of the subplots. But although more disabled actors are now being employed to play disabled characters, able-bodied actors are still cast in some disabled roles, which is due to lack of disabled actors. (Hartnett 2000:27) And disabled people are being portrayed less often than any other minorities. (Hartnett 2000)

There are also more media catering for disabled people, made by disabled people. BBC *Ouch* has already been mentioned, but there are others such as *In Touch*, a program for blind people on BBC Radio4 and Insight Radio, which is the RNIB radio station.

Other, more disability focused programs have also appeared on television. For instance, *The Blind Me* and *The Autistic Me*, as part of BBC Three's *Adult Season*. These programs feature young people who are trying to figure out their lives in terms of getting independent, going to university and acquiring a partner. And in 2009, Channel4 broadcast the TV series *Cast offs*, featuring six people of various disabilities, played by actors with those same disabilities, who are stranded on a desert island. Although the disabilities in all these programs are apparent and very much a main theme, they seem to be an attempt by the media to normalize disability to the general public. It is arguably sad that programs normalizing disabilities are needed, but I will argue that it mainly is a good thing as it does educate and inform the audiences.

David Blunkett seems to a large degree and for the most part, to have been lucky enough to be portrayed as normal. His disability was hardly mentioned and focus was put on his politics instead. And his 'normality' becomes evident when we see how small a part blindness was made in the Blunkett scandal.

However, I will argue that although disabled people are now portrayed as both more normal and more active in the community, there are certain programs portraying this in a slightly less favourable way and which can be argued to be modern day freak shows. *Beyond Boundaries* for example, featuring disabled people tracking difficult terrain to get somewhere. Through a jungle, up a mountain etc. In Norway it was the top of Snøhetta which was the summit point. On the one hand, *Beyond Boundaries* are showing the able-bodied public that yes, disabled people can be sporty, active and clever. But I will argue that the need to prove it in the first place suggests some sort of ignorance and that these programs would be even better if both disabled and non-disabled contestants were included.

And there is the Channel 4 program *The Undateables*. The title is quite offensive and suggests that disabled people are anomalies whom nobody wants to date. And indeed the program feature disabled people who are trying to find love. Again, one can wonder why can't disabled people just take part in normal dating programs?

3.5 The disabled celebrity as normal

In the introduction, I mentioned that we were going to look at three disabled people who have been in the media a number of times completely unrelated to their disability. They are David Blunkett, Cato Zahl Pedersen and Oscar Pistorius.

3.5.1 David Blunkett

Being the main subject of this thesis, we should by now already be acquainted with David Blunkett enough to know that his numerous media appearances are largely due to him being a politician. As he mentioned in our interview, his blindness was not an aspect of his persona which he found important enough to feature. He also didn't use the so called 'blind card' to try save himself from the media attacks during the 2004 scandal and 2005 aftermath. He stated that he want to be judged and treated on an equal level to his colleagues.

And as for the stereotypes identified by Barnes (1992) he hardly fit any of them. He has made a good career for himself, and worked hard to end up as Home Secretary. His affair with Quinn suggests that he is not sexually abnormal and although he may have been among Quinn's less favourite people, he cannot be said to be evil.

3.5.2 Oscar Pistorius, Blade Runner

At the time of writing, Oscar Pistorius occupies world headlines because he has been convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to five years in prison for shooting his model, reality TV star and law graduate girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp on February fourteenth 2013, mistaking her for an intruder. That in itself sets the agenda for a normal portrayal. He is quoted by various media to be "a good-looking man" and the deceased Steenkamp as being glamorous. Many might think Pistorius is evil, but whichever views people may hold, he likely is not the evil avenger type.

Before these misfortunate events, the Paralympian, born on November 22nd 1986 in Johannesburg, South Africa, became the first disabled athlete to participate in the regular Olympic Games (where he qualified for the semi-finals and finished eighth on 400 metres) as well as winning a silver medal in a regular World Championship for athletes. Oscar Pistorius has been nicknamed 'Blade Runner' and 'The fastest man on no legs', because his legs are amputated from below his knee due to fibula in both legs.

Pistorius has been featured in various ads for iconic brands such as Nike, Lloyds TSB and Thierry Mugler. The ads did not attempt to hide Pistorius's disability they rather made it a selling point. In the 2011 Nike ad for example, Pistorius is depicted wearing green Nike tights and singlet on black background. One can clearly see where his legs stop and prosthetics start. And the accompanying text strengthens the boldness of the ad. Accompanied by the Nike logo 'Just do it' he states that "I was born without bones below the knee. I only stand 5 ft 2. But this is the body I've been given. This is my weapon. How I conquer. How I wage my war. This is how I have broken the world record 49 times. How I become the fastest thing on no legs. This is my weapon. This is how I fight." The Nike ad for 2012 also features Pistorius ready to make a run for it. And this is just as bold as the first one.

Lloyds TSB used Pistorius to create excitement about the London Paralympics while Thierry Mugler A-Men perfume shows him running, "using his super powers".

3.5.3 Cato Zahl Pedersen

Cato Zahl Pedersen, born January 12, 1959 in Larvik, Norway, is a sportsman who has won thirteen gold medals and one silver medal in four Paralympics, both winter and summer. He is a double amputee, having lost one and a half arm as a result of climbing up an electricity mast to see the view while playing in the forest in 1973. The humidity was so high, that he got current through his body and fell down onto some rocks. He is perhaps most known for his skiing, and was the first amputee to reach the South Pole in 1995.

Zahl Pedersen has first and foremost appeared in the media for his sports efforts. However, in 2010 he admitted publicly to having cheated on his wife. Their marriage survived, but the reason for the admission was that he was being threatened by the husband of his ex-mistress, even though the affair was reportedly over.

He has also featured in adverts, such as If skadeforsikring (If Accident Insurance) which aims to tailor jobs for disabled top athletes. He also advertises his books and lectures of the “You can make it if you try hard enough” category at his website www.catozahl.no. Where one can say that Pistorius is selling himself as an icon for iconic products in the ads he appear in, this is not so much the case with Zahl Pedersn. I will argue that it has a lot to do with the Norwegian market being a lot smaller than the international giants that contracted Pistorius. And that the two men coming from two different generations play a significant part as well. Being in the media for cheating on his wife, suggests that Zahl Pedersen is portrayed as normal and although the supercrip argument could be applied to both him, Pistorius - and to a certain extent Blunkett - they are portrayed much more as people who know how to use their disability as a selling point in an attractive way. Arguably more so in the case of the athletes as sports put much more emphasis on appearance and healthy looks than politics in general. When it comes to his sporting achievements, which is the main reason Zahl Pedersen has been portrayed in the media, he seems, like Pistorius, more like a super hero than a supercrip. Not because any of them are Daredevil compensating for them being amputees, but simply because they were good at what they were doing. And they just happened to be amputees. In that regard, I will also argue that Blunkett too is a super hero. He is so good that he made to one of the top posts in politics, and he incidentally could not see.

3.6 Conclusion

Disabled people are portrayed more favourably in the media today than what was the case up until only two decades ago. The DDA, recognizing that the disabled community is also part of the community, may be a big factor for this change. Charities with previous negative names and images have changed to reflect a more positive side of disability. Soap operas, films and other TV series are employing disabled actors and not always focusing on their disability as a primary theme such as in *Boyz in the Hood* and *Four weddings and a funeral*. The big broadcasters such as BBC, ITV and Channel4 have recognized the need for informing documentaries on disability as well as platforms where content is created for a disabled audience by disabled journalists and producers. BBC *Ouch* is to date the best example of such a platform, though there are others such as *In touch* on BBC Radio4 catering to a blind audience and radio stations by and for the blind, like Insight radio of the RNIB.

But the stereotypes identified by Barnes (1992) have not disappeared completely and new one has arisen of late, namely disabled people as benefit scroungers. But just as there will always be stereotypes related to homosexuals and ethnic minorities, there will probably always be some stereotypes left that are tied to disability.

Disabled celebrities can and are changing attitudes. We have discussed David Blunkett, Oscar Pistorius and Cato Zahl Pedersen. Two of them athletes, and one of them a politician. They became famous because of their skills. They just happened to be disabled. I have also argued that because them being good first and disabled second is their selling point, they appear more as super heroes rather than supercrips. They have chosen to put everything into dedicating their lives to what they are good at.

3.7 Final comment to chapter 3.

Shedding some light on how disabled people have been and are being portrayed in the media is of high importance to this work, because we are, for a good part, looking at how a disabled politician was treated and portrayed in the media during a scandal. This chapter has been important in highlighting in which category Blunkett's portrayal has fallen under, because this study is also looks at the social science of disability by looking as his portrayal.

4. David Blunkett biography

Now that we have discussed the two aspects of the further study, it is time to get better acquainted with David Blunkett and his life, political career and the scandals.

4.1 Early life

David Blunkett was born in Sheffield, the 6th of June 1947 to Doris Williams and Arthur Blunkett. He was blind from birth due to underdeveloped optic nerves, caused by a rare genetic incompatibility in his parents.

Both his parents valued hard work, and instilled the same value into their child. They did not let his blindness be a reason for not doing well and working hard in life. (Pollard 2005)

At the age of four, he had to board at a blind school at the other side of Sheffield.

In 1959, when David Blunkett was 12 years of age, his life underwent two important changes. Firstly, he left the school he so much disliked, to go to secondary school at The Royal Normal College for the blind in Shrewsbury which he disliked just as much. (Pollard 2005) Secondly, Arthur Blunkett died in an industrial accident. As The Blunkett family was left virtually penniless. Especially since the board refused to pay compensation for two years, due to the fact that Arthur Blunkett had worked past the retirement age. When David Blunkett and his mother were finally rewarded 1500 pounds each as compensation, it did not relieve them of their poverty.

Blunkett strongly disliked school which did not provide him with the academic qualifications he wanted and needed to go on to university in the future. The school did not encourage academic subjects, but wanted their pupils to learn practical skills that would get them into a career which would earn them money and which was perfectly respectable and normal for blind people at the time, but these were also careers with no prospects of moving upwards and improving oneself. By his teachers he was told that he had few options in life. Those options included becoming a wood worker, or a piano tuner. But his determination to do greater things meant he spent six years going to evening and day-release classes to get the qualifications needed to go to university. The principal at the Royal Normal College did not take well to Blunkett and a few other boys going to these evening classes at the local college and did his utmost to discourage them from going by making it difficult, such as by not providing transport. His day release classes took place when he moved back to Sheffield and worked as a typist.

He got into Sheffield University where he gained a BA honours degree in Political Theory and Institutions in 1969. On graduating, he entered local politics, whilst gaining a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in Huddersfield Holly Bank College of Education.

In 1970, David Blunkett became the youngest ever councillor for Sheffield City Council. Only aged 22, he was also the youngest in Britain. He served there from 1970 to 1988 and was a leader from 1980 to 1987. He was also on South Yorkshire County Council till 1988.

4.2 Political career

As a politician, David Blunkett was perceived as militant, destructive and a conservative liberal by those who did not like him. By his supporters, he was seen as effective, as one who improved the education system and efficiently dealt with Britain's crime rate and immigration problem and as somebody who had overcome many barriers to have ended up in senior government. The latter was also recognized by those who were not in favour of him. (Blunkett 2014)

During his leadership in the 1980s, Blunkett gained Labour Party support and became a Member of Parliament in 1987 for Sheffield Brightside as well as spokesman for the local government. He joined the Shadow Cabinet in Westminster in 1992 as Shadow Health Secretary and in 1994; he became Shadow Education Secretary. When The Labour Party won the general election in 1997 and Tony Blair became Prime Minister, he became Secretary of State for Education and Employment. Both in his job as Shadow Education Secretary, and Secretary of State for Education and Employment, his policies were heavily influenced by his own experiences with the education system and immediately took action to improve literacy and numeracy. In the reply to his first resignation letter in 2004, Tony Blair acknowledged how much the literacy and numeracy rates had improved under Blunkett's leadership.

But he wasn't only focused on the academic side of education. He was equally passionate about young people becoming involved in their community. He therefore introduced citizenship lessons, which among other things, was about volunteering in the community.

In 2001, in the second term of the Blair Government, Blunkett was promoted to Home Secretary following the success of his previous post. It would prove to be a challenging term for him because of the 9.11 incident. But he had difficulties even before 9.11., mainly because the way he thought the Home Secretary should operate, was not the way home secretaries before him and their cabinets had operated. His predecessors to a large degree meant that once a bill had been passed and approved in the House of Commons and House of Lords, it was no longer the Home Secretary's task to oversee that these bills worked well in practice. That was up to those working with the law. Blunkett strongly opposed this. He wanted to follow up the bill which was implemented. After 9.11., one of the bills he was trying to pass, was one concerning ID cards. So that anyone who was not registered with a national insurance number and paid tax in Britain, was unable to work, thus making the job of deporting illegal

immigrants easier. His critics questioned how the ID cards would affect civil liberty and whether it would be too costly. But Blunkett, who took a hard line, tough speaking approach to being Home Secretary, was not faced by this criticism. He held the Home Secretary post until his first resignation in 2004.

Blunkett made a brief appearance in government in 2005, when Blair got re-elected Prime minister as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. He resigned from this post after six months, on November 2nd, 2005.

David Blunkett stepped down as MP for Sheffield Brightside in June 2014. He is also taking on other projects, and works a lot with Sightsavers International mainly in East Africa. (Blunkett 2014) Other charity oriented work, is for Aid foundation where he looks into why people give differently at different times of their lives. (Blunkett 2014) He also leads an advisory committee for the low cost airline Easy Jet, to improve travel conditions for the elderly and disabled. He is additionally involved with cyber security and various other things which he was involved with during his time in government. (Blunkett 2014)

He married Dr. Margareth Williams, in 2009. (Blunkett 2014) He has three grown-up sons with his first wife Ruth whom he divorced in 1990, and a younger son with his ex-lover Kimberly Quinn.

4.3 The Blunkett scandal

The Blunkett scandal was, in some ways, a smaller part of a big puzzle: The News of the World phone tapping scandal in which Andy Coulson, then editor of News of the World, was found guilty and sentenced to eighteen months in prison while Rebekah Brooks, then editor of The Sun, was acquitted. (Blunkett 2014) Kimberly Quinn's telephone was tapped by News of the World journalists, so that they could get more details of what was going on with her and Blunkett. But it all started with Quinn going to Andy Coulson to inform of her affair with the then Home Secretary.

4.3.1 Kimberly Quinn

David Blunkett first heard Kimberly Quinn, on a Radio4 program and found that he liked her voice and how she talked about literature. She is American and publisher of the magazine

Spectator, a weekly conservative political magazine. Not long after this, she asked to interview Blunkett and he said yes, on the condition they'd have dinner afterwards. (Pollard 2005 ch.12)

The two immediately struck up a friendship and was soon seeing each other a lot. But after a few months, they became lovers despite the fact that she was married. She soon fell pregnant, and their son was born in late 2002. Blunkett has described his relationship with Quinn as "hidden in public view". (Blunkett 2014) They were seen out and about together a lot, so everybody knew they were friends, but nobody realized they were lovers. Tony Blair knew of the affair, and even the child, but didn't think it would affect Blunkett's job and when Blunkett came and told him that he wanted to move in with Quinn, he had Blair's blessing. Pollard (2005 ch. 12) argue that perhaps Blunkett's blindness could have been a reason for their affair not to be exposed as speculations would have risen a lot quicker if any other politician would have been seen so much out and about with a married woman of Quinn's position. (In our interview, Blunkett referred to comments made about "how he, a blind man, could get such an attractive woman," but this does not answer the question as to why nobody realized they were together.)

But as it was, Kimberly Quinn, who wanted to end the affair and go back to her husband, went to the press while Blunkett was on holiday in Italy.

4.3.2 The scandal develops

Blunkett knew that the story of his affair was going to break, because Andy Coulson, the editor of News of The World, came to speak to him. Blunkett recorded this conversation, which was also court evidence. (Blunkett 2014) According to Pollard (2005 ch.12) The News of the World treated Blunkett very much with "kid gloves" when the affair with Quinn was disclosed at first. The story soon died down because Blunkett and his press officers decided not to confirm anything with regards to the affair. Blunkett came back and continued his job as before. However, his private life was in turmoil despite the media mostly staying away. Quinn wanted to deny him access to their son, there was to be a court hearing regarding this, and this disagreement between them, was what led to the scandal developing around Blunkett.

Quinn went back to the press and disclosed more details of their affair. And the tabloids were hungry for the story. First and foremost, they could not believe how public the Blunkett and

Quinn affair had been, yet still so hidden from them. (Blunkett 2014) And secondly, certain people, including Gordon Brown who wanted Blair's job, wanted Blair to step down as Labour Party leader. The most effective way to achieve this was to weaken Blair's key ministers and Blunkett, being second in government after Blair, and being somebody who supported his policies, was the perfect target. And as is true for all mediated scandals, Blunkett's and Quinn's affair was a compelling and engaging story. Especially since it also involved a child.

4.3.3 Allegations

Quinn revealed the following to the press:

- Blunkett had given her a train ticket from London to Doncaster. This train ticket was only meant for MPs spouses.
- Blunkett had used a work car to drive him, her and their toddler son to his holiday home in Derbyshire.
- Blunkett had fast-tracked the visa of their son's Filipina nanny Leoncia (Luze) Casalme.

Had all these allegations been true, Blunkett certainly would have been fired, however, he managed to refute most of them. He did admit to having given her the train ticket, but had done so in good faith. (Blunkett 2014) This alone was not a very serious breach of conduct. The work car, was only used because he had to take a work trip to Derbyshire. (Pollard 2005) And he had therefore asked to be driven to his holiday home. This then, was also fine since it didn't go against any rules. The visa was harder to explain away. When I asked what the visa allegations were founded on, Blunkett stated that "it was her evidence entirely." Referring to Quinn. "And if I had done it, I would have said so. Because it would just have been a storm in a teacup. I would have just said, "Yeah, it was a mistake. I should have passed it to a junior minister to deal with." But I hadn't done it." (Blunkett 2014) The visa of Casalme had been processed in only 19 days, leading the press to talk about Blunkett using his public role for private matter. "That's where the controversy really took off." (Blunkett 2014) "In fact I suggested an enquiry. Which was, at worst inconclusive and at best it cleared me." (Blunkett 2014)

4.3.4 First resignation

Blunkett said in our interview that in hindsight, he would have stepped down as Home Secretary already in September so that he could have devoted his time to the Family Court hearing. Him being an interesting target for the press was also damaging to the government. (Blunkett 2014) As it was, he resigned on December 15th 2004.

4.3.5 Returning to government

Tony Blair and the Labour Party got re-elected in May 2005, only a few months after Blunkett's resignation. But Blair, knowing that Blunkett supported his policies, wanted him back in Government. Blunkett said yes, but in hindsight realized that he hadn't been in a strong enough position to get back into government. (Blunkett 2014) In the period between his first resignation and getting back into government, Blunkett had dealt with matters in his private life, mainly getting access to his young son whom he had with Quinn. Blunkett had also got interested in DNA testing "Entirely for the wrong reasons" (Blunkett 2014), and had invested some money and work in to a biotech company, Bioscience. "I had to use DNA to prove I was the father of my son." (Blunkett 2014)

This time Blunkett was made Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. But his troubles started after only a few months in office.

4.3.6 Sally Anderson

Blunkett met the 29-year-old estate agent Sally Anderson in an exclusive London night club, Annabel's. She, like him was from Yorkshire and she told him how she wanted to be an opera singer and that she may have skin cancer. Blunkett, admitting that he's "a sucker for a good story" felt sorry for Anderson and because they got on well, they became friends. (Blunkett 2014)

It did not take long for the media to start writing about Blunkett's and Anderson's affair, which wasn't an affair. "I did not have sex with her, and I know I sound like Bill Clinton now," Blunkett said in our interview. And soon, it became clear to him that Sally Anderson had set him up, when a story where Sally claimed to have been sexually used by Blunkett and a story talking about a miscarriage appeared in the tabloids. All the touching stories of her difficulties were false and she also admitted eventually that she'd had no sexual contact with

Blunkett. “She was a superb actress,” Blunkett noted. (Blunkett 2006) And she’d made a lot of money selling her story via the publicist Max Clifford. (Blunkett 2014) At the time, Anderson’s voicemail was also intercepted by News of the World. (Robinson 2013)

4.3.7 Second resignation

David Blunkett resigned from government on November 2nd 2005. This was after a hearing where he had been accused of taking up unsuitable investments whilst he was out of government. He had invested shares in the company Bioscience that specialized in DNA testing. He took up the role with Bioscience because the guidelines for taking up such roles did not concern people going into government. Rather it was for people going out of government to make sure they didn’t use any confidential information they had gained in government. (Blunkett 2014) He had declared his role with bioscience and been totally open about it. Still, as he puts it, “the press really wanted to do me over” and Christopher Grayling, now Secretary of State for Justice for the coalition government, spent the summer attempting to find something he could use to weaken Blunkett’s position.

Blunkett says about his second resignation that it happened entirely on the back of the 2004 events. And that had they not taken place, it would never have happened. “My second resignation was a mess and totally unnecessary.” (Blunkett 2014)

Chapter 5 Methods

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will be discussing the methods I will be using to answer my research questions. It will discuss why Case study, a method criticised in the academic field is the best method for this project. It will then go on to discuss why I chose to compare articles in the Guardian and BBC online, and why I chose these articles in particular. I will finally discuss what kind of analysis I will be using to analyse my two chosen articles before concluding.

5.2 Case study

The Blunkett scandal is one case, and it is therefore perhaps not surprising that the primary method I will use in order to answer my research question is case study. Yin (2009) defines a case study as a look at a contemporary phenomenon in society. The Blunkett scandal

happened ten years ago, and I will argue that it is highly contemporary. Both because there hasn't been a scandal involving a blind politician ever since, and if there ever was one before, it would have been so long ago that there is no known records of it.

The Blunkett scandal is also a phenomenon within the two disciplines of studies I have focused on the previous chapters, namely political studies and disability studies.

5.2.1 Single case study

What I will be carrying out, is a single case study. It's single because we are studying only one case, and not for instance comparing two similar cases, which would have made it a multiple case study. The case is not one case study being made as part of a bigger project and it is therefore not an embedded case study.

5.2.2 My case for the case study

Case study has received criticism for being an unreliable method that doesn't provide good internal and external validity of a phenomenon in the same way a quantitative survey does. But these claims have been refuted by supporters of the case study such as Yin (2009), Flyvbjerg (2001) and Gentikow (2005). They all argue that the case study is seeking an in-depth look into a phenomenon, rather than the breadth of it which is the purpose of a quantitative study. And thus, the quantitative study and a case study can together provide a fuller picture of a phenomenon. For example, the quantitative study will tell you how many disabled persons happen to find themselves the middle of a scandal while a case study will tell you more specifically how their disability was made part of a scandal.

They also argue that a case study is not looking to provide the same kind of validity as a quantitative study. A case study can never give answers that are certain outside of its immediate context. And as such, Flyvbjerg (2001), Yin (2009) and Gentikow (2005) argue that it provides as full validity as a quantitative study in its own right. Due to the very limited topics I am researching, I am of the opinion, based on their argument, that a case study will provide this study with good validity, both internally in its fields and externally in other academic contexts. There is currently no other case like Blunkett unless one chooses to compare how he, as a blind politician was treated in the media compared to a woman or a politician from an ethnic minority, or indeed a mainstream male politician. But we are looking at Blunkett as a single case. And seeing as he is the only phenomenon at present, a case study

arguably suffices as this is currently the only case of its kind and cannot be done as part of a quantitative study of similar cases.

5.2.3 Selecting the articles

Case study is only my primary method, or what I will call my frame method. Because although we are dealing with a case study, other methods need to be applied to answer the research questions posed. According to Yin (2009) a quantitative study can be part of a case study in the same way a case study can be part of a quantitative study. And when I set out with my initial research question “How was blindness made part of the Blunkett scandal?” I was planning on doing a small quantitative study comparing the coverage of different British media on this topic only. But both because I was advised by my supervisor to focus on media that could be compared with one another in terms of seriousness and audience, I decided that a qualitative study would be easier. As mentioned previously, a quantitative study would mean accessibility challenges I was unsure how to best address within the timeframe I had to write this thesis. Coding software such as SPSS are not screen-reader accessible and large excel sheets are also difficult to navigate with the use of JAWS without external help. As I am a professional writer, the case study is a field I am more familiar with than coding and large quantities of data. In the beginning, my idea was to take five articles from the BBC and five from the Guardian and analyse them in-depth. But as I worked on trying to find articles talking about his blindness, there was little to be found. That fact alone, and through my initial correspondence with Blunkett prior to my interview with him, answered my first question: The outcome probably would not have been any different had he been sighted. And Blunkett himself did not feel that the media treated him any differently. I agree for the most part, although the fact that an article such as the article I first selected, “What’s blindness got to do with it?” written by Selina Mills, a blind journalist, can be argued to be contradictory to Blunkett’s opinion. The article discusses whether Blunkett ended up in the current mess the scandal created because he was blind and couldn’t see what kind of person his ex-lover was, or whether he was “blinded by love” to use a phrase from the article. And had he been sighted, there wouldn’t be grounds for posing such a question. On the other hand, it could also have been done had Blunkett been gay, black, deaf and so on. So therefore I will say that yes, he was treated differently because this article was even published, but he probably would have been treated the same had he belonged to any other minority. This then, leaves us with a somewhat split answer, yes and no. And this article alone was the only interesting reflection

on this topic. The other articles that mentioned blindness, in both guardian and BBC, mentioned it as mere biographical fact.

I didn't feel one article was ground for sufficient analysis. In the sense of disability, and with the imposed restrictions as to what media to look at, it was the only good one, but my still needed something additional. I was a little stuck on what to do, until I decided to do with my analysis what I had done with the theory. Split the topics into two parts. Scandal and disability. I already had the disability grounds covered with that one article, and another article that put a new angle to the scandal aspect, that I wanted to use, and which was from the BBC website, made grounds for the other part of the analysis. This article stood out to me among the vast number of news and commentary articles I looked at during the very early stages of my research because of its different and quite narrow focus. But finding the angle and focus of this article as intriguing as I did, I just couldn't let it go unnoticed. All the other articles were too similar and uniform and it would be hard to pick just a few to look at. It put an interesting perspective on the scandal. How badly exactly had Blunkett behaved in a global and more specifically African context? And that is why I chose to add another research question to my thesis. Namely, how big or small was the Blunkett scandal in a global and more specifically African context?

This article is discussing what impact the scandal may have had on Blunkett's political life had he been African. And by African, the article, published by Joseph Winter for the BBC Africa website on December 18 2004, is talking collectively about African countries. Hence I will also refer to African rather than talking about one specific African country although most of my examples are taken from Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria.

I have chosen two articles both with an extremely narrow focus which perhaps is seen as a very unorthodox ground for analysis and with good reason. However, because of the very specific questions I am posing throughout this work, and because the articles are able to give answers to these specific answers to those questions, I will argue that in choosing to carry out my analysis in this way, I have ensured the kind of validity such a small selection can provide because the viewpoints and topics of these articles are rather unique and outstanding. Had I drawn in more newspapers and broadcasters, I could perhaps have found more articles that would be good for analysis of both research questions. Perhaps in which case, I might have gone global instead of just African when looking at the scandal's significance. But as it is, I did not do that this time.

5.3 Why the Guardian and the BBC?

I was advised early on in the thesis writing process that it would be easier to compare media of a similar nature to one another and I was advised to pick two in order to keep some order and limitation in the selection. This was before I knew exactly what kind of coverage there was of the Blunkett scandal, and it could be that I would have chosen more media with focus on the disability aspect of the scandal had I known this back then. As it was, and with little time to change my approach for various reasons, I landed on the Guardian and the BBC. I have worked as a journalist for the BBC and I know the organization well, such as how stories are produced and being reported on. It was therefore natural for me to choose them. The BBC's reporting is also quite balanced and neutral most of the time. And though it perhaps would have made sense to look for a sensational blindness angle in one of the tabloids, I was more intrigued to see whether such a neutral organization had picked up on anything striking I could use.

It was also not hard for me to choose the Guardian as the media organization to find analysis material from. I am a Guardian reader, and thus familiar with its reporting too. And although the Guardian is a rather left wing, newspaper, and doesn't have as strict requirements and guidelines for reporting as is the case with the BBC, I experience the two organizations to report on stories in a very similar fashion.

The Manchester Guardian, today known as just the Guardian, was founded in 1821 by John Edward Taylor. The Guardian started off as a weekly paper, then twice a week and then weekly in 1755 it achieved national and international recognition under the fifty-seven years editorship of C. P. Scott which started in 1872. In 1907, Scott bought the paper from John Edward Taylor's son who passed away. He pledged that, in line with the founder's will, the Guardian would continue to uphold the liberal values and stay independent. The founder's values are still ensured by The Scott Trust, which today owns the Guardian. And these instructions also including expanding and improving the newspaper, are the only instruction Guardian editors have had since. (theguardian.com 2002)

The British Broadcasting company was born 101 years later in 1922. In the beginning, it had four staff and the Scottish engineer John Reith was the first Director General until the company dissolved in 1926 after a general strike. It then reformed as the British Broadcasting Corporation, which it's still called. In 1932, when the BBC moved into Broadcasting House, which it vacated in 2013, the Empire Service, pre-cursor for The World Service was also

formed. It was given money from the commonwealth office, but was still independent of the government like in the UK. (BBC 2002, BBC 2014)

Both the BBC and the Guardian have a lot of their audiences outside the UK. BBC World Service broadcasts in many countries in twenty-seven languages as well as English and the Guardian have both an American and an Australian website.

The articles I've chosen for analysis are both taken from the websites of the Guardian and the BBC. The reasons for this are very evident, because we are here dealing with a broadcaster and a newspaper, two very different kinds of media. However, by going online, the differences between the two immediately become less apparent and thus much easier to compare.

5.4 Additional analysis material

To help me in the analysis, I have used material from the exclusive interview I did with Blunkett in January 2014. In the part on how blindness was made part of the scandal, I used quotes and passages where he talked about blindness to support claims made in the article, but also for explanatory purposes.

In the part about how big the Blunkett scandal was in an African context, I use quotes and passages from the interview talking about the scandal to clarify what happened in relation to the fast-tracking, how the scandal got so big in the UK and the political climate surrounding him at the time of the scandal.

Using the interview material makes the analysis more exciting, because I managed to obtain access to the subject I'm writing about and help clarify matters with regards to both topics, making the analysis fuller and easier to contextualize into the bigger pictures of disability studies and studying political scandals.

Because the two articles are very different from one another, I had to handle them in very different ways and I could not follow the same pattern when analysing them. "What's blindness got to do with it?" uses different effects to "What if Blunkett were African?" to keep the reader's attention. While the blindness article uses humour, quotes from musicians and poets and parallels with ancient cultures to exaggerate some of the point, the article on "What if Blunkett were African?" uses no such thing. But it has comments from the readers

underneath it which emphasizes a lot of the points. So where I was identifying popular culture aspect to a larger degree in the first one, I was dealing with more factual material in the second, although one cultural reference, Chinua Achebe was mentioned. Because of this, the interview makes up a bigger part of the second part of the analysis, because more facts are presented. In the first part, facts are present, but a lot of this is opinionated, such as Blunkett expressing comments about him being blind and going out with an elegant lady etc.

5.5 Methods of analysis

To help me analyse the articles, I will be using three types of qualitative analysis methods. They are issue analysis, descriptive analysis and hermeneutic analysis. (Gentikow 2005, Yin 2009) The various methods of analysis will be used interchangeably throughout the analysis chapter though some parts of the analysis chapter will have more elements of one of the analysis types.

5.5.1 Issue analysis

I will primarily analyse my material by using what Gentikow (2005) has identified as issue analysis. The term suggests quite accurately what this means, namely to analyse a text from the angle of looking at certain issues within it. In the chapter where I analyse “What if Blunkett were African?”, I look mainly at the issue of how big or small the scandal was in an African context, the issue of the role of African versus British politicians and Blunkett’s view on the scandal and what happened, i.e. the scandal itself, which is also fair to be called an issue and the issue on the present and changing political climate in Africa.

In the analysis of “What’s blindness got to do with it?” I am analysing the issue of how blind people judge differently from sighted people and the issue of the need for such an article in the first place.

5.5.2 Description analysis

The secondary type of analysis I’ll be using, is what Gentikow (2005) calls description analysis. Like with issue analysis, this term is pretty straight forward in that it analyses an entire or elements of a text by describing them. It is not straight forward describing as that would either make it a summary or pure retelling of the text. The best example of descriptive analysis in my chosen articles is in “What’s blindness got to do with it?”, when I analyse the author’s use of humour and quotes from famous people to see what affects they have on the

article as a whole. There are also elements of descriptive analysis in the topic on “What if Blunkett were African?”, when I used readers’ comments to emphasize some of the differences between African and British ministers.

5.5.3 Hermeneutic analysis

Thirdly, there are elements of what Yin (2009) has defined as hermeneutic analysis. This means that one is looking in-depth at a media text, analysing linguistic use. This is done in both parts of the analysis. And we’ll see how language is used to convey certain points across. According to Gentikow (2005), all types of qualitative text analysis can easily be woven into each other in the manner I have chosen to do. And I will argue that combining the three methods of analysis is the best and most fulfilling way to get as much out of the two articles as possible.

5.6 Conclusion

Using the single case study as my main method and a combining three types of text analysis methods, issue analysis, description analysis, and hermeneutic analysis, is how I best think I can answer my research question. We have established that we are dealing with a single case study, and that combination of different text analysis methods can be and are used to get as much of a text as possible. I will argue that by only choosing one or even two of the analysis methods, I would miss important aspects of the text that would help shed light on them. The same goes for combining the articles with quotes and passages from my interview with Blunkett.

6. Analysis

6.1 Introduction

This analysis will look at the two articles I have chosen to focus on. And it’s divided into two parts. The first being “What’s blindness got to do with it?” written by Selina Mills for the Guardian on December 8th 2004. I will analyse the article in four rounds. First of all from the headline to the end, sentence by sentence in order to establish how Mills came to the conclusion that blindness played no part in the predicament i.e. the scandal he found himself in. Analysing this article, will help us in answering my first and initial research question,

- *How was blindness made part of the Blunkett scandal?*

Then the second time around, I will look at rhetorics used in the article to grab the readers' attention. I will go through it a third time, analysing the elements of humour and finally a fourth time where I go through another means Mills has used to connect with the readers, quotes by famous people.

In the second article, "What if Blunkett were African?" written by Joseph Winter on December 18th for the BBC Africa website, I am going to tackle the second research question,

- *What was the significance of the Blunkett scandal in an African context?*

I will mainly discuss the different roles of politicians in Africa and Britain and how being a minister in an African country implies that you are some kind of king whereas in Britain you are a servant. I will use a selection of the readers' comments in the article to illustrate these differences. Winter uses examples from Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) to further illustrate this point and I will do the same.

Throughout the analysis of both articles, I will be using appropriate quotes from my 2014 interview with Blunkett which will provide for a fuller understanding and give better answers to my two research questions. This will be done to a greater extent in part two as he talks more about the scandal than being blind through the scandal.

I will briefly conclude the two part analysis with an answer to each of my research questions, but the full conclusion will be provided in chapter 7.

6.2. "What's blindness got to do with it?"

6.2.1 The headline

"What's blindness got to do with it?" The headline of this article is clearly written as a rhetorical question, which is a tool often used to engage an audience, be it a professor using it in class, or a Prime Minister using it in a political speech. A rhetorical question means that it will be answered by the one who poses it. However, it is a great way to point something out. To make somebody pause for a second to think about what is being asked. Perhaps a point that hasn't been addressed before. What's blindness got to with it? What's blindness got to do with *what*? Besides, the headline also seems to be a pun on Tina Turner's *What's love got to do with it* so the actual question is "What's blindness got to do with love?" – or "What's love got to do with blindness?" The headline itself does not answer any questions and one has to read on, past the introductory text, or teaser, which is the line between the headline and the

article itself which is meant to tease the reader's appetite for knowledge of what the article contains.

So in order to make sense of the rhetorically posed questions that is the headline, we can look at the date of publication, December 8th. We know that David Blunkett resigned on December 15th, exactly a week after the publication of the article. It is highly likely therefore, that the article was published in the phase of the scandal proper as this was the height of the coverage. We can conclude that the rhetorically written headline is making those who are closely following the scandal stop to think of what blindness has got to do with it all.

The reason for posing the question is one we looked at in chapter 2. Human interest angles on big stories – such as the Blunkett scandal – are used to engage the public. It is, in a scandal setting part of what Ekström & Johansson (2008) refers to as the playing out in the media. And though Blunkett stated in our interview in January 2014 that “I didn't want them to take into account my blindness at all.” it is inevitable that it is a side to the story an editor will seize on, because it provides a different perspective and more in-depth way of seeing the matters that went on. It is with blindness as it is with anything that isn't mainstream such as being from an ethnic minority, being homosexual or being deaf for that matter. It is something the majority of the public doesn't understand unless they know it. Either first hand or second hand. And the headline, suggesting that this perspective is now going to be, at least partly revealing of how Blunkett might have judged, is one which would both generate sales and online clicks.

This headline is thus click/sales generating. A rhetorically posed question, talking about a little mentioned aspect in order to perhaps understand Blunkett a little bit more in terms of the actions which led to the scandal. We know it is about the scandal due to the time of publication, the phase of the scandal proper. (Thompson 2000)

6.2.2 Teaser

“It is said he can distinguish a woman's perfume at some distance. But is David Blunkett's blindness really a relevant factor in his predicament? Selina Mills, who is blind herself, thinks not.” (Mills 2004)

The teaser opens with a statement that has nothing to do whatsoever with the topic of the article. And it is also one of these statements which I will argue has an almost ignorant tone to it which, as we have seen in chapter 3, is not unheard of when reporting on disability issues. “It is said that he can distinguish a woman’s perfume at some distance” is a statement similar to the one found in ‘It’s Not a Joking Matter’ (Michalko & Titchkosky 2001) where Harry claims that “... the blind student on the elevator could tell the numbers of the floors on the elevator pad since they were slightly embossed.” This first statement is also written in a patronizing way as it almost appears to be making up for the fact that Blunkett finds himself in a challenging predicament. At least, he has the comfort of being able to smell a woman’s perfume at some distance. I will argue, based on the discussion in chapter 3, that this is a classic case of bad disability portrayal. Had he been sighted, and able to smell a woman’s perfume at a distance, this would likely not have been mentioned. But that’s probably got to do with the fact that sighted people tend to recognize people by seeing their faces and body frames rather than by smells or sounds.

And the teaser arguably makes whoever got excited by the rhetorical headline excited about what may possibly come, again generating clicks and sales. The teaser redeems itself however, by adding that Selina Mills, who is blind, thinks not. This could be seen to be balancing out the less favourable sentence before and provide some depth to the article, suggesting that it, after all, is a serious piece.

In short, we here deal with a teaser that in the first half makes the classic disability portrayal turn of highlighting a positive attribute to the subject, i.e. Blunkett, by highlighting his great sense of smell. This is totally unrelated to the predicament as the continuation suggests. But is blindness really a relevant factor in his predicament? And it finishes by a statement from a blind person, Selina Mills, an interesting non-participant who gives expert opinion because she too is blind.

6.2.3 What Blunkett says

What’s blindness got to do with the predicament he found himself in? This is what we’ve put together so far. And we also have the immediate answer given us by Mills, a blind journalist. Nothing. And though this is an opinion piece, Mills’s opinion doesn’t seem to be as farfetched as Blunkett himself didn’t think his blindness had anything to do with it. But let’s go back a little

before we get onto Blunkett's opinion on the matter to look closer into what predicament the article is talking about versus what predicament I am talking about. We have not yet read far enough into the article to realize that the predicament Mills is talking about is the betrayal by Kimberly Quinn. And in fact, the article never directly states it, but because it is later talking about finding a partner in life, this is pretty likely. The predicament I am exploring is the scandal. We can thus pose two questions from this. Mills' which is about whether blindness made Blunkett misjudge Quinn's character, and mine which is:

- *How was blindness made part of the Blunkett scandal?*

Though these questions are technically quite different from one another, they come together as one, because Quinn is ultimately the person who got Blunkett into the predicament, or scandal he found himself in by feeding the media with stories and allegations that were untrue. We will see quotes confirming this in the next part of the analysis chapter but the question on what predicament is one which is essential to explore to fully understand exactly what we are looking at.

Returning to Blunkett's opinion on whether he was treated differently by the media, he said: "I could have got into convolutions about what material had been passed across to the civil service in what form and all the rest, of its which would have been really messy. And I think that that wouldn't have done me any good. It certainly wouldn't have done the cause of equality any good so I'd steered well clear of that. And I thought that respect was shown to me by people not caring about it anyway, perversely." (Blunkett 2014) This quote should speak for itself. Blunkett clearly states that his blindness played no part in how everything played out in the media. Blunkett then went on to say that he felt as if he was treated just like anyone else would have been in this position, ending with the quote: "so you wanna be treated like everyone else? Here we are. Fine." (Blunkett 2014)

6.2.4 Judgment and blindness

A predicament is a result of passing judgment. If you for example believe a person to be completely trustworthy only to discover that he isn't, and you have perhaps lent a substantial amount of money to this person that you will never get back, you find yourself in a predicament. And that is the first thing Mills (2004) goes on to discuss after the teaser. "As an

almost blind writer and journalist, I was asked recently whether my judgment of people was different from those who have 20:20 vision. It is an intriguing question and one that many people have asked, or at least implied, about David Blunkett: was he “blinded by love” – or did his own blindness contribute to his lack of judgment?” The question ending this paragraph is of a rhetorical nature as it’s in a way, just a longer way of formulating the headline. In fact, that paragraph itself takes into account both the headline and the teaser, and put them together; making the conclusions we arrived at earlier in this text very valid. But before she goes on to answer the question; we encounter another sweeping statement which is very much in the category of the statement about the perfumes and the lift numbers. “As a cab driver recently said to me while helping me out of the taxi (and holding my white stick): “He 'ad no control, did he? Coz 'eez blind, ain't he?”” (Mills 2004) This statement is very much phrased as a question, but if we look at it a little closer, we can see that it is the driver’s firm opinion formulated in such a way that it appears to be a rhetorical question. Let’s look at the context of the sentence. A taxi driver is helping a blind lady, Selina Mills, out a cab while holding her white stick. The fact that he is talking about Blunkett, suggests that he has come up at some point during the cab ride. And by making the statement when he did and in the way he did, helping her out of the cab, it could also suggest that this is what I will call a superiority statement. He was blind, ergo he had no control. The fact that Mills also recounted this statement in a Cockney slang may also have been a way to express the unfair nature of this statement without expressing it profusely in words. Cockney is a mostly east London slang associated with the working class, thus regarded by middle and upper class people as being a little stupid. I will therefore argue that by emphasizing the Cockney, which the driver may well have spoken, Mills was implying that of course the driver would be unintelligent enough to believe something like this, as he, after all, spoke with a Cockney accent. If translated into more plane language, this paragraph could arguably easily have read, “As a cab driver was helping me out of a cab, my white stick in his other hand, he implied in a rather ignorant way that Blunkett’s poor judgment only was caused by his blindness, as blind people are not able to see the bad in people.” (Mills 2004)

By judgment, we can discern that the cab driver is talking about Kimberly Quinn, because the article is asking the question of whether Blunkett was “blinded by love”. Blunkett does not talk about this in our interview, but based on his desire for equality, as well as the very simple fact that a mere sensory impairment is not a barrier for seeing the bad in people, it is fair to argue that he most likely simply wasn’t able to think that a person he loved and knew very well, would turn on him as Quinn did when revealing the affair to the press and making false

allegations about the visa which led to his resignation. It was more a case of unpredictability rather than a blind man not being able to realize that he was going to be betrayed and therefore his blindness had nothing as such to do with his predicament.

Mills arrives at a very similar conclusion to this. In fact, she states that she has a more informed view than most when it comes to how blindness affects judgment as she went from being sighted to legally blind over the course of five years. “My view is that I judge in the same way as everyone else, but with certain senses heightened and intensified as others have dulled. As far as I am concerned judgment depends on how one uses ones senses and available data, and not the senses themselves.” (Mills 2004)

6.2.5 What's blindness?

After giving her rather general opinion, which also happens to be similar to mine, and from what we're able to discern of Blunkett as a person through the biography and interview, likely his as well, Mills picks all the concepts apart to make it understandable to the readers. As previously mentioned, most people who read this article are likely not to be too familiar with blindness, and may read this article with very great interest. So this background knowledge is quite important. It also helps to see how a reader can possibly arrive at the same conclusion as Mills has.

The first thing she points out is that over 90% of those registered blind can actually see something. “I, for example, see the world as if looking through cling film where all colours are windswept. As the wonderful poet Stephen Kuusisto points out in his autobiography, *Planet of the Blind*, for others again it is similar to looking through a series of veils, or smeared windowpanes.” (Mills 2004) Blunkett has a detached optic nerve and sees nothing. No light, no shadows and no shapes.

Mills then goes on to say that a blind person's brain is constantly filtering information. That information is acquired differently however, which we already know because of how blind people judge differently due to the different available data. She states that she has a keen sense of hearing and an amazing memory. She says that though both sighted and blind people eliminate the excess information to focus on key elements, the key difference is that blind people save extra information to make up for the information the sight does not provide. Going back to the perfume statement, smelling perfumes is a way for Blunkett to recognize

somebody he isn't able to see, granted that this someone doesn't change their perfume on a regular basis.

6.2.6 How blind people are passing judgment through voice

Mills has already given us the answer as to how blind people pass judgment. Namely to the data available to them, just like sighted people. The only difference being that the data is different. Mills claim to judge people by their voices. "It is true that I can be captivated by the depth, warmth and clarity of tone, nuance and rhythm to give me a sense of a soul." (Mills 2004) The same could be said for David Blunkett, who has stated in his biography, that he got attracted to Quinn when hearing her for the first time on the radio (Pollard 2005). But rather than focusing on the differences between judging somebody based on their voices, Mills is drawing parallels with how sighted people in general tend to judge somebody. She considers a voice a kin to a handshake and a smile. Strangely, she does not here mention appearance, which, we learn from a young age is important, as appearing clean and well-dressed will make people get a good first impression of us. Evidently this is not the case for a blind person who will notice a good smell, a firm handshake and a nice voice before the dress and clean appearance which will need to be pointed out to them, although one can guess that somebody who smells good is also clean and likely respectively dressed. The blind version of somebody who is not turned out so well or do not inspire confidence therefore, is somebody with a wimpy voice. "Wimpy once just don't inspire confidence." (Mills 2004) To emphasize her point, to make the readers really connect and relate to Mills's point about the voice, she uses a Bob Dylan quote. "A woman may be deaf, dumb, crippled and blind, and still have soul and compassion. You can hear it in the voice." Mills adds that "This rings true for men as well." (Mills 2004)

6.2.7 How blind people pass judgment through touch

Another way in which blind people pass judgment according to Mills, is through touch, and describes how a hand on the forearm or a gentle stroke can change her opinion of somebody. Interestingly, it says after the hand on the forearm (now dubbed 'doing a Blunkett'), a sentence we cannot interpret easily without knowing the meaning behind why it is dubbed 'doing a Blunkett'. As to that, no explanation is given. However, the fact that laying a hand on someone's forearm has been dubbed 'doing a Blunkett' is an intriguing one, which suggests

that Blunkett may have relied on touch queues from others in his job, or been particularly touchy feely, both of which can easily be contributed to blindness.

But it seems that Mills thinks touch is a less exclusive way of passing judgment to blind people than what the case is with voices. "But this is not a sense exclusive to those who cannot see. "To lovers, touch is metamorphosis," John Cheever wrote. "All the parts of their bodies seem to change ... seem to become different and better." This has been tried and tested throughout time by making love in the dark, blindfolds and the simple act of shutting one's eyes when kissing." (Mills 2004)

6.2.8 Finding a partner, Blind vs sighted

What's blindness got to do with how we select a partner? Mills doesn't pose the question as such, but after having talked about how blind people make judgment based on the data available to them, touch and voice, and how that is both similar and different to how sighted people find a partner, she goes on to talk directly about finding a partner as a visually impaired person. I will argue that so far, we have seen that she, with her article, are diminishing the barrier between the blind and the sighted. A barrier many people not used to blindness might have thought was bigger. Certainly the cab driver which she refers to near the top of the article. She appears not just to be doing that to educate the general public about blindness, though the piece for some may be educational, but likely also to not give Blunkett any excuse for any misjudgement. An excuse Blunkett himself wouldn't stand for, simply because that would create unnecessary inequality. And the language Mills use to iron out any doubt the reader may have left about differences between blind and sighted people is intensifying. "So as a visually impaired person, and along with the rest of the human race, I have found that finding a partner in life is just one big lottery." (Mills 2004) Particularly the use of the words, "along with the rest of the human race". She is, by that statement in a sense further breaking down the aforementioned barrier some people may have placed between the blind and the sighted. We And They. And put everybody together as one by saying that finding a partner is hard whatever your disposition may be. However, on practical grounds Mills does acknowledge that finding a partner is a "slower and clumsier task" if one is blind. "It is also clear that it will not only be harder to catch people's attention, but more complicated to know whether they have got it, returned or spurned it." (Mills 2004) Rather than appearing as an excuse how blind people can misjudge people solely based on their lack of ability to see,

it rather explains practical difficulties further building up under the very early conclusion that Blunkett's judgment or lack thereof, was not at all a result of his detached optic nerves.

Mills makes the important point that we are all blind when it comes to human relationships and that any intimacy requires knowledge over time. David Blunkett and Kimberly Quinn were lovers for nearly three years, and knew each other for a while as friends before their friendship developed into something more. It is thus more likely that the misjudgement on Blunkett's part had nothing to do with the blindness. It is more likely that Blunkett knew exactly what he was doing when he entered into a relationship with a married woman who is the publisher of a magazine supporting the political opposition. And that it is more accurate to say that he didn't let her professional (and personal) life stand in the way of entering into a relationship with her. These factors didn't make him pause to consider how such an affair might end. And who could blame him? Very few people think about the breakup before the first kiss, or the betrayal before opening up to a beloved. In the final few paragraphs of the article which speaks for themselves so well that I shall present them in full without further comment, Mills emphasizes this extremely clearly.

"I wish I could say I was like the blind oracles of Greece and Rome, who were supposed to be able to filter the good from the bad, and use their "inner eye" to judge characters, but like the mere mortals who went to them for guidance, I have and will no doubt make mistakes throughout my journeys. I hope I will not be excused for bad behaviour or reckless judgment simply because I am blind, but be considered in the same way one would any human being. While I undoubtedly have some seriously difficult and frustrating days, I mostly think of being blind as one long voyage. I still approach people with the same vigour and jollity that my character assumes when at dinner parties, and I still find I put my foot in my mouth and twist when it comes to subtlety. Indeed, I like the response Mark Twain once gave in response to accusations that Helen Keller's life was dull and boring. "Oh no," he is said to have quipped. "It's very exciting. You try getting out of bed in the middle of the night, drunk with sleep, with a fire under your bed and try getting out of the house. It is quite an adventure." David Blunkett may well agree." (Mills 2004)

6.2.9 Other effects

We have now been through Selina Mills' article from top to tail and analysed everything from the headline to the last few paragraphs with the aim of seeing what verbal

tools and thought process Mills have used to get her point across and to arrive at the conclusion that blindness had nothing to do with Blunkett's predicament. Now we're going to go through the article again and identify what linguistic tools Mills have used to make the article engaging, dramatic otherwise thought provoking to her readers. Some of them we have touched on previously in this chapter.

6.2.9.1 Rhetorics

Rhetorics are used a few times in the text. And when we have talked about rhetorics earlier in this text, we have said that rhetorics is a way to ask questions to make the readers stop and think and that though these questions are not to be answered by the readers, they are gentle reminders for us to engage with the content.

In this article, we find rhetorics in the headline; what's blindness got to do with it? The rhetorical style of writing is also present in the teaser following immediately after the headline. "It is said he can distinguish a woman's perfume at some distance. But is David Blunkett's blindness really a relevant factor in his predicament?" (Mills 2004) This rhetorical question, unlike others we find in the text, including the headline, is immediately being answered by the writer of this teaser. "Selina Mills, who is blind herself, thinks not." This is thus a much clearer example of rhetorical ways of addressing the readers than the other part where the thoughts provided is an indirect way of addressing the questions. Another paragraph which has been much discussed above, is in the paragraph where the taxi driver says "He 'ad no control, did he? Coz 'eez blind, ain't he?" We established that though it seems like a question it is clearly the driver's opinion.

Another way of using rhetorics in speech and writing is to answer a question that isn't directly posed. This is a rhetorical answer as opposed to a rhetorical question. However, they serve the same or a similar purpose. We find one such rhetorical answer near the bottom of the article where Mills said that "Yes, being unsighted means everything is intensified – one has a more sensitive touch, sense of smell and even taste (I have been told on good authority that David Blunkett can distinguish a woman's perfume from some distance)." (Mills 2004)

6.2.9.2 Humour

Humour is often used in commentary articles to engage the reader and draw attention to the piece. Unlike rhetorics however, humour is much harder to define since one person's sense of

humour can differ greatly from another. When it comes to identifying humorous elements in a text therefore, it is very often down to personal taste and guesses as to what the author included as humorous elements. Despite this, we shall try to establish the humorous elements of Mills' article.

I will argue that the first identifiable humorous element is the paragraph concerning the Cockney speaking taxi driver. Perhaps because I am blind myself, I read the entire article with a slightly satirical outlook, so it may be that for somebody who has a different understanding of this article, this is not humour. What I find clearly humorous about this paragraph is the situation. In the way she has written out the statement, it seems as if Mills is ridiculing the ignorance of that cab driver. The Cockney accent making that even more blatant.

A second humorous element, perhaps more obviously so, is where Mills, have just explained that blind people use the data available to them to pass judgment rather than it actually being a product of the senses themselves. "I certainly do not claim here to speak for the blind, nor can I speak for Blunkett - I will leave that to the spin doctors." (Mills 2004) I will argue that this is humorous because although it is a fact that spin-doctors, or spinfluencers as they're also called, play a great role in communicating what they and the governments and ministers want the media to focus on, one can never know how much is actual hard truth and how much is spun to make the politics/minister seem more attractive in their views, or to do as little damage to the reputation of a minister as possible.

Mills' inability to sometimes physically see things for what they actually are, is also a more obvious humorous element, though it can be argued that laughing at such a thing could be rather mean. However, she uses herself as an example for the readers to really understand what it is like to not see. Thinking that parking meters are deer and tall lamp posts her 6 ft 10 in father, is a little bit similar to the, at times comical story of the blind person talking to him or herself at a gathering because the person they spoke to has disappeared without saying that they're going. This type of incident is more common among the blind than one may realize.

6.2.9.3 Quotes from famous people

Drawing in quotes related to famous people to get a points across, is yet another way to engage the readers. And Mills is doing this frequently throughout the text.

First up is Stephen Kuusisto, a poet who is describing what blindness may be like for some people in his autobiography, *Planet of the blind*. “For others again it is similar to looking through a series of veils, or smeared windowpanes.”

Next up and arguably more well-known than Kuusisto is Bob Dylan who Mills quotes when she argues that a voice is a helpful tool for a blind person to gauge whether they find somebody attractive to them or not. “A woman may be deaf, dumb, crippled and blind, and still have soul and compassion. You can hear it in the voice.” When talking about touch, Mills quote John Cheever, who wrote “to lovers, touch is metamorphosis.”

And, as previously seen, Mills is quoting Mark Twain talking about another famous person, namely Helen Keller. One of the most famous blind people. Ever.

Another interesting point is the very illusive reference to the famous movie “Scent of a woman.” Interestingly, this was pointed out to me by my sighted supervisor. And what makes that interesting, is that it raises a question of whether Mills did that on purpose to establish a repo with her readers. Something the average sighted person could relate to because they’ve seen the film. So although I have argued that the perfume statement is unnecessary, it may have been a very important component in the article to draw in the sighted readers to make them further understand how blind people pass judgment and recognize people.

6.2.10 Conclusion

We have looked at the article “What’s blindness got to do with it?” in four rounds using three methods of qualitative text analysis interchangeably: Issue analysis when dealing with the issue of blindness, description analysis when describing the elements and the various components and hermeneutic analysis when looking at linguistic specifics in the text.

First and foremost, we looked at the entire article and how it was presented. How Mills arrived at the conclusions she did, namely that it was more likely that Blunkett are blinded by love, or rather couldn’t imagine that Quinn could betray him like that, rather than his blindness being the obstacle which made it impossible for him to judge his ex-lover Kimberly Quinn as someone not to be trusted. We looked at ways Mills explained what being blind was

like to build up under her conclusion. And though the article mentions that she does not claim to speak for the blind, I will argue that although she uses herself and her own experiences as a blind person, her conclusions are very universal. This is particularly clear in the paragraph where she points out that everybody has had different experience according to their sensory life, and that everybody passes judgment on people according to their experiences and data available to them than through the senses themselves. Every blind person will use different data from sighted people to pass judgment. Thus, her experiences can be related to me and even Blunkett.

Then, we looked at different elements she had used to engage her readers to deepen their understanding of the concepts blindness, judgment – and the two put together. Many elements could have been analysed. However, I chose to focus on three. Rhetorics, humour and quotes from famous people, all of which the articles contained. There was also a possible parallel with the film “The Scent of a Woman”, i.e. the perfume statement in the teaser.

In relation to the research question,

- *How was blindness made part of the Blunkett scandal?*

it is hard to give an affirmative answer based on just one text. However, from the way in which I have chosen to do the analysis, and based on the fact that this article was published, I will say that blindness was made part of it by writing an article with this kind of focus. For the most part, his blindness was overlooked, and from quotes from my interview with him presented in this chapter, this was something Blunkett was keen not to have flaunted too much in the media. He wanted and wants to be treated like everybody else. The reason my answer is as it is stems from the mere fact that this article, arguably well written and informative to some, published in a respectable newspaper, would not have been published had Blunkett been sighted. There wouldn't be grounds for such a story. Had Blunkett been deaf, black, gay or a wheelchair user, it is likely that articles focusing on this would have been published. My conclusion is therefore, that blindness was made a very minor part of the Blunkett scandal, except that his blindness, of course, had to be written about. This probably did not change the outcome of it all. Sighted, blind, Blunkett would still probably have had to resign. It just so happened that he had one minor thing different about him that one newspaper seized on to perhaps try and make excuses for him. The attempt seemed to have been rather in vain. According to Selina Mills. On asking David Blunkett whether he thought the media had treated him differently, he said “No, other than one small thing. Some articles questioned how

a blind man could go out with such an elegant lady.” That is also an evident way, however small, in which blindness was made part of the Blunkett scandal

6.3 “What if Blunkett were African?”

6.3.1 It’s a reflective matter

This article is a reflective article, something we can see from the title which is of a rhetorical nature like the previous article. “What if Blunkett were African?”

The article was published on the BBC website on December 18th 2004, just three days after Blunkett’s resignation. I will argue that the article was published in what Thompson (2000) has called ‘the culmination phase’ of a scandal: When the scandal comes to its head and there is a resignation, a court case, or a confession from the “guilty” party. In Blunkett’s case it was a resignation. And my reason for arguing that the article is a reflection piece published in the culmination phase rather than the aftermath is that it was done so very recently after the resignation. These types of reflective articles don’t strictly belong in this particular phase of the scandal. In fact, they occur throughout all the phases. However, the type of reflective articles we are dealing with in this chapter corresponds well with the fourth characteristic of a scandal, the need to fuel the fire (see Ch. 2.4.4)

The fact that an article like this is published on the BBC Africa website is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, because of the close bond the UK still has with its colonies and the influence British public institutions have had on those countries. Secondly, it also shows how far removed the ex-colonies are from “the motherland”. Although many British practices, most notably the legal system, has been adopted in those countries, other things are done very differently. Politics and the high level of corruption one can find in Africa, is one such thing. With the role of the African minister being a king compared with the role of the minister as a servant in Britain, the matter over which Blunkett resigned, was not so scandalous in an African context. As we shall see later, it was even argued by some readers that the resignation was of a ridiculous nature which would have made him seem weak in countries like for instance Nigeria. It also says something about the relevance of such a reflection for an African audience who are all too used to corrupt leadership.

Corruption can be found everywhere in the world. But Africa as a continent is experiencing an overall high level of corruption. Looking at the most recent Corruption Perception Index

(CPI) from 2013 published by Transparency International that attempts to measure corruption levels all over the world, we find African countries such as Angola and Nigeria very close to the bottom where Somalia resides. The UK is ranking on the fourteenth place, being quite high up on the list. And though some readers commented that this article was the most stupid comparison the BBC had ever made, and that it was like “comparing goat’s food to lion’s food” the amount of comments on the piece shows that it was a topic that generated discussion among Africans in Africa and the African diaspora as well as among some who did not originate from the continent. This in turn, shows that the topic did have some relevance even if Blunkett’s reason for resigning would have been such a minor one in Africa. We could say that in an African context, it was a small scandal with some relevance because it highlighted problems of African governance.

6.3.2 The matter of reflection

“UK Home Secretary David Blunkett has resigned after it emerged that his office had fast-tracked a visa application for his ex-lover's nanny. An e-mail was sent which said the application should receive "no favour but slightly quicker".” (Winter 2004)

These opening lines, straight to the point after the rhetorical headline, leaves us in no doubt about what we’re about to read. But before continuing looking into the piece, let’s recap what Blunkett himself said upon me asking him about the accuracy of the allegations. We return to them a few times during the course of the interview. The first time, was when he talked about the court battle to be able to see his son, which, as we have seen previously, was really at the heart of the scandal.

“But then, once we got into the Family Court, the whole thing got public again and I was accused of having fast-tracked the renewal of a work permit for my son’s nanny, which I hadn’t done, but it became a really interesting story. And once you get into that situation, it’s firstly, quite difficult to do the job properly anymore. And secondly, you start to damage the government.” (Blunkett 2014) Then, he reiterated that they came from Quinn herself: “Well, all of this came from the individual concerned. So none of the accusations were found out by the media. The media pretended that they’d found these things out. They hadn’t found it out at all. These accusations were made by my son’s mother.” (Blunkett 2014)

And when I asked him directly: “In terms of the visa, you write a little bit about it in The Blunkett Tapes. But what happened that led to those accusations taking on the scandalous theme that they did in the end?” he replied: “Well, I could quite rightly say that my private

life was private. But the minute that there was any connectivity with my public duties, namely, had I given an instruction to fast-track this work permit, then that drew in my using my public role for private matter. And that's where the controversy really took off. Now, I mean, actually, in the greater good of things that happened it was neither here nor there. And if I had done it, I would have said so. Because it would just have been a storm in a teacup. I would have just said, 'Yeah, it was a mistake. I should have passed it to a junior minister to deal with.' But I hadn't done it. So, well, the twist of this is if I had done it and confessed to it, the press wouldn't have left it alone and it would have been very unpleasant because I'd still have been fighting the private battle. But it wouldn't have been such a cause celebre." To my question "What was the accusation founded on? Was it founded on her?" he answered "It was her evidence entirely. And she didn't produce any evidence. It was entirely an accusation. And we had an enquiry. In fact I suggested an enquiry. Which was, at worst inconclusive and at best it cleared me. They couldn't find anything. It didn't prove I hadn't and it didn't prove I had. And of course, you can't prove a negative." (Blunkett 2014)

If we are to believe Blunkett's words on the matter, the second paragraph about the email "no favours, but slightly quicker" must be very inaccurate. And perhaps more worryingly, it leads to questions of whether the BBC can be trusted. Especially because that sentence is so blatantly contradictory. "No favours, but slightly quicker" is arguably a favour to process the visa slightly quicker. "An e-mail was sent..." also suggests that the source work here is not up to the journalistic standard set in the BBC Editorial Guidelines.

Winter's article continues by saying that "Mr Blunkett insisted that he had done nothing wrong and his close friend and ally, Prime Minister Tony Blair said he had "left government with his integrity intact"." (Winter 2004) And Blunkett said in our interview that "if I had my time again, I'd have stepped down from being the Home Secretary back in September and devoted my time to the court hearing." (Blunkett 2014) Previous quotes from the interview which we looked at, also emphasizes Blunkett's innocence. Thus Blair's statement is most likely not untrue.

The Blunkett scandal was probably seen as a big scandal in the UK because it resulted in Blunkett's resignation. At the time he was pronounced guilty of corruption by the press, and as a result, presumed guilty by the public. But in the end what mattered more, wasn't what he had or hadn't done, but that the allegation was destroying the government. In hindsight – and as Thompson (2000) mentions, it is in hindsight we can properly define mediated scandals –

this was a relatively small scandal. This is at least the case seen with African eyes. In Africa it appears to be more common to be sacked in order not to disgrace the government rather than just resigning voluntarily. A reason for this is that holding power in Africa holds so many perks. Winter discusses this later. But it tends to be different matters ministers are sacked for in Africa. Take for example the issue of the former deputy communications minister in Ghana, Victoria Hammah, who was sacked by President John Mahamah for uttering that she wouldn't leave politics until she had \$1M in the bank. The statements taped by her driver (Spy video tape 2013) went viral on social media and was played out on a local radio station. Hammah's offense, I would argue, was very far flung from corruption allegations, and had Blunkett been guilty of fast-tracking the visa, his punishment should, at least in the British sense, be harsher in the 'court of scandal' than what Hammah's somewhat naïve and inappropriate remarks should have. In Britain, Hammah would most likely not have been sacked, nor made to resign for her statement although she probably would have been a popular topic on political satire shows and in the media in general for a time. One reason she may have been sacked, and this became a big scandal in Ghana, was the fact that Hammah acknowledged the presence of the elephant in the room to the elephant's face. Said in other words, everybody knows about corruption, but with nobody alluding to the fact that it exists, which Hammah's statement alluded to.

Winter points out in his article that, "If an interior minister in most African countries had helped with a visa application for an acquaintance in this way, no-one would have batted an eyelid." "And if the details had been leaked to an African newspaper, it simply wouldn't have become a story." (Winter 2004) In order to get an answer to the question why this is the case, we shall look more closely at firstly, what the relationship is between ministers and voters in Africa, and then at how African ministers operate differently to UK ministers according to Winter's article, the readers' comments and Chinua Achebe's book *No Longer at Ease*.

6.3.3 Big boss

Winter describes the African minister as big boss. That alone suggests that there is not the kind of transparency and dialogue between ministers and voters in most, if any African countries as one can find in the UK. In the UK, the minister is not big boss. He is merely somebody who has been elected by the voters to serve them. And though he is elected on his merits, he is much more at the mercy of the voters than big boss in Africa, where he is at the

mercy of the president. In the UK, there is also a greater public dialogue between ministers and voters, ensured by BBC Radio 4 programs such as *Any Questions* and *Any Answers*, BBC's *Prime Minister's Questions* and the Westminster Channel (digital radio channel). In Africa, there is some sort of dialogue, but it tends to be more on a one to one basis, i.e. private individuals coming to ask the minister, big boss for a favour or two.

African ministers, face very different types of pressure to ministers in Britain. Firstly, there is a wider gap between rich and poor within the same families, friendship circles and so on it is expected of an African minister to help those who are near and dear. To quote Winter "They will have a variety of reasons, an aunty looking for some money, a distant cousin who has just left school looking for a job and, in all possibility, the nanny of a girlfriend looking for her visa to be fast-tracked." (Winter 2004) Nepotism is no doubt found in the UK as well, but because of the law and order in Britain compared to many African countries, it wouldn't be in the minds of the average British citizen to approach a government employed family member with those kinds of requests.

Winter illustrates this pressure on African ministers by referring to the novel *No Longer at Ease*, by one of Nigeria's most famous writers, Chinua Achebe. In this novel, published in 1960, the young Obi Okonkwo arrives in Nigeria from England and immediately becomes a senior civil servant due to his British university education. He is idealistic and wants to put himself forward as a good example of a Nigerian of a certain position who does not take bribes. But pressure from his townsmen to pay back the scholarship they raised money for, paying back his fiancé's money that got stolen as well as for her abortion, paying his brother's school fees and needing to pay taxes, sees him break down and accept bribes to pay off debts, which in turn leads to his downfall. Before Okonkwo puts his ideas aside however, he has multiple discussions with his friends who think he's mad not to accept briberies. And through these discussions, Chinua Achebe illustrates how there is a very different cultural approach in Nigeria to helping those in your immediate circles who are less fortunate than what the case is in England. And the cultural aspect of this is also highlighted by some of the readers' comments to the article:

NO WAY THIS IS FAR TOO OVER BLOWN BY THE PRESS IN THE UK ...SO A MINISTER HAS USED PUBLIC OFFICE FOR PERSONAL GAIN.....EVERYONE DOES IT.....HOW MUCH TIME EFFORT HAS AN ENQUIRY INTO THIS MATTER TAKEN????

ERIQ MUTHEMBA, NAIROBI, KENYA

This Kenyan reader clearly thinks the British government has been spending time and resources on a matter which would have been minor in Kenya. We can guess this from how the comment is worded. These sentiments are to some degree shared by a fellow Kenyan who lives in Texas and who finds that comparing the British and African context in very bad taste because while Africa is communitarian, Britain is very much a welfare society. The comment also points out that Blunkett is no better than an African minister as he appeared to resign out of pressure rather than character:

It is in bad taste to compare the case in Britain with the African experience. First, there is untold suffering in most African countries that anybody who is working, leave alone a minister or an MP, is expected necessarily to help his or her community. Again, most African countries are communitarian; it does not help to wallow in riches while your neighbour is sleeping on an empty stomach. We define our humanhood by the way we are integrated into the society. It has a lot of meaning to our wellbeing. The case with Blunkett's resignation does not hit me as a person who did so out of character but out of pressure. There is a big difference here and the media must highlight such divergence. If he was of good character, he could not have waited that long to call it a day.

Joseph Okech, Kenya, in Texas

The next commenter confirms what Chinua Achebe writes in *No Longer at Ease* about Okonkwo's friends thinking he is crazy to try and stay on the straight and narrow:

In Nigeria that type of attitude will draw laughter and even scorn from most people, especially his tribesmen, including those in the media itself. Personally i don't think the President will even accept a resignation of a minister who is caught in a minor scandal, especially if the minister holds a crucial post, or is a prominent party member like Mr Blunkett.

Uche Ibemere, Lagos, Nigeria

In Uganda, this also appears to be a non-issue:

In Uganda, that wouldn't have come to the media.

By our standards that is a non-issue.

Mukiibi, Kampala-Uganda

But the next commenter is applauding Blunkett for resigning and points out that it would be nice if African leaders could be that honest:

I haven't heard of such resignation in Africa. Power and position is constantly abused to create personal wealth. There is hardly any form of accountability. Hope African leaders learn from Mr. Blunkett.
sena aniwa, london, england

This next Nigerian commenter is echoing the sentiments of the first three commenters, thus strengthening the argument that the African minister is a saviour/king:

I WAS QUITE SHOCKED AT THE WAY THE BRITISH PRESS PUSHED THIS ISSUE, IN MY COUNTRY, MRS QUINNS FRIENDS AND RELATIVES WOULD BE ENTITLED TO FREE TICKETS, USE OF OFFICIAL CARS, IN NIGERIA MR BLUNKETT WOULD'VE DONE THE RIGHT THING, COS IF HE DOESNT OFFER THIS KIND OF FAVOURS HIS CONSITUENCY WOULD CRUCIFY HIM, FOR NOT TAKING ADVANTAGE OF HIS POSITION.

IRENE, NIGERIA

These comments, taken from the many interesting contributions to Winter's article, highlights how difference in thought and culture result in different political practices in Africa and the UK. And they also show how minor the scandal itself was in an African context.

Winter says that not much has changed in Africa since Chinua Achebe wrote and published *No Longer at Ease*. And he points out that the problem of corruption is not just among ministers, but that anyone in position of power practices it. "I have a good friend who used to work at the airport in one African country. This meant that whenever I arrived at the airport, he introduced me to the customs officials, who waved me through without the usual rigmarole of searching my bags and asking for a bribe in order to waive some customs duty or other fee." (Winter 2004)

He continues by saying that though this may seem like a minor transgression – like Blunkett's – "it goes to the heart of Africa's poor governance." We can therefore draw the conclusion based on Winter's experiences that the ministers are not acting out of the ordinary according to societal norms by being corrupt. The UK being no. 14 on Transparency International's 2013 CPI index means that it is not without corruption either though it's way ahead of for instance Nigeria which is on 144th place, Ghana on 63rd place and Kenya on 136th place to mention a few. African countries have corruption everywhere in society, i.e. it is practiced by everyone in authority. Even if the UK score is considerably lower, there still is a certain level of corruption. This means in turn that should UK ministers act in a corrupt way, which they likely do at times, it works out the same as in Africa. However, though this is a similarity

between Africa and the UK, the difference lies in the fact that greater transparency in the British system makes corruption and accepting of bribes a lot more risky. And since it generally seems to be of less acceptance within British ministries to accept bribes, I will argue that taking the step of accepting a bribe or commit a transgression of a corrupt nature is further outside the moral boundaries of British ministers than for their African counterparts. As a reader's comment to Winter's article points out after saying that he has worked in the USA for a number of years and that nepotism and corruption is widespread there, that "white people just do corruption with a little more finesse". As we saw in chapter 2, people in power seem to have much more room for practicing corruption in the USA than in the UK however, the above mentioned comments still go to show that corruption is everywhere though the scale varies.

6.3.4 The differences in operation.

Having established key differences in the relationship between minister and voter in Africa and the UK with the help of Winter's article, some of the responding comments and Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*, we shall attempt to construct how an African minister's everyday life and works is according to the same three sources.

Apart from difference in how scandals are measured in different parts of the world, there are other differences in how voters in the UK and Africa approach their ministers. Whilst sending letters is probably the most common ways for the average Joe to approach a minister in the UK, Joseph Winter speaks of "long queues in the waiting rooms of African ministers" in his article. Going back to *No Longer at Ease* by Chinua Achebe, it often happened that somebody completely unknown to Okonkwo would approach him in order to get money for something or rather, such as when he was offered his first bribe by a young man whose sister needed to be selected to appear before a board so that she could show she was clever enough to get a scholarship to study in England. This was before Okonkwo accepted bribes, so he turned the man down. But only to have the young woman in question come to his house to offer her body to him which he also refused. (Achebe 1960)

As we've already discussed a little, the law stands much stronger in a country like England than in many African countries. It doesn't matter whether you know somebody in England if you need a visa. How long it takes to get it depends not on how much money you have or who

you know, but on many other factors such as how long the visa queue is, or whether you have a history as a criminal offender. It is also unimportant whether the bureaucrat who processes somebody's visa belong to the same ethnic group as he gains nothing in the British system for letting in somebody of the same, or indeed a different ethnic group to himself. According to Winter, being of the same ethnic group or being from the same region is an advantage if one wants something from an African minister. As Winter points out "Newly appointed staff in many ministries will be from the same region, tribe, or ethnic background as the minister and the top civil servants. A study was recently carried out in Kenyan ministries, which found that many ministries were dominated by one particular group." (Winter 2004) This is also apparent in *No Longer at Ease* where people trying to bribe Okonkwo point out that he is Igbo just like them. (Achebe 1960)

Winter says that resignations are "all too rare in Africa" where being in government has so many perks and "the possibility of corruption" (Winter 2004) though being in the British government undoubtedly has its perks as well; they are not of the same kinds as in Africa. As we have discussed previously in this chapter, the answer to this is likely to do with material equality. In the UK there certainly are rich and poor, but even poor people in Britain have access to things we take for granted in the Western world such as clean drinking water and a working welfare system ensuring education, and medical care. Whilst in Africa, at least in some countries, this depends more on how big your bank balance is or how lucky you are to receive free medical aid where you live.

From what I have been able to discern from Joseph Winter's article, being a minister in the UK and being a minister in Africa is different in the way that in the UK, the job entails being a servant to the people in that you at least should do your utmost to work in the interest of the voters who elected you. And as a minister, you are at their mercy to a much greater extent. In Africa, being a minister means that you somehow are a saviour. You all of a sudden have the power to help those you love, care about, marginalized ethnic groups and so on out of poverty. That is not to say all African ministers are driven by compassion to do so. Compassion arguably means that you help everybody no matter who they are. Still compassion may be part of what drives them. Hand in hand with the lust and hunger for power to be used for greater good or evil. And it would be unfair to say that no African minister acts as a servant to the people, as much as the systems in their individual countries

allow them to. And as much as their character compels them to. Not everybody in African politics are power hungry, but genuinely wants to make a difference for the better.

Because of this servant status of the minister in Britain, Blunkett had to resign “so as not to disgrace the government” as a comment from a reader puts it. Whilst in Africa, resignation over the same issue would be another way for Blunkett to declare “Now, take my privileges away please!” And, as we have seen, not a matter to resign over. This is why Blunkett likely wouldn’t have resigned had he been African.

6.3.5 ‘The times they are a changing’?

At least that is what Joseph Winter seems to think when he points out that although resignations in Africa are rare, “there is some room for optimism now a few African presidents have voluntarily left power.” (Winter 2004) And it seems some scandals are being picked up by the media in some African countries that leads to ministers resigning, be it voluntarily or forcibly so. A recent example from Nigeria is when, in February 2014, Aviation Minister Stella Oduah resigned over corruption charges, as well as false university certificates in fear of being sacked by President Gooluck Jonathan. And three other cabinet ministers, Minister of Police Affairs, Caleb Oolubolade, Minister of Niger Delta Affairs Godsdoy Orubebe and Minister of State for Finance Yerima Ogama. (Premium Times Editorial 2014)

6.3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have established that the allegations over Blunkett’s resignations were rather minor in an African context, although as we saw from the Victoria Hammah case, had the scandal been turned on its head, i.e. had Blunkett alluded openly to corruption, it could have been a big scandal that would have him fired, whilst in England it might have been just an embarrassing statement. We also established that cultural differences, as well as material differences, have defined two very different roles for the minister in Africa and the minister in the UK. In the UK, the minister is a servant. And in Africa, the minister is king. In other words, and rather ironically, being a minister in the UK is almost like a burden, whilst in Africa being one is almost the opposite, though that’s of course a slightly simplified way of looking at it.

The research question this article prompted me to pose is how big the Blunkett scandal was in an African context. And though one article can’t give a complete answer to this question,

Winter puts the answer quite nicely in his finishing paragraph. “David Blunkett's error was nothing compared to the corruption in some governments but the fact that he had to resign should be seized on by those campaigning for better governance in Africa.” (Winter 2004) So, a small scandal in the African context, but a big case in the debate for a better and more transparent African democracy.

7 Final discussion and conclusion

This is the conclusive chapter to this thesis and it will thus be concluding the entire work. I will begin with a recap of the research questions posed and I will then further discuss how I arrived at the answers and conclusions presented in the previous chapters by referring to the scandal and disability theories in chapters 2 and 3. I will then put my two conclusions from the analysis chapter together and fully conclude everything.

My initial idea as discussed in the methods chapter was to only focus on the Blunkett scandal in relation to his blindness. My main question was thus: Did Blunkett’s blindness have any effect on the media coverage and outcome of the scandal? But due to the selection of media I had to do (see chapter 5) I was left with only one article. “What’s blindness got to do with it?” And since I came across a very interesting article “What if Blunkett were African?” which was far outside the original scope, I decided to add a second research question: How big was the Blunkett scandal in a global and more specifically African context?

But before attempting to answer any of the research questions, the two components which they were based on, needed to be explored. These components are ‘scandal’ and ‘disability’, for obvious reasons. We are dealing with a happening, a scandal. David Blunkett allegedly fast-tracked a working visa for his ex-lover’s nanny. A nanny who was looking after her son that he had fathered and thus, his son too. Other allegations such as him having given her a train ticket meant for spouses, (which he admitted to) and using a work car to go on holiday. I have left those minor allegations out of the scandals discussion as it was the alleged visa that made it necessary for Blunkett to resign. David Blunkett is blind due to a detached optic nerve and is thus considered disabled. Since one of the research questions concerned itself with how his disability may or may not have affected his media portrayal and the outcome of the scandal, it was also important to look into how disabled people have been, and are portrayed in the media today.

7.1 Sex and power

We have been discussing the four types of scandals. Namely sex scandals, financial scandals, power scandals and talk scandals. The first three has been identified and categorized by John B. Thompson, while the last one is identified by Ektström & Johansson. I chose to place the Blunkett scandal primarily in the power category, and secondarily within the sex category. As Thompson (2000) states, power scandals is the most pure form of political scandal. And if we look at the transgression Blunkett allegedly committed, namely the fast-tracking of the visa, it is clear that this is something he only could have done on account of holding government office. Not only did he hold any government office, but he was Home Secretary, only second to the Prime Minister.

To arrive at the decision of putting the Blunkett scandal in the sex category, we need to keep in mind who he allegedly fast-tracked the visa for. His ex-lover's nanny. His ex-lover was a married woman, i.e. someone he, according to moral public standards should not have had a relationship with in the first place. As David Blunkett states, his ex-lover Quinn, fed the media the visa allegations. I have therefore argued that although the affair with Quinn when exposed in the media most likely wouldn't have seen him resign, the allegations stemmed from the affair which as such played a part in the scandal. The sexual element, the affair as such, cannot be called scandalous per se, but I argue that since it led to a greater scandal, it can be seen as the first-order transgression which led to the second-order transgression.

7.2 Disability portrayal

In the chapter on disability portrayal in the media, we established that through disabled people has had their fair share of unfavourable portrayal in the media through history. This bad portrayal includes everything from misleading language such as for instance suffering from blindness, rather than just being blind, to negative stereotypes such as the supercrip, evil, or in later years, benefit scroungers. These negative stereotypes likely stem from literature where disabled people have been written into these negative roles. Shakespeare's *Richard III* is one such example. The 1930s freak shows also ensured that disabled people for some time, and still to some degree is, an object of ridicule. And charity shows like *Children in Need*, reinforces the disabled person as pitiable. Disabled people tended, and still tends to be in the media because they are disabled. Rarely is their disability second to another capacity, although in Blunkett's case, it's safe to say that he was definitely in the media due to his ministerial positions and not due to his blindness. In relation to advertising, there were hardly

any ads aimed at the non-disabled community featuring disabled people and as (Parashar & Devanathan: 2006) points out, disabled people are “Still Not In Vogue.” However, things are changing with disabled models and actors being shown in mainstream TV series and films as well as fashion adverts.

As previously mentioned, David Blunkett is known for his political stands rather than his blindness. This makes him an all too rare breed of disabled celebrity. But he is not the only one enjoying fame unrelated to his disability. Apart from Blunkett, we have discussed Oscar Pistorius and Cato Zahl Pedersen. The three celebrities have one thing in common apart from their disabilities. They are normal men who have achieved great things in life. They are all well-known names in their countries and in other parts of the world too. One could argue that they fall into the supercrip category. But what makes them stand out from that category is that none of them follow the script film and literature has created for the supercrips. Supercrips are supposed to be disowned by their families until they have achieved great things thanks to some charitable person who believed in their super talents. And when they had fame and acceptance from the ones who used to mock them, they lived happily ever after and were nice till death carried them from this earth. All my three examples had hard beginnings in different ways. Blunkett was poor - from the lower working class, Zahl Pedersen probably had to adjust to living with one hook half an arm instead of two fully functioning arms and hands, and life can hardly have been easy for Pistorius in terms of growing up as a different child. But from reading their biographies, they come from supportive families and they themselves have been driving their careers without a charity needing to do it for them.

I will conclude by saying that they are normal men who followed their dreams. And though their disabilities have of course been mentioned in the media, their achievements and downfalls have made that a secondary thing. And they surely have good and bad days like the rest of us. Blunkett said in our interview when asked if there were any silver lining to the scandal: “The silver lining is my son. The silver lining is my wife Margaret. The silver lining is that it made me reassess my life and relationship with a wide circle of friends and acquaintances. I’m lucky to have a number of friends and not just acquaintances ’cos there is a difference. I’m fortunate to have that, and to see life with a degree more balance than I thought I would be able to eight years ago.”

7.3 “What’s blindness got to do with it?”

Because Blunkett as a politician has earned a lot more focus in the media than blind man Blunkett, has, it was not surprising that I didn’t find much written about his blindness. Looking at how disabled people’s somewhat unfortunate media portrayal, this is very encouraging. And it is also encouraging that Blunkett was voted in and accepted despite his blindness. But even so, the disability had to be mentioned for reasons discussed previously. And the one article I found in the Guardian, “What’s blindness got to do with it?” was the perfect onto pick, not so much because it was focusing on Blunkett’s blindness. Neither because it was written by a blind journalist. But because it was asking what on earth blindness had to do with Blunkett being in a sticky situation because his ex-lover proved to be somebody he could not trust. The article was thus questioning why this aspect had to be even considered. As I discussed in previous chapters, the reason this angle had to be looked at, has got to do with the public’s hunger for human interest matters in a big story like the Blunkett scandal. Everything which is different sells, and blindness is different, in the way that being from an ethnic or sexual minority is different. So this article was written, most likely to generate clicks and sales, but it was written by a blind journalist because such an article would and probably did serve an educational purpose. The article broke down a lot of possibly imagined barriers between sighted and blind people by informing that essentially, blind people judged in the same way as sighted people, i.e. by the data available to them. The only difference being that the visual data for obvious reason isn’t there.

The article was also proving one other essential thing. Namely that blind or sighted, intimacy requires knowledge over time. We can never know who is going to betray us when. As humans, we can only go by instinct and trust based on previous experiences with the same person and just hope they live up to them.

What the article essentially did was to spell out knowledge we acquired in the chapter on disability. David Blunkett’s blindness was hardly mentioned for a reason. The reason of unimportance to his political performance. And if we read between the lines, that is exactly what “What’s blindness got to do with it?” is telling us as well.

7.4 “What if Blunkett were African?”

Blunkett has claimed innocence in the visa allegation. And how effect that “What’s blindness got to do with it?” is talking about how Kimberly Quinn betrayed him, though not mentioning anything about the allegations themselves, paired with Blunkett’s explanation in our 2014

interview on how things had proceeded back then, I am choosing to believe Blunkett on his innocence. It does not however, change the fact that he had to resign because of the visa allegations and since blindness didn't seem to play a part in how the scandal was covered in the media, nor its outcome, I thought it was interesting to look at how big the scandal really was. I could have chosen to compare it with other scandals of a similar nature such as the Peter Mandelson scandal (see chapter 2), but finding the article entitled "What if Blunkett were African?" I decided to look at the scandal from a global and more specifically African perspective as discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

From what I was able to discern from the Guardian and BBC coverage I had been looking into, the Blunkett scandal as a whole wasn't a big one. He had to resign over what was essentially corruption allegations, but since the investigation according to Blunkett was "at worst inconclusive and at best it cleared me" and since he also stated that he left so as not to destroy the rest of the government, it was relatively minor. The interesting fact was that BBC Africa ran the above mentioned feature article on it. Why was this important in Africa? Rather than highlighting a big scandal, the purpose of the article seemed to be to highlight differences between the British and African political systems. The article also gave an indirect taste of what would and would not constitute for a political scandal in Africa. Fast-tracking of a visa was something Blunkett would almost be expected to do, had he been a minister Big Boss in some African country. And Quinn as Big Boss' mistress would have the right to use work cars and get train tickets. Looking at one recent example from Ghana, where the deputy communications minister Victoria Hamah was sacked for uttering that she wouldn't retire from politics until she has a million dollars in the bank, i.e. insinuating that she was in politics for the money and indirectly alluding to corruption. In the UK, such a statement would only have been embarrassing, but likely not cause her to need to go.

Although some of the readers' comments found it in bad taste to compare what Blunkett had done to the situation in Africa, and also highlighting the same cultural differences Joseph Winter, the article's author discussed many of them seized on the third and perhaps the most important purpose this article served. Namely, discussing the basic problem of governance in Africa. As stated in the previous chapter, being a minister in Africa is like being a king. It holds a lot of personal perks as well as giving you the power to help friends, family and tribesmen. You are therefore able to do more as you please with the power that's been given you.

In the UK, the role of the minister is more like that of a servant. There are democracies in Africa and the UK is a democracy, but the political process in the UK has been streamlined over a much longer period of time than is the case with most African countries who only very recently gained independence and has thus not managed to build the same kind of transparent and orderly infrastructure one can find in the UK. As Winter says towards the end of the article, “Blunkett’s resignation should be seized on by leaders in Africa.” And thus the purpose of the article highlighting African governance comes very clear.

7.5 Final conclusion

The final conclusion to this work should be rather evident. The two main research questions were

- *How was blindness made part of the Blunkett scandal?*

And

- *What was the significance of the Blunkett scandal in an African context?*

Both questions were answered in the previous chapter and further discussed in this chapter. Blindness had nothing to do with David Blunkett’s predicament. Therefore he was not treated differently in the media due to it, other than the fact that it was covered extensively in this one article and mentioned as a biographical fact in the many others. I will safely conclude by saying that had Blunkett been sighted, the scandal probably would not have had a different outcome. He had to resign due to matters unrelated to his detached optic nerve. The fact that blindness played no role, in neither the media coverage, nor the outcome is very encouraging, because it builds up under the media portrayal of disabled people as normal. And from what David Blunkett himself said in our interview, he’s glad it was so, because he wants to be equal to all his colleagues in good and bad. Finally, Blunkett was highly discussed in the blind communities at the time of the scandal. Being blind himself, he was interesting to the blind community in the same way a politician from an ethnic minority background no doubt is to the communities of his ethnicities. The views on Blunkett among the blind were and are as diverse as the people within the blind community. But one view most blind people seemed to have in common, is that for all Blunkett had done, he is a good role model for the blind and visually impaired.

Surprisingly, the Blunkett scandal did play quite a significant role, though a symbolic one rather than having a lot of direct impact. Surprising because I did not expect to come upon

such an article and let alone such a conclusion when I set out to answer my research questions. As for answering what the significance of Blunkett scandal was in a global and African context, we need to look no further than the final paragraph of that article which says that Blunkett's resignation should be seized on, or set an example for other African leaders: Leaders who really did and does practice corruption on a big scale. The Blunkett scandal may have been a small scandal compared to some major scandals we have seen in British history and indeed that of scandals in the rest of the world. But it raised some important questions about political transparency on a few different levels as the BBC Africa Article is an example of.

References

- Achebe, Chinua. (1960). *No Longer at Ease*. New York: Random Books
- Allern, Sigurd., Pollack, Ester. (eds). (2012). *Scandalous! The Mediated Construction of Political Scandals in Four Nordic Countries*. University of Gothenburg: Nordicom.
- Barnes, Collin (1992). *Disabling Imagery and The Media. An Exploration of the Principles for Media Representations of Disabled People*. The British Council of Organisations of Disabled People. Halifax: Ryburn.
- BBC. (2002) "A short history of the BBC." Website article, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/1231593.stm> visited on 19.06.2014
- BBC. (2014) "Horizon at 50" Website article, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/horizon/index.shtml> visited on 19.06.2014
- BBC Editorial Guidelines: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/guidance/> visited on 28.10.2014.
- BBC Prime Ministers' Questions <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006nldz> visited on 29.10.2014
- BBC Radio 4 *Any Answers* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qmmj> visited on 29.10.2014
- BBC Radio 4 *Any Questions* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qgvj> visited on 28.10.2014
- BBC *Ouch* podcast <http://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/series/ouch> visited on 27.10.2014
- BBC *In touch* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qxww> visited on 26.10.2014
- Bird, S.E. (1997). "'What a Story!' Understanding the Audience for Scandal". In Lull, J. & Hinerman, S. (eds.): *Media Scandals*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Blunkett, David. (2006). *The Blunkett Tapes: My Life in the Bear Pit*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC

- Blunkett (2014): Interview with David Blunkett at his Westminster office on the 21th of January 2014. See Appendix 1.
- Bowler, S. & Karp, J.A. (2004) "Politicians, Scandals, and Trust in Government", *Political Behavior* 26 (3): 271-288.
- Briant, E., Watson, N. & Philo, G. (2011) *Bad News for Disabled People: How the Newspapers are Reporting Disability*. Project Report. Strathclyde Centre for Disability Research and Glasgow Media Unit, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK.
<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/57499> visited 19.04.2014.
- Britten, Terry. King, Riley B. & Bihari, Joe. (1984) What's Love Got To Do With It
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pu8KFlfzk3Y> visited on 28.10.2014.
- Cast Offs Channel 4 <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/cast-offs>
- Corruption Perception Index (CPI) from 2013: <http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2013/results/> last visited on 29.10.2014
- Couser, G. Thomas. (2001) "Conflicting Paradigms: The Rhetorics of Disability Memoir". In Wilson, James C. & Lewiecki-Wilson, Cynthia (eds.) *Embodied Rhetorics – Disability in Language and Culture*. (p. 78-91). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Disability Discrimination Act, DDA: <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/the-disability-discrimination-act-dda> last visited on 26.10.2014
- Ekström, M. & Johansson, B. (2008) "Talk Scandals", *Media Culture & Society* 30(1): 61-79. SAGE Publications
- Flyvbjerg, Bent (2001) *Making social science matter. Why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fredericks, Bob. (2014). "Kim Jong Un ordered execution of uncle's entire family." Newspaper article in New York Post <http://nypost.com/2014/01/27/kim-jong-un-ordered-execution-of-uncles-entire-family/> visited on 19.07.2014.
- Gentikow, B. (2005). *Hvordan utforsker man medieerfaringer. Kvalitativ metode*. Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget.

Gripsrud, J. (1992) "The Aesthetics and Politics of Melodrama", in Dahlgren, P. & Sparks, C. (eds) *Journalism and Popular Culture*. (85-94) London: SAGE Publications.

Hartnett, A. (2000). "Escaping the 'Evil Avenger' and the 'Supercrip': Images of Disability in Popular Television". *The Irish Communications Review*, Vol.8, 2000.

Hallin and Mancini. (2004). *Comparing Media Systems. Three Models of Media and Politics*. Cambridge: University Press.

Hornnes, Elin S. (2013) *Når kvinner må si unnskyld... Medierte skandaler, kvinnelige politikere og retoriske forsvarsstrategier*. Doktorgradsavhandling. Universitetet i Oslo.

Howard, Russell. Good News Extra S7 Ep12 BBC 3 (15/12/12): Francesca Martinez: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pYqcql8wSh0> visited on 18.07.2014.

Keeler, Christine. Thompson, Douglas (2014). *Secrets and Lies*. London: John Blake Publishing 2014.

Larsson, Anders Olof. (2013) "Rejected Bits of Program Code": Why Notions of "Politics 2.0" Remain (Mostly) Unfulfilled'. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 10(1): 72-85

Lull, James. Hinerman, Stephen. (eds.) (1997) *Media Scandals*. Cambridge: Polity Press Cambridge UK 1997.

Mancini, P. (1993) "Between trust and Suspicion: How Political Journalists Solve the Dilemma", *European Journal of Communication* 8 (1): 33-53.

Mencap <https://www.mencap.org.uk/> visited on 26.10.2014

Michalko, R. & Titchkosky, T. (2001) "Putting Disability in Its Place: It's Not a Joking Matter". In Wilson, James C. & Lewiecki-Wilson, Cynthia (eds.) *Embodied Rhetorics – Disability in Language and Culture*. (p. 200-228). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Mills (2004) "What's Blindness got to do with it". Newspaper article, *The Guardian* 8th of December 2004.

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2004/dec/08/immigrationpolicy.davidblunkett> last visited on 18.07.2014. See Appendix 2

McNair, B. (2000) *Journalism and Democracy. An Evaluation of the Political Public Sphere*. London: Routledge.

McNair, B. (2007) *An Introduction to Political Communication*. (41h ed.). London: Routledge.

Oxford English Dictionary: <http://www.oed.com/> last visited on 28.10.2014

Parashar, D. & Devanathan, N. (2006). "Still Not in Vogue: The Portrayal of Disability in Magazine Advertising". *Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling - Volume 37, Number 1, Spring 2006 p. 13-20*

Pedersen, Cato Zahl: www.catozahl.no visited on 18.07.2014

Pointon, A. (1999). "Out of the Closet". In Franklin, Bob (ed.). (1999). *Social Policy, the Media and Misrepresentation*. London: Routledge.

Pollard, S. (2005). *David Blunkett*. Hodder & Stoughton Ltd; 2 edition (14 Dec 2004)

Premium Times Editorial 2014. Editorial in Premium Times Nigeria on the 12 Feb 2014 at <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/155031-breaking-jonathan-drops-corrupt-aviation-minister-stella-oduah-3-others.htm> last visited on 21.04.14

Royal National Institute of Blind People <http://www.rnib.org.uk/> visited on 27.10.2014

Robinson, Martin. (2013). "Whoever it is I hope they rot in hell': Phone-hacking jurors played David Blunkett's intercepted voicemail messages revealing his anger at being falsely accused of an affair" Newspaper article, Daily Mail Online on 11th of November 2013 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2500194/Phone-hacking-trial-hears-David-Blunketts-intercepted-voicemails.html> visited on 28.03.2013

Spy video tape 2013: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PpB3WFNzmjE> source: <http://www.ameyawdebrah.com/> visited on 18.07.2014

theguardian.com. (2002). "History of the Guardian. A brief history of the Guardian newspaper." <http://www.theguardian.com/gnm-archive/2002/jun/06/1> visited on 19.07.2014

The Undateables Channel 4 <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/the-undateables> visited on 27.10.2014

Thompson, J. B. (2000). *Political Scandal. Power and Visibility in the Media Age*.
Cambridge: Polity

UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities:

<http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml> last visited on 19.08.2014

Winter, Joseph. 2004. "What if Blunkett were African?" BBC News article on

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4101439.stm> last visited on 28.10.2014. See Appendix 3

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case Study Research*. California: SAGE Inc. Adapted for Linn
Martinussen by the Norwegian Library of Talking Books and Braille in 2012.

Appendix 1

David Blunkett Interview

This interview took place in the Westminster office of Mr David Blunkett on Tuesday January 21 at 13:30.

Q: What was the political climate like at the time the scandal broke out?

A: I think the first thing to remember is that it was in the lead up to a general election. It was pretty clear that it was going to be an election in the first half of 2005. And the material that came out in relation to my private life and the subsequent connectivity with my public life was in 2004. However, it is also worth remembering that this whole event took place at a time when hacking into people's answer phones had really taken off. And as we speak in 2014 this trial is continuing on of those who are alleged to have over seen known about the hacking of the phones all the way back to that time. And in fact, quite a lot of my evidence has been used in court in this prosecution case. So those two things were really running together. The media were illegally hacking into people's private answer phone messages. In my case they were hacking into the mother of my son. And they were also investigating the intruding into my family and the hacking into my older sons' phones. And what was going on at the same time was, that the further building up to the general election where the media, by the very nature of their job are looking for stories. This was a great story, because they were bemused as to why they hadn't caught on to this earlier. And slightly aggrieved that this had been going on, this relationship between me and this particular woman for three years. They hadn't found out and I think they were a little aggrieved about that which explains why they got so worked up about it.

Q: It's been said that you were very private about your private life and affairs. How secret was your relationship?

A: Somebody has described it in court recently as "hidden in public view". Namely that we didn't hide the fact that we were friends, but people didn't realize that we were lovers. So that was very clear. When all this blew up and the media revealed in what was then the News of the world Sunday paper which was then our biggest circulation newspaper, and is now defunct after the aftermath of the scandal of the hacking of phones. When they ran the story in August 2004, my son's mother decided to go back to her husband. And it was the aftermath of that which leads to the conjunction of the private intrusion, which, for the press was a very good story. And the public interest in the sense that she started accusing me of things in

relation to my activities as Home Secretary, which were designed to stop me going through the process of the Family Courts to win contact and responsibility for our son.

Q: So tell me, in the mediated version, what was the story? What was the first thing that came out? Because you were in Italy at the time.

A: Yeah, I knew about the story because the editor of The News of the World came out to see me and was asked to do so by the then chief executive of News International. When they informed him of the story, they thought they had to because this was the Home Secretary, and he insisted that they came to talk to me which they did. I put my recorder on the table and said "I'm recording this" and that recording actually is being used in court because it's absolutely crucial evidence of what they knew and how they obtained the information. And he said he was determined to run it the following Sunday. Now, I was due to go on holiday anyway on the Saturday. And in fact, I was due to have had my son's mother and my son with me. But obviously they took off to Paris and then to California. And I was in Italy. So all this storm was taking place while I was theoretically on holiday, because it wasn't a holiday anymore. And the press was following us trying to find out where we were and all sorts of things. So it turned into a cause celebre. When I came back I tried to calm the whole thing down and for a time it was calmed down in the early autumn and I carried on doing my job. But then, once we got into the Family Court, the whole thing got public again and I was accused of having fast-tracked the renewal of a work permit for my son's nanny, which I hadn't done, but it became a really interesting story. And once you get into that situation, it's firstly, quite difficult to do the job properly anymore. And secondly, you start to damage the government,

Q: By the job, you mean the job as Home Secretary?

A: Yes, the Home Secretary job. I mean, if I had my time again, I'd have stepped down from being the Home Secretary back in September and devoted my time to the court hearing. But, that's in hindsight.

Q: I guess we all know exactly what to do when it's too late. So the renewal of this visa incident, that happened, came as a result of this court hearing.

A: Yes. The Family Court hearings had started. A step had been taken to fast-track to the High Court to stop the process completely. And between the normal Family Court hearing and the High Court hearing, which was when these accusations were made, - they were made five days before we were due to appear in the High Court. The High Court ruling was that the case

should continue. That they had no right to block my action. But the High Court judge actually said in terms that he was very concerned about the way the media reported this case and that they simply told lies about it. Of course the press didn't report that.

Q: So all of that is now up in court?

A: Yes, that's right. The one thing I did do, which she accused me of, was the train ticket. Although they actually couldn't find any evidence of it, I said, "Yeah that's true. I did give her a train ticket." That was the one out of all the silliness that was correct. And ironically, none of the administration could find any record of it.

Q: So how do you think that particular thing was found out?

A: Well, all of this came from the individual concerned. So none of the accusations were found out by the media. The media pretended that they'd found these things out. They hadn't found it out at all. These accusations were made by my son's mother.

Q: So just to verify, everything came out because there were disagreements between you, she wanted to go back to her husband and...

A: They'd agreed that I wouldn't see my son until he was at least fourteen, by which time; he wouldn't have known who the hell I was. So there was no question. I was gonna have to fight for it. Tony Blair did say to me "Do you think they will raise anything that will cause you difficulty?" and I had to say to him that "the truth is, I don't know".

Q: In terms of the visa, you write a little bit about it in The Blunkett Tapes. But what happened that led to those accusations taking on the scandalous theme that they did in the end?

A: Well, I could quite rightly say that my private life was private. But the minute that there was any connectivity with my public duties, namely, had I given an instruction to fast-track this work permit, then that drew in my using my public role for private matter. And that's where the controversy really took off. Now, I mean, actually, in the greater good of things that happened it was neither here nor there. And if I had done it, I would have said so. Because it would just have been a storm in a teacup. I would have just said, "Yeah, it was a mistake. I should have passed it to a junior minister to deal with." But I hadn't done it. So, well, the twist of this is if I had done it and confessed to it, the press wouldn't have left it alone and it

would have been very unpleasant because I'd still have been fighting the private battle. But it wouldn't have been such a cause celebre.

Q: What was the accusation founded on? Was it founded on her?

A: It was her evidence entirely. And she didn't produce any evidence. It was entirely an accusation. And we had an enquiry. In fact I suggested an enquiry. Which was, at worst inconclusive and at best it cleared me. They couldn't find anything. I didn't prove I hadn't and it didn't prove I had. And of course, you can't prove a negative.

Q: Yeah. And I guess, when the press is hungry it's hungry.

A: Oh yes, they had decided that it was time to do me over basically. It was a very good lie and I was a senior minister. This wasn't just about me. It was about Tony Blair. Because I was a key supporter of Tony Blair in an absolutely key government position. And they therefore knew that by damaging me, they would also damage him. It was why I was so clear that I'd step down, because I was actually damaging him and the government just by collateral damage.

Q: Would you say that you were his Achilles heel in some way?

A: Only in the sense that he would stand by me. The more he was doing that, the more the press would get worked up and determined to see me resign. The sooner I got out, the better really.

Q: And what about the things you allegedly said to your biographer, Stephen Pollard?

A: Well, who knows? He said that I knew he was recording. And I have to say that must have lost my marbles as we say in English. I didn't know he was recording that. Nor did I know that he was going to fast-track the publication of the biography once he'd cottoned on that it was going to be a controversy. I don't blame anyone else. If you say things, you know, you've got to carry responsibility for them. In the normal run of things, they wouldn't have been particularly damaging. But in the middle of this controversy they certainly were. He put them all into one package, whereas these had been things I'd said over a period of time. I don't think it did either of us any good. He got his ten thousand pounds, but it ruined the biography really. And instead of being seen as a serious biography, it was seen as a piece of tittle tattle.

Q: After your first resignation you were playing it cool for a bit. And then you came back?

A: Probably not long enough. 'Cos again, the press hadn't given up. They were quite aggrieved that Tony wanted me back again. This was as much about Tony as it was about me. They were quite annoyed that I was coming back so quickly. And looking back, I hadn't recovered. 'Cos it does have major impact on you. I don't think I was clinically ill, but I was certainly depressed and not thinking straight.

Q: How did you spend your time?

A: I started putting thoughts down, trying to sort out the tapes that I'd recorded each weekend. I tried to read, but I failed to concentrate because of was a difficult period in time. I probably was encouraged to come back quickly because I have a good relationship with people in the street. And by that, I do not mean the party, but people in Sheffield. We had Andrea Bocelli over for a concert in Sheffield in February 2005. I met him and his manager said "Why don't you introduce him?" There were eight thousand people in the Sheffield Arena. And this was a kind of test. Was I going to be welcomed, would there be a deathly silence or was I gonna be booed? I made the introduction, assuring them I wasn't going to sing. And they laughed and clapped and I knew I was alright. But it was delusional because I was on my own territory and people wanted me back. Whereas it doesn't mean that the opinion formers and those in the outside world necessarily did.

Q: Everybody I've spoken to and in all the articles I've read about you, everybody seems to have great respect for you. Why do you think that is.

A: It's very kind of you to say that. If I'm honest, I think it is because everyone's quite astonished that somebody who can't see can hold their own on such a senior level without being patronized. I mean you couldn't do the job as Home Secretary or my previous one as Education secretary – it I had lots of remit from covering everything from early years to university skills and employment – if you weren't capable of doing it. And I think there was a slight "Goodness me! How did he manage it if he can't see?" I also think it was my background. I come from a very poor working class background. My dad was killed when I was 12 as you've probably read, and that kind of hard background, the tough part life, means that when I speak about those things, people know I do so from real experience. It makes me quite close to politics as to where people are at. That side of it adds to it. And I do try to say things as I believe them. I try to speak openly and honestly rather than dissembling. Politics are full of people who are dissembling and merely mouthed.

Q: Because it mentions in your biography that you give straight answers rather than dodging them.

A: I try as much as I can without committing suicide politically. I try never to lye even if I don't always tell the truth. And if you think about that in a quiet moment, you'll see that there is a big difference. In other words, when people are asking me questions I don't just babble things out that would destroy the people around me, the politicians around me, and the party policy.

Q: You don't talk much about not being able to see, for reasons I can understand on a personal level. But why do you keep it so quiet?

A: Partly it is because I don't want to be the spokesperson for disability and people who can't see. I just didn't think that was my role. I thought other people had that role. I felt that I could do well by getting other people to accept that they have responsibilities. When I was in the first four years of the Blair government, I was responsible for equal opportunities for gender, the establishment of the disability Rights Commission, which is now part of the equality and human rights commission, and I was responsible for expanding the disability discrimination act which was brought in at the end of the Tory government, but which was very heavily criticized. So I was doing that through my ministers. I was saying "Look, you're the ministers of disabled people. You've got to do this. So get on with it". Since I've left the government, I have done more, but mostly outside the country. I've worked with Sightsavers International mostly in East Africa. Because of being in Tony Blair's cabinet, I can open doors. I can see ministers in governments such as in Kenya and Tanzania, which NGOs like Sightsavers wouldn't be able to get in to. So that's been a good thing to have been able to do.

Q: So going back to the time before your first resignation. Do you think you would have been treated any different had you been sighted?

A: I didn't want them to take into account my blindness at all. I could have got into convolutions about what material had been passed across to the civil service in what form and all the rest, of it which would have been really messy. And I think that that wouldn't have done me any good. It certainly wouldn't have done the cause of equality any good so I'd steered well clear of that. And I thought that respect was shown to me by people not caring about it anyway, perversely. Certainly my second resignation, because it was a mess that was completely unnecessary, I could have. The politics, I'd had enough of it. And I thought I'll get out this time for good. But the little bit where I made a mistake was the advisory committee in

ministerial appointments it wasn't in the advisory committee. And it isn't now its mandatory now on the back of what happened to me. But it was about whether I should have been taking advice. And the truth is, that at the time, which was in the election period, (April 2005, and I've never raised this publicly,) I didn't have access to the papers in Braille because all the offices are shut during the election so the MPs can't use their facilities to campaign so that they have an advantage over their opponents. So I couldn't get in to the office so I had access to the material. But it would have been pointless raising that. It would just have looked like someone making excuses. So I steered clear of that completely. They were treating me as vile if you like, as they sometimes treat other people.

Q: Do you think that's on account of who you are? Or do you think they perhaps would do the same to any disabled politician?

A: The honest answer is, I don't know. I think given the position I held and how robust I've been over the years it was probably just a case of "You wanna be treated like everybody else here we are. Fine". Other than just one small thing. There were remarks in some of the articles which indicated a slightly bizarre view that it's astonishing that this guy is going out with someone as attractive and elegant as this woman.

I was back in government early May when we won the election. I was made Work and Pension secretary. It is a compliment in a sense that the Tories were desperate to get me out. It would weaken Blair and it would get someone out of the front line politics that they obviously either detested, or feared and would be a formidable opponent. I like to think the latter, being arrogant. 'Cos if you're arrogant enough to get on the front line, you're arrogant enough to believe that you're doing a good job. They started frenzying around in terms of anything they could throw at me. Now, I wasn't my best advocate here, because my private life had fallen apart. I had a bit of a good time as well. I should have gone into my shell a lot and just knuckle down. I didn't do anything outrageous. I mean, I wasn't married or anything like that, so I could do what I liked. The second part of it was that I had invested a small amount in a biotech company, 'cos I was interested in it. I'd actually got interested in DNA for all the wrong reasons. I had to use DNA to prove that I was the father of my son. I hadn't sought the full advice in the advisory committee about their view on me taking this role. Ironically, that was for people who were going out of government, not going into government. And the rules weren't for people who were taking up political appointments, they were supposed to be about what you did with information and knowledge you had acquired in government. That didn't seem to bother anyone at the time. Christopher Grayling who is now the justice secretary in

the coalition government, decided to make it his life work to try and find something he could damage me with. And he kept it up all the way through the summer, suggesting that there were gonna be contracts in the departments for DNA testing when their weren't, because they'd already been done while I'd had nothing to do with it. In the end, you've got the note in the book from the secretary to the cabinet where the investigation found out that I'd handled that properly. I'd declared it properly, been totally open about it and there weren't any contracts that I'd had any possibility of dealing with. So it was all nonsense. But it built up further again. And I think it was entirely on the back of what happened the year before. If the year before hadn't happened, this wouldn't have taken off. It would not have been of interest.

Q: Your dealings with Sally Anderson were also drawn into all this.

A: Yeah, and it was all based on lies.

Q: Was she setting you up?

A: Oh yes. And she made quite a lot of money selling her story via a publicist called Max Clifford, who himself is being investigated by the police for interfering with young girls. Its part of this aftermath of the big scandal of a celebrity who's died, called Jimmy Saville. Now we've got all sorts of people being investigated. Rolf Harris and all sorts of media characters. Looking from outside, you must wonder if Britain at one point in time was full of pedophile obsessives.

Q: It seems all these things are coming up at the same time.

A: Well it is, because they are accumulative. People see their rights to their main chances as we say in English. They see that there's an opportunity here. Again, I'm quite happy to accept my responsibility for not seeing that there was a real danger although I didn't have a sexual relationship with sally Anderson. I sound like Bill Clinton don't I. But I didn't and she admitted that she'd lied. And I got substantial compensation. But you can't compensate for your character being trashed.

Q: You had a musical made about you. Didn't you?

A: Yeah, and fortunately it didn't go anywhere. It didn't last. It was all silliness. By a group of people who I describe as libertarians. They are kind of lefty, but they're not. They're libertarian rather than democratic, so they're not democratic socialist. They're in a

metropolitan elite sphere. And I think that the one interesting thing in all this is that those who were critical of me would not have fought for their child. They'd have walked away happily and left the child with the mother.

Q: Do you think they were envious because you had the strength of character to fight?

A: Some were admiring, some were resentful, some were saying "I wouldn't have done that, what the hell were you playing at?" Bear in mind the now mayor of London Boris Johnson was paying for an abortion for his mistress at the time and that other babies actually arrived at the same time. So they are all part of the same set. The Metropolitan London set. So it's difficult to disentangle these people from their attitude and the way they were behaving.

Q: So, in the Sally Anderson and Max Clifford chain if you like? What was Max Clifford's interest in everything?

A: Sally Anderson went to Max Clifford so that he would be the publicist who would get her the deal.

Q: But what was her interest?

A: She wanted money. That was all. And I was the perfect target for that because of the publicity about my private life, and the fact that I was now alone. And presumably people realized I was vulnerable, which in one sense, I was. But that's my fault. It was hard not making friends with Sally Anderson. Especially because she told me about having skin cancer and all sorts of other problems. And here's another expression, I'm a sucker for a good story.

Q: Your second resignation happened in November 2005?

A: Yes, the second of November 2005.

Q: What happened to Blair's government after you left?

A: There was pressure for Tony to resign anyway. Gordon Brown wanted to be Prime Minister and the people around him were building up the pressure that Tony should set a date which he did the following summer in 2006. And subsequently went in July 2007.

Q: Was Brown the in party opposition to Blair?

A: Yes, he wanted the job. And he'd resented way back in the 1990s. He felt he was squeezed out at the time by Tony. Whereas Tony, had actually been by far the most popular choice.

Q: And what was your professional relationship with Gordon Brown?

A: Not unfriendly. Strained, but robust. If you stood up to Gordon, he respected you. I actually spent time in Scotland at his house, so I can't say I was deeply antagonistic. I found him a very complex character. Intellectually very bright, extremely focused, nobody could fault his work rate. It was unbelievable. It was very hard to relate to him personally. And I fear for him now in terms of not having a hinterland as the say, of other interest and things that make life bearable when things are difficult. I'm not sure Gordon has that apart from Sarah and the children.

Q: What happened to you after the scandal? What's your life like now?

A: I wrote the diaries, I got on with trying to rebuild my public profile and above all my character and esteem so I'd not feel that this had destroyed me. Because you either go under, or you fight back. And I wanted the rest of my life to be pleasurable which it is. I'm married, I have my son regularly, I'm reasonably well off and I'm happy. But also, to be able to make a contribution, you need people to regain respect for you in public life. The charitable work that I do and having something to say. Those things took time.

Q: But you're here in Westminster now?

A: I'm still representing Sheffield Brightside here in parliament. I've got to make a decision whether I shall stand next year; I shall be sixty-eight next year. That's 45 years I've been elected in office, because I was made councillor back in May 1970 for Sheffield. I also do charitable work that helps others like Sightsavers. I'm doing some things that earn me a bit of money as well, like I'm doing some work for Easy Jet on revamping and leading an advisory group on making travel by Easy Jet easier for people with disabilities or aging. So that they distinguish themselves as a low-cost carrier from others in terms of people feeling comfortable that they are getting the right information and the right service when they're travelling. That's quite an interesting thing to do. And they're paying me for cheering the advisory committee. And I'm interested in cyber security. I really kept my interest in the things that I was involved with in government. So I'm at the moment doing a major review for the leader of my party and the education spokesperson on reviewing the structure of education given the landscape the coalition government is creating with the isolated individual schools as opposed to partnership approach. I'm doing some work for the charity Aid Foundation on what inspires people to give and why do they give differently at different

times of their lives. So I'm doing projects like that which are interesting and time consuming. So between now and the spring, I'm busy. I haven't yet decided what I'll do over the summer. Perhaps I'll take a bit of time off.

Q: You know the saying that in everything there's a silver lining. Has there been a silver lining in the Blunkett scandal?

A: The silver lining is my son. The silver lining is my wife Margaret. The silver lining is that it made me reassess my life and relationship with a wide circle of friends and acquaintances. I'm lucky to have a number of friends and not just acquaintances 'cos there is a difference. I'm fortunate to have that, and to see life with a degree more balance than I thought I would be able to eight years ago.

Q: Has it made you more reflective?

A: It has made me a more rounded human being. It certainly made me more reflective and I'm not as abrasive. But who knows. You get less abrasive as you get older and you get very abrasive when you get very old. I had to become more rounded and reflective if I was ever going to recover. There was no point in blaming other people; there was no point in resenting. When my son's mother said "why don't you hate me?" I said "You can't send hate and resentment like an e-mail." Hate and resentment only corrodes the person who is hating. There was no point in going down that road, the best thing was to get on and rebuild life.

Q: It seems like you've been doing that pretty well with your projects. But how would you say your reputation is now?

A: I'm not the best judge Linn, honestly. I'd say that I can still commend an audience by something I write or speak about. I was on television at lunch time on the BBC2 politics program, about a speech I am making tonight, about the nature of government and trying to get people to engage in politics, get people to participate in public life and how young people are disengaged. Why is it that the coalition government and all parties are so concerned about the needs of older people? It's because old people vote in very large numbers and young people don't. And so the austerity program has bitten harder on younger people than it has on the elderly. So I'm still talking, writing, thinking, so as long as that still happens, I'm alive.

Q: As long as you think, you are.

A: Yeah, as long as you think you are you must be. I think, therefore I am. Or as Monty Python says, “I drink, therefore I am.”

Finishing: Well, you certainly have to exist to get the boos down. Thank you very much for this interview.

Appendix 2

What's blindness got to do with it?

Source: <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2004/dec/08/immigrationpolicy.davidblunkett>

It is said he can distinguish a woman's perfume at some distance. But is David Blunkett's blindness really a relevant factor in his predicament? Selina Mills, who is blind herself, thinks not.

As an almost blind writer and journalist, I was asked recently whether my judgment of people was different from those who have 20:20 vision. It is an intriguing question and one that many people have asked, or at least implied, about David Blunkett: was he "blinded by love" - or did his own blindness contribute to his lack of judgment? As a cab driver recently said to me while helping me out of the taxi (and holding my white stick): "He 'ad no control, did he? Coz 'eez blind, ain't he?"

When it comes to the question of whether blindness affects judgment, I have a more informed view than most, having moved over the past five years from the seeing world to being legally blind. My view is that I judge in the same way as every one else, but with certain senses heightened and intensified as others have dulled. As far as I am concerned judgment depends on how one uses ones senses and available data, and not the senses themselves.

In arguing this view, I am well aware of the potential to fall flat on my face. I certainly do not claim here to speak for the blind, nor can I speak for Mr Blunkett - I will leave that to the spin doctors. This is merely one person's view on the matter, who has known both the benefit of sight and its lack.

Perhaps the best place to start is to imagine what it is like to be blind. Few realise that over 90% of blind people can see something - colours, light shapes and forms. I, for example, see the world as if looking through cling film where all colours are windswept. As the wonderful poet Stephen Kuusisto points out in his autobiography, *Planet of the Blind*, for others again it is similar to looking through a series of veils, or smeared windowpanes. Objects take on a life of their own. My malady (difficult cataracts) has allowed me to think parking meters are deer, and that a tall lamppost was my 6ft 10in father. All of this means that one's brain is constantly filtering information, and one's other four senses are working overtime. In my case, my sense of hearing is very keen, and my memory amazing. Living in shadows means I eliminate the excess in order to concentrate on key elements. Sighted people do this too, the only difference being that my brain is saving extra information to make up for the lack of data from sight.

Evidently, I do judge people by their voices, and it is true that I can be captivated by the depth, warmth and clarity of tone, nuance and rhythm to give me a sense of a soul. But I consider a new voice akin to a handshake and a smile. Wimpy ones just don't inspire confidence. "A woman may be deaf, dumb, crippled and blind," Bob Dylan once said, "and still have soul and compassion. You can hear it in the voice." This rings true for men as well.

I also get a huge amount of information through touch. A gentle hand on the forearm (now dubbed "doing a Blunkett") or a stroke can change my opinion of someone very quickly. I can gauge whether they are gentle or harsh, caring or bossy. But this is not a sense exclusive to those who cannot see. "To lovers, touch is metamorphosis," John Cheever wrote. "All the

parts of their bodies seem to change ... seem to become different and better." This has been tried and tested throughout time by making love in the dark, blindfolds and the simple act of shutting ones eyes when kissing.

So as a visually impaired person, and along with the rest of the human race, I have found that finding a partner in life is just one big lottery. I can not deny that it is harder to find a mate if you are blind, somehow a slower and clumsier task. It is also clear that it will not only be harder to catch people's attention, but more complicated to know whether they have got it, returned or spurned it.

However, relationships are about testing waters and reading signals, whether visual or not. Essentially we are all blind when it comes to human relationships and love. Yes, being unsighted means everything is intensified - one has a more sensitive touch, sense of smell and even taste (I have been told on good authority that David Blunkett can distinguish a woman's perfume from some distance). Maybe one does listen to one's internal voice and fantasies more than to other people.

But any type of intimacy requires knowledge over time. Whether we can see or not, we don't know which bits will be turned on or off until we have learned them. Everyone has had different sensory experiences according to their life histories and must be responsible for these, be they deaf or blind or even madly neurotic. Being unsighted simply adds to the lottery of fantasies that we all have about each other.

I wish I could say I was like the blind oracles of Greece and Rome, who were supposed to be able to filter the good from the bad, and use their "inner eye" to judge characters, but like the mere mortals who went to them for guidance, I have and will no doubt make mistakes throughout my journeys. I hope I will not be excused for bad behaviour or reckless judgment simply because I am blind, but be considered in the same way one would any human being.

While I undoubtedly have some seriously difficult and frustrating days, I mostly think of being blind as one long voyage. I still approach people with the same vigour and jollity that my character assumes when at dinner parties, and I still find I put my foot in my mouth and twist when it comes to subtlety. Indeed, I like the response Mark Twain once gave in response to accusations that Helen Keller's life was dull and boring. "Oh no," he is said to have quipped. "It's very exciting. You try getting out of bed in the middle of the night, drunk with sleep, with a fire under your bed and try getting out of the house. It is quite an adventure."

David Blunkett may well agree.

Appendix 3

What if Blunkett were African?

Source: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4101439.stm>

UK Home Secretary David Blunkett has resigned after it emerged that his office had fast-tracked a visa application for his ex-lover's nanny.

An e-mail was sent which said the application should receive "no favours but slightly quicker".

Mr Blunkett insisted that he had done nothing wrong and his close friend and ally, Prime Minister Tony Blair said he had "left government with his integrity intact".

If an interior minister in most African countries had helped with a visa application for an acquaintance in this way, no-one would have batted an eyelid.

If the details had been leaked to an African newspaper, they would not have seen it as a story - such abuse of power, and far more extreme versions, are taken for granted.

'Big boss'

And this goes right to the heart of many of the continent's problems. If you are in a position of authority, it is to be expected that you personally, and then your friends, relatives and hangers-on will benefit.

Visit the waiting room of most African ministers and there is a long queue of people waiting to see "the big boss".

They will have a variety of reasons, an aunty looking for some money, a distant cousin who has just left school looking for a job and, in all possibility, the nanny of a girlfriend looking for her visa to be fast-tracked.

The pressure on African ministers is well described by one of Nigeria's most famous authors, Chinua Achebe in his book, *No Longer At Ease*, published in 1960.

Despite starting out with the best intentions as a new civil servant, Obi Okonkwo eventually gives in to the multiple requests from his extended family, leading to his downfall.

In most countries, little has changed since then. And it is not just ministers, but anyone in any position of power.

I have a good friend who used to work at the airport in one African country.

This meant that whenever I arrived at the airport, he introduced me to the customs officials, who waved me through without the usual rigmarole of searching my bags and asking for a bribe in order to waive some customs duty or other fee.

This may seem like a minor transgression - like Mr Blunkett's - but it goes to the heart of Africa's poor governance.

Rule of law

Rules are not the same for everyone.

If you know the right people, you can get a visa quickly. If not, you go to the bottom of a very long queue.

Newly appointed staff in many ministries will be from the same region or ethnic background as the minister and the top civil servants.

A study was recently carried out in Kenyan ministries, which found that many ministries were dominated by one particular group.

One businessman in Somalia, where there is no government, recently told me that he is not allowed to sell certain goods in Kenya because businessmen close to the government have been awarded a monopoly.

Rare resignations

Because being in government leads to such perks, not to mention the possibility of corruption when lucrative government contracts are awarded, people are more willing to take up arms to fight for power.

Especially when people from one region or ethnic group feel that they are being marginalised from power.

And once in power, there is a determination to stay whatever the cost.

Ministerial resignations remain all too rare, although there is some room for optimism now that a few African presidents have voluntarily left power.

David Blunkett's error was nothing compared to the corruption in some governments but the fact that he had to resign should be seized on by those campaigning for better governance in Africa.

What do you think? Would a minister in your country resign over this issue? Would such behaviour be expected or are things changing?

This debate has now closed. Here is a selection of your comments.

A selection will be published and read out on the BBC's Focus on Africa programme at 1705 GMT on 18 December.

Resign? What's that word?

Olu Akinmade,

NO WAY THIS IS FAR TOO OVER BLOWN BY THE PRESS IN THE UK ...SO A MINISTER HAS USED PUBLIC OFFICE FOR PERSONAL GAINEVERYONE DOES ITHOW MUCH TIME EFFORT HAS AN ENQUIRY INTO THIS MATTER TAKEN ????

ERIQ MUTHEMBA, NAIROBI, KENYA

In Tanzania,during Nyerere's era we had several resignations and ministers were held responsible.Even now several ministers have resigned even if their mistakes were committed by their juniors.If a minister can not resign then the President has to sack him or her.Though this is not the case always but at least we have seen people taking responsibility for scandals However we have to congratulate David Blunkett for taking responsibility regardless of the truth on the issue. Similarly the British media needs special credit on how they handle home issues.

Emmaus Bandekile Mwamakula, Tanzanian (Redcliffe College, Gloucester, England)

Well from the experiences here in Tanzania, I must say, that issue wouldnt have lead to resignation. We have seen ministers here holding their positions even after loss of lifes eg. MV Bukoba tragedy

Masatu, Fimboyamnyonge, Tanzania

I understand Mr. Winter's concern for good governance (or the lack of it)and the need to redress such issues in certain countries. I do not however see the link between Blunkett's blunder and the situation in some African states. Firstly, Blunkett did not admit to any wrong doing and only resigned, honorably, in order not to disgrace the government. Secondly, the link between nepotism and civil war in African states is somewhat far-fetched. THE two biggest cases in Africa: Rwanda and Sudan are examples where those in power terrorise the weaker, not of the weaker taking up arms against hegemonic rulers.

Zwelithini Simela, Bremen, Germany

Nepotism exists everywhere, don't highlight this as if it were only an African problem.
thato, cambridge, USA

It is in bad taste to compare the case in Britain with the African experience. First, there is untold suffering in most African countries that anybody who is working, leave alone a minister or an MP, is expected necessarily to help his or her community. Again, most African countries are communitarian, it does not help to wallow in riches while your neighbour is sleeping on an empty stomach. We define our humanhood by the way we are integrated into the society. It has a lot of meaning to our wellbeing. The case with Blunkett's resignation does not hit me as a person who did so out of character but out of pressure. There is a big difference here and the media must highlight such divergence. If he was of good character, he could not have waited that long to call it a day.

joseph Okech, Kenya , in Texas

This is the most stupid comparison the BBC has ever made. It is like comparing goats' food with lions' one.

Sintoiya Ole Lekumbai, Nairobi, Kenya

In Nigeria that type of attitude will draw laughter, and even scorn from most people, especially his tribesmen, including those in the media itself. Personally I don't think the President will even accept a resignation of a minister who is caught in a minor scandal, especially if the minister holds a crucial post, or is a prominent party member like Mr Blunkett.

Uche Ibemere, Lagos, Nigeria

It has never happened under this Cameroon's present regime, for a minister to resign - no matter the depth his mismanagement. Only the "self-powered" president decides if you should leave or otherwise. In Cameroon, a minister WILL NEVER resign on this issue.

akere, Aarhus, DK

People need to stop being so maopic and narrow minded as to think this kind of corruption only happens in Africa. Look west and see how much Rumsfeld and George Bush's government has gotten away with murder and is still there. This is not an African problem, it's a problem of the world of power

kenneth mwase, harare zimbabwe

What the former cabinet minister did was wrong and it is good he resigned from office. This is intolerable in present Ethiopia and such things do not take place openly. The prime minister of Ethiopia and the smart Ethiopian political leadership would have simply have kicked or even sent to jail to a person like Blunkett. What he did was really morally wrong and not acceptable in Ethiopia.

Alemuye, Addis, Ethiopia

The real reason for the impunity of some African leaders is that both they and their ill-gotten gains are very, very safe in the Western European societies that cynically criticise "African corruption".

Doye Agama, UK

Winter's concern for Africa's poor governance is appreciated. Such climate as nepotism exists in Africa. However helping out illegal immigrant nanny's and other bigbrother favoritism

among friends and cliques are far more common in today's USA.

Ifeanyi Ughanze, Houston, Texas

It is not only Africa that this happens. Here in the USA any good political contributor would expect the same sort of access and favours from the person they contributed to. Visa and greencard queues can be jumped in the USA if you know someone.

Mike Thompson, Fairfax, VA USA

In Uganda, that wouldn't have come to the media.

By our standards that is a non-issue.

mukiibi, kampala-Uganda

I haven't heard of such resignation in Africa. Power and position is constantly abused to create personal wealth. There is hardly any form of accountability. Hope African leaders learn from Mr. Blunkett.

sena aniwa, london, england

In Zimbabwe the authorities can and do what they want. They must think Blunkett mad to have resigned! The whole point of being in power is to enrich yourself and your family. The idea that you are there to serve the people is as alien to the ruling party as you can get. The only time the politicians show an interest in the people is when masses start to show signs of removing them from power!

Alex, Zimbabwean in UK

I don't think a minister in Liberia would have resigned over such a row as "visa favor". Normally, the public will see it as a sign of great help and perhaps would shower him with praises. Anyone criticizing the minister will be looked at out of touch with the norm of society. Public servants should be above the suspicions of public eyes but unfortunately this is not the case in most African countries.

J Duwar Kollie, Palm Coast, FL USA

I've been a resident of the United States for 11 years. I work for a company involves in contracts with the federal government, and believe me, corruption is widespread in the US too. Who you know makes who you are. To get a government contract in the US, you must rub elbows with the right people. White people just do it with more "finesse". Campaign contributions are a form of legal corruption.

C. IVERS, Fulton, Maryland, USA

That is one thing I like with western democracy. Maintaining one's integrity is something African politicians have yet to do, and will unfortunately take a long time to be entrenched. In Kenya, despite many corruption claims, involved politicians are getting stronger by day.

weru macharia, Kenyan in Brighton,

This behavior is common in SA, the minister would have gotten a promotion and the nanny would have taken his old position.

ryan, JHb South Africa

It is a natural fact that power is not easily relinquished. If we think that ministers in western governments are more honourable than their counterparts in African governments, then why didn't Mt Blunkett resign as soon as the story came out, but he tried to stay in power and twist

the fact as best as he could to get out of it. These things happen everywhere in the world and it so happen that in Africa it is not seen as an abuse of power, but merely given a helping hand to those who need your help. It is a human nature and whether it is in America or Britain we know favouritism (and corruption) exist. The difference in Africa is that the media will not seize upon it as media in the west does. More importantly because of poverty and the close knit community that we live in a lot of people depend on the few who have jobs.

Banky Njie, London/Gambia

Definately not, i think that the ministers in our country might have been debated in the media, but such a trivial thing like this could never have forced a minister to be forced to leave the cabinet, let a lone resign.

Jonathan Damsgaard, Malmoe Sweden

This type of "corruption" is not only common in Africa amongst Africans but in most if not all developing countries. In all of the Middle Eastern states this is a common practice of Govenors down to the traffic police. It is called "Wasta" which basically means having and using connections to obtain special favor. I have seen the same thing in Mexico and Asia. I think this practice is not related to geographic location but rather economic situation.

Brian Green, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

I WAS QUITE SHOCKED AT THE WAY THE BRITISH PRESS PUSHED THIS ISSUE, IN MY COUNTRY, MRS QUINNS FRIENDS AND RELATIVES WOULD BE ENTITLED TO FREE TICKETS, USE OF OFFICIAL CARS, IN NIGERIA MR BLUNKETT WOULD'VE DONE THE RIGHT THING, COS IF HE DOESNT OFFER THIS KIND OF FAVOURS HIS CONSITUENCY WOULD CRUCIFY HIM, FOR NOT TAKING ADVANTAGE OF HIS POSITION.

IRENE, NIGERIA

Call it nepotism or network. It exists everywhere. Its also a way of life and business in Asian countries.

Lynette Chua, Singapore

I think it would amount to a major wonder of the world if a Nigerian Minister, Governor, Senator or any other government official chooses the path that Blunket had chosen- resigning over a mere assistance to fast track a visa application. Given my experiences here in africa I still find it hard to come to terms with the fact that Blunkett resigned under such circumstances, even when he did not 'bribe' anyone nor did he even pick up a phone to make a call to ask for assistance on the visa application.

Jonah Iboma, Lagos, Nigeria