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The Power of Popular Publicity:
New social media and the affective dynamics of the Sepp Blatter racism scandal.

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Abstract: Sociologists have tended to take insufficient account of the importance of emotions to the social power of the institution of media, particularly as altered by the emergence of social media in the current media ecology. This paper compensates for this neglect by examining the effect of social media on the public reception of the 2011 Sepp Blatter racism scandal and other 'race-related' media scandals in the UK. In proposing media scandals' wider sociological significance regarding the dynamic, multi-accented relationships between emotions and power, it analyses how England's prevailing climate of 'postcolonial guilt' was reinforced and conveyed through social media networks.

Key Words: emotions; media scandal; power; racism scandal; social media.

Introduction: Mediating emotions, mobilising power

The conceptual separation of power from emotions has a long tradition in sociology, with the concepts commonly treated as distinct conditions: emotions as internal, power as external; emotions as subjective, power as objective, and emotions as non-rational, power as calculative and rational (Alexander, 2011). While Weber's (1946) understanding of power as the ability to obtain compliance over another has since been developed to account for the emotional dimensions of status (Kemper, 2002), rationality (Barbalet, 2008), and authority (Alexander, 2011), the capacity of emotions to legitimate or undermine power through the media, and the implications of this relationship, has received insufficient sociological attention. In this paper we seek to compensate for this neglect by addressing the role of emotions and power in contemporary media in both their 'legacy' and 'new' forms. We focus on the interrelationship between power and emotions in media scandals, with particular emphasis on the role of social media technologies and user relations. We undertake this task by analysing the impact of social media on the recent racism scandal surrounding Sepp Blatter, the current President of the international governing body of football, FIFA (*Fédération Internationale de Football Association*), comparing the incident to a series of other contemporary race-related scandals in England. Here, we explore why the scandal evoked such moral outrage, especially from English audiences, by considering social media's role in scandal, and its wider, sociological significance regarding emotions and power. Our response embraces the examination of not only how media scandals are disseminated via new interactive, social media (principally YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter in this instance), but how scandalous transgressions are framed through these emergent technologies in relation to power and emotions. We suggest that, while research on the media has traditionally been concerned with issues of power and authority in conventional economic or political terms, the rise of new, putatively 'democratic' social media has tended to privilege the emotional dimensions of social networking (conceived as a 'cause' of sociality or of loneliness). We argue that to reduce the study of such media scandals either to issues of power or of emotions is sociologically problematic, suggesting that the connection between power and emotions is central to public engagement with, and scholarly analysis of, these emergent communication technologies and practices.

The Sepp Blatter racism scandal

The scandal that is the focal point of this study refers to the moral outrage arising from Sepp Blatter's recent claim that football does not have on-field problems with racism. When asked during an interview with *CNN World Sport* in November 2011 whether he thought racism on the pitch was a problem in modern-day football, Blatter responded:

> There is no racism [on the field], there is maybe one of the players towards the other, he has a word or a gesture which is not the correct one, but also the one who is affected by that, he should say, 'It's a game, we are in a game. At the end of the game, we shake hands'. And this can happen because we have worked so hard against racism and discrimination' (Murphy, 2011).

Despite claiming that on-field incidents of racism could be settled by a handshake, Blatter subsequently denied the claim, releasing a statement on FIFA's website claiming that he had been misunderstood. What became known as the 'Blatter racism scandal' evoked moral outrage from the international sporting community and wider public, while having particular salience in England, which, as we discuss, necessitates an analysis of how extant and emergent power relations inform that country's emotional memories and current 'emotional climate' (de Rivera, 1992). Although the incident was first communicated via a conventional television broadcast, the scandal was subsequently disseminated and contested on various social media platforms, with Blatter and a series of prominent English footballers using the social networking site Twitter to debate the claim. Blatter's comments

provoked an immediate response from the English footballer, Rio Ferdinand, whose brother Anton was at the time the victim of alleged racial abuse by (then) England football captain, John Terry. Using the @SeppBlatter reply button to engage both publicly and directly with FIFA's President, Rio Ferdinand (@rioferdy5) tweeted:

> Your comments on racism are so condescending it's almost laughable. If fans shout racist chants but shake our hands is that OK?

Adding:

> I feel stupid for thinking that football was taking a leading role against racism - it seems it was just on mute for a while.

Blatter responded to Ferdinand's criticism with a tweet, accompanied by a link to a statement on FIFA's website, depicting a photo of himself hugging Tokyo Sexwale, a black, South African MP:

> My commitment to the fight against racism - d3w.io/s4dm9I

Rio Ferdinand, then, publicly ridiculed the FIFA President on Twitter:

> FIFA clear up the Blatter comments with a pic of him posing with a black man..I need the hand covering eyes symbol!!

This type of immediate, globally available public response enabled by the social networking site would have been unimaginable had the footballer relied on more traditional forms of media. With Ferdinand's Twitter account accumulating approximately 2,600,000 followers, his public condemnation of Blatter could have significant implications for the FIFA President's authority by undermining his legitimacy and popularity.

Many social media users were not only offended by, and critical of, Blatter's comment, they used these online platforms as a public forum to question his leadership of the governing body, with a series of retired footballers, including Stan Collymore and Shaka Hislop, employing Twitter to call for Blatter's resignation:

> Stan Collymore: Mr Blatter, your comments about racism are ill thought, and condescending in the extreme. You should resign.

> Shaka Hislop: How can he possibly remain?

It was not only footballers and commentators who employed social media to call for Blatter's resignation, with the hashtag #BlatterOut established to aggregate public support for the FIFA President to be fired. The use of social media here as a 'many-to-many', interactive form of public communication in 'real-time' marks a significant shift from the 'one-to-many' mode typically associated with more traditional forms of media (e.g. cinema, television, and radio) in which only those who control the means of production have access to the content disseminated via these media (talk back radio and reality television being rare, though still routinely manipulable, exceptions to this model).

Communicated (and 'trending') on social media as a global 'media event' (although a more disorderly one than the scripted 'story form' conceived by Dayan and Katz (1992)), the scandal reinforces John Thompson's (2000) observation that media scandals provide important insights into the ways in which power is exercised, with the transgressions at the heart of these incidents publicly contested in the symbolic realm through claims, critiques and counter-critiques. As struggles for 'symbolic power', the

importance of emotions for media scandals is their capacity to damage the protagonist's reputation and trustworthiness - the very resources from which legitimate power and authority are derived. The question remains, however, whether these emergent technologies have a significant impact on media scandals and why, in this instance, the incident caused such moral outrage in England, particularly when the interview revolved around the problem of racism in football pertaining to the behaviour of fans during the prospective 2014 World Cup in Brazil. In what follows we canvass traditional sociological approaches to media to suggest that the public interest in, and response to, the Blatter racism scandal in England cannot be adequately understood without consideration of the interconnected relationship between power and emotions in this new, dynamic mediated domain.

The power of the media

Sociologists have conventionally emphasised the power of the media to determine how content is produced and received. In the 1960s-70s there was a primary focus on the power of the media (that is, those institutions, organisations and individuals with the power to control the means of text and image production) to 'manufacture [the] news' by means of selection, narrative, ideological interpretation, agenda setting and so on (Cohen and Young, 1973). An influential example of this type of top-down approach was the pioneering *Understanding Media* (1964), in which Marshall McLuhan examined the psychological and social consequences of the media in their various forms. McLuhan noted, for example, that 'electric' media alter social relations in so far as 'they can no longer be *contained*, in the political sense of limited association. They are now *involved* in our lives, as we are in theirs, thanks to the electric media' (1964: 5 [emphasis original]). The effect of media, for McLuhan, was thus twofold: First, by destabilising conventional boundaries of space and time, emergent technologies facilitated the process of globalisation so that the world becomes more like a 'global village'. Second, the historical context in which a medium (e.g. electric, digital) emerged corresponds to significant shifts in the distribution of power in any given society. Power was central to the media, therefore, according to McLuhan's primary thesis that 'the medium is the message', by which he meant that the media (with differential impact according to specific medium), not their content, nor how social actors employ them, determines their sociological value:

> The latest approach to media study considers not only the "content" but the medium and the cultural matrix within which the particular medium operates. The older unawareness of the psychic and social effects of media can be illustrated from almost any of the conventional pronouncements…If the formative power of the media are the media themselves…technological media…have some obvious social patterns of organisation as a result…Radio and TV, become "fixed charges" on the entire psychic life of the community. And this pervasive fact creates the unique cultural flavour of any society (McLuhan, 1964: 11, 22-3).

In suggesting that the medium (media/ technology) determines communication's social value, this new approach to media leaned towards technological determinism by proposing that media technologies themselves have 'agency', instead of viewing technology simply as a tool through which people communicate intentional – and unintentional - meaning (Baker, 2012b). Such top-down approaches to media are problematic not only because they endow what is ostensibly a communication device with agency, but because, by focusing on the power of the media to configure social relations, they tend to overlook the subjective ways in which audiences emotionally negotiate each medium; in this case neglecting the particular reasons why English audiences felt so morally and 'publicly' offended by Blatter's scandalous transgression, when societies with similar media ecologies appeared to be rather less affected by the incident.

Late-twentieth-century media theory was similarly concerned with the power of the mass media in 'manufacturing consent' (Chomsky, 1988) and 'directing the mass audience' (Chomsky, 1997). From

this perspective, the distribution of power (the nature of its economic, political and status hierarchies) was held to affect systems of social meaning, with 'the elite' (or agenda-setting) media controlling the resources that facilitated hegemonic influence in relation to other systems of power, including those of governments, corporations and universities. This view finds expression in Dayan and Katz's (1992: 225) notion of 'media events', whose meaning is controlled by corporate or state organisations, thereby, 'reinforcing the existing power structure, even if they open delicate, potentially subversive questions concerning alternative arrangement for the operation of power'. To view the media as part of the ideological state apparatus (Althusser, 1971), or as promoting the vested interests of a particular class), reflects a particular Marxist approach to media indebted to early-twentieth century critical theories of 'the culture industry' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1947) in 'an age of mechanical reproduction' (Benjamin, 1936), and of capitalist consumption where the media were considered 'a reflection of obvious power structures' (Chomsky, 1997) with the power to affect our perception of reality (Baudrillard, 1981 - though he later distanced himself from Marxism in returning to a McLuhanesque understanding of media). In this sociological tradition, control over media production is considered fundamental to the ways in which power affects the reception of the media in an undemocratic way.

Although sociologists have frequently acknowledged that media representations are neither ideologically uniform nor totally determining of audience readings and responses (for example, Hall, 1997), there is a critical tradition with overriding concern with the media's capacity to represent 'reality' and, thereby, inform and shape collective meaning. For example, while emotions are implied in Hall et al.'s classic *Policing the Crisis* (1978), the fear generated by the moral panic of 'mugging' in 1970s Britain maintained a top-down approach whereby media (and state) organisations were held largely to control mass public sentiment. Such top-down approaches took little account of the possibility that sceptical audiences might feel distinct emotional responses to scandals or challenge their significance and, in so doing, contest the monopolisation of formal public and commercial media organisations as evident in such well-known *imbroglio* as Watergate (1972-4), the Clinton-Lewinsky affair (1998), and the News International phone-hacking scandal that precipitated the Leveson Inquiry (2011-12). Even for 'reflexive' sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984), power is conceived as structured by the distribution of material resources, its affect (as ingrained in habit and taste) largely determined by social-class structures. In short, there has been a tendency in academic scholarship to separate power and emotions, or to convey emotions as a corollary of power. Jonathan Heaney (2011) has argued that 'power and emotion are conceptual twins in need of a serious theoretical reunion', a relationship that, we argue, can be illuminated in analysing responses to Blatter's comments outside the institutional media sphere.

The 'emotional turn'

The mid-1980s-1990s witnessed the proliferation of emotions research in the context of micro- and macro sociology, with this so-called the 'emotional turn' giving rise to the sociology of emotions as a distinct field of inquiry. Although classical sociologists examined the effects of emotions on society's moral order regarding alienation (Marx, 1867), anomie (Durkheim, 1897), and the blasé attitude (Simmel, 1903), for example (thereby, continuing an ancient tradition of emotions research as espoused by Aristotle - see Baker, 2010), the causes and effects of emotions were for the most part implied rather than systematically examined as a primary mode of inquiry. The neglect of emotions also reflects a series of cultural developments, with nineteenth and early-twentieth-century theories of 'disenchantment' (Weber, 1946) characterised by an emphasis on procedural rationality in a post-Enlightened age of secularisation and industrialisation that was thought to erode genuine emotions and meaningful *telos* (see Rowe and Baker, 2012a). From this 'enlightened', modernist perspective, emotions were considered the antithesis of rationality, as exemplified by nineteenth-century crowd theory, which portrayed irrational, violent mobs, characterised by emotional 'contagion' and exaggerated sentiments (see Baker, 2012a). The 'emotional turn' marks a paradigm shift, with

emotions no longer opposed to rationality, but rather conceived as constituent of procedural rationality, with collective emotions and action governed by the same goal-seeking activity that operates at an individual level (Flam, 2000), and even in the context of crowd behaviour and social movements (Flam and King, 2005). Understanding how emotions may structure action, bind and rupture the moral order of society is a key sociological task. Whether ecstatic, outraged or indifferent, there is an increasing awareness that emotions have the power to inform thought and action on an individual and collective level.

When applied to the context of media production, the intellectual impact of the 'emotional turn' is to acknowledge and appreciate the emotional dimensions of the media in their various forms. While social structures are powerful, they provide the context for action rather than its comprehensive determination, as human subjects negotiate a range of emotional memories, present experiences, future aspirations, and unexpected contingencies. Thus, it is important to take account both of enduring institutional media power (Curran, 2011a) and the ways in which it can be challenged and negotiated by actors who possess their own subjective emotional orientations. Given the relative absence of sociological research on how emotions and power operate in this new twenty-first century media ecology, and the limitations of the more 'mechanical' theories of media power first formulated within rather different media environments, it is imperative to explore and analyse how social media may be altering the construction and reception of media scandals (Baker, 2013).

New social media and the new media ecology

Although media scandals are by no means a new phenomenon, the development of new social media in the twenty-first century has dramatically altered public communication practices. Twenty-first century media communication is marked by the emergence of Web 2.0, the large-scale shift towards user-generated World Wide Web content that is more open, collaborative, and participatory (O'Reilly, 2005). The introduction of social media services, such as Facebook (2004), YouTube (2005) and Twitter (2006), form part of this new media ecology, contributing to new social networks through online practices of 'uploading', 'blogging', 'tagging', 'commenting' and 'interacting' in the mediated public sphere. The capacity of Internet users to create content, as well as to consume it, has been influentially described as an online 'participatory culture' (Jenkins et al., 2006). With Web 2.0 applications becoming a routine part of contemporary social life (indeed, the 'semantic web' of Web 3.0 is already beginning to supersede them), the introduction of social media in the early twenty-first century, together with new convergent technologies (e.g. 3G digital smart phones) that enable instant modes of mediated exchange, are now making substantive contributions to media scandals. The instant and mobile forms of communication afforded by these technologies enable users to upload, disseminate, and respond publicly to scandalous transgressions, and at an unprecedented speed and scale (although, as is argued below, the prominence of such interventions is itself related to current structures of power and positioning within dominant, institutional media). To examine how emotions and power operate in contemporary media scandals, then, is to interrogate the impact of new social media which, 'popular rhetoric' suggests, are reworking hierarchies, changing social divisions, creating possibilities and opportunities, and reconfiguring social relations (Beer and Burrows, 2007). If these claims become manifest in action, the interpretive power of the social media user makes it considerably more difficult for those in positions of power to control their public image and to maintain their authority. Nevertheless, as we demonstrate by canvassing the mediation of a series of race-related scandals, social media services are also increasingly incorporated within existing power structures and commercial interests.

England's emotional climate

The Blatter racism scandal emerged in an emotional climate acutely sensitive to issues of racial discrimination. Like France, England has a colonial history of racism, with the country's current political landscape marked by more democratic sensibilities and feelings of 'postcolonial guilt' (Baker, 2010). While structural racism undeniably still exists in England, its overt manifestations are no longer publicly tolerated in the country's liberal democracy, with the Macpherson Report (1999)[i] into 'institutional racism' in London's Metropolitan Police Service marking a defining moment in English 'race' relations. This common emotional memory, together with these present political sensibilities, constitutes what de Rivera (1992: 2) has termed an 'emotional climate':

> The basic idea of emotional climate is relatively easy to grasp. I have in mind an objective group phenomenon that can be palpably sensed – as when one enters a party or a city and feels an atmosphere of gaiety or depression, openness or fear-only, as the term ''climate'' implies, I am less interested in temporary moods than in more pervasive emotional phenomena that are related to underlying social structures and political programs. I have in mind, for example, the climate of fear which existed in Chile during the Pinochet regime and which has recently changed to a climate of hope.

This is not to argue that emotions are determined by the abstract phenomenon that we call 'society', but rather that each society, conceived as a dynamic set of loosely bound social structures, practices and value formations, is marked by a common (that is, socially pervasive) emotional context that structures and influences collective and individual experience. Although major media organisations exert substantial control over the means of production, audiences have particular shared and personal emotional experiences that inform how they may interpret media content (an interpretive power, which, as discussed, is accentuated by the emergence of social media as a public platform to communicate one's opinion). To prioritise emotions challenges the harder-edged Foucauldian notion that people occupy subject positions inside systems of power/knowledge, reconceptualising media users as other than passive consumers subjected to the 'knowledge' of those media organisations that exercise 'power', but themselves may be 'active' users with power to negotiate meaning. The necessity, then, is to examine both the relationship between emotions and power, and to understand how the moral outrage caused by Blatter's scandalous transgression, for example, was facilitated by the new media ecology in which it occurred.

The Blatter racism scandal occurred at a specific historical conjuncture when, most significantly, issues of 'race' were heightened in England's popular imagination and, expediently, FIFA had been the subject of intense institutional government, sport, media and wider public criticism. In November 2011, the topic of racial discrimination occupied a salient place in England's emotional climate with the Stephen Lawrence trial (upon which the Macpherson Report was based) coinciding with several inquiries into alleged racism in English football involving Chelsea/England captain, John Terry[ii] and Liverpool player, Luis Suárez[iii] (the former scandal resulting in a formal investigation by the Metropolitan Police, an indicator of the severity of issues of racism in England). The Football Association (2011) 'alleged that Suárez used abusive and/or insulting words and/or behaviour towards Manchester United's Patrice Evra contrary to FA rules', but, more importantly, that 'this included a reference to the ethnic origin and/or colour and/or race of Patrice Evra'. Although Suárez denied the allegation,[iv] on 20 December 2011 he was warned as to his future conduct, fined £40,000, suspended for eight first-team matches and ordered to pay costs. The racism scandal was reignited following his eight-match ban when Suárez refused to shake Evra's hand during conventional on-field, pre-match greetings between their two clubs.[v] Blatter's racism scandal also corresponded with the emergence of what became known as the 'tram incident',[vi] where a female tram passenger was arrested in London for making racist comments to fellow passengers (ethnic minorities) on the tram. This latter incident, on the Croydon to Wimbledon tramlink, is particularly relevant to our discussion of social media given that it was composed (filmed on a smart phone), disseminated (uploaded) and consumed on various social media platforms. The clip was viewed on YouTube more than 124,000 in 24 hours (*Guardian*, 2011), generating outrage as public sentiments were 'focused', coordinated and inflamed by the

Twitter 'trend' (via the hashtag #MyTramExperience), which subsequently prompted police to investigate the incident and to arrest the woman in question.

Emotions, we contend, are fundamental to understanding public responses to Blatter's racism scandal. Situating English responses to the scandal within its emotional climate demonstrates that Blatter's claim was received in a context highly sensitive to issues of racial discrimination, in part explaining why English audiences were more affected by the scandal than those of comparable countries. But it should also be noted that there was already substantial, widespread hostility to Blatter in England after England gained only two out of twenty-two FIFA Executive Committee votes in its bid to host the 2018 World Cup, England's former Football Association (FA) Chairman Lord David Triesman and the *Sunday Times* alleged corruption in the process, while the FA attempted to obstruct Blatter's re-election to the FIFA Presidency in 2011, which was described by British Prime Minister David Cameron as "something of a farce" (Gibson, 2011). *The Sun*, Britain's best selling newspaper, drew on this existing anti-Blatter/FIFA sentiment when, during the racism scandal, it organised a petition dedicated to ousting him, presenting its position in an article entitled 'Let's splatter Sepp Blatter: Join Sun campaign to get rid of FIFA buffoon' (Millard et al., 2011). Here it can be seen that the existing current of opinion in England provided the atmosphere that sustained the social media campaign – and that it was also significantly stimulated by legacy media.

Social media could also be seen to alter the affective dynamics of the scandal, with public responses to these incidents on social media platforms signifying widespread moral outrage that arguably influenced authorities to punish the footballers more severely, and to arrest the passenger responsible for the tram racism scandal. Public sentiment, then, inexorably affected the power relationships of those implicated in the scandal (including commentators). For, if it had not been for social media and this case of 'citizen journalism' (Allan and Thorsen, 2009), and the collective emotions communicated on these online platforms, it is unlikely that the perpetrator of the tram racism scandal, for example, would have been brought to justice. By providing a public voice to those traditionally excluded from mainstream media, social media modify traditional hierarchies in some respects by representing a new form of 'people power'. In this sense, 'the medium *is* the message' ('the change of scale or pace or pattern' that a new invention or innovation introduces into human affairs). This is not to argue that the content mediated online is inconsequential, but rather that the emergence of social media corresponds to significant shifts in public communication (including emotional expression) and the distribution of communicative power. The introduction of social media, with their global, 'real-time' communication channels, provides a capacity for a broader spectrum of the *demos* (public) not only to respond, but to interpret and communicate the meaning of scandals, thereby challenging more traditional notions of coercive power exercised over passive subjects. It could, then, be proposed that social media are having a democratising effect on the public sphere by providing greater scope for those without formal access to media power to influence the meaning and visibility of media scandals.

New social media: A democratic initiative?

The 'new rhetoric of democratisation' briefly described above is defined by the notion of 'the people' reclaiming the Internet and taking control of its content - a kind of 'people's internet' (Beer and Burrows, 2007) as exemplified by the new 'mediated crowd' phenomenon that characterised many of the protest movements throughout 2011-2012 (Baker, 2011, 2012a). During the 'Arab Spring', for example, there were two million Facebook users in Tunisia (approximately one fifth of the population), ninety per cent of whom had access to a mobile phone (*BBC Two*, 2011). This putative 'democratic' shift implies a more collaborative, participatory public culture, where 'anyone' can get involved, be viewed or heard. If this were the case, it could, for example, bridge 'the divide' between the public and players produced by the corporate power structures that govern football (*Guardian*, 2012; Ruddock et al., 2010). While Foucault (1977) discussed the diffusion of power through the concept of governmentality, the separation of power (the ability to have things done) and politics (the

ability to decide which things are to be done) is increasingly evident in the media age (Bauman, 2011), with the recent protest movements understood by some as a response to the disparity between the 'respect' given to people's opinions online, and their complete 'disrespect' from established political powers (Hammersley, 2011). In such cases, social media have a significant impact on the relationship between emotions and power, empowering the *demos* by providing a social arena for emotional expression to those traditionally excluded from the political sphere. It is, nonetheless, important not to romanticise this 'space of respect', with practices of incivility such as 'trolling' and 'flaming' common in the relative anonymity of the online world, including those areas of it devoted to football fandom (Rowe et al., 2010).

Social media users also have greater capacity to influence public opinion than those operating in standard face-to-face interactions, given that media communication affords some anonymity and protection from traditional forms of censorship and policing (and, as noted above, facilitating greater degrees of incivility). A case in point is the recent racism scandal involving the physical and verbal abuse of a black English youth in police custody in the early aftermath of the 2011 English riots (Lewis, 2012). With the victim recording the racial abuse on his mobile phone, the incident helped precipitate another racism scandal involving a policeman allegedly assaulting a 15-year-old black boy in the custody area of an east London police station. The point here is not that claims of institutional racism in the police force are new, but that representing these men as victims of illegitimate policing on these emergent media made their emotional suffering impossible to ignore (see Baker, 2013). The role of social media here is significant, with the public dissemination of these racism scandals on various social media platforms helping to prompt investigations by the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), and multiple officers being suspended and possibly dismissed.

While social media could be said to democratise emotional expression in the public sphere, power relations nonetheless persist on these online platforms. Despite user capacity to participate in public debate on social networking sites, influential users in the form of politicians, celebrities, and even media organisations continue to dominate social media platforms, whether because of status, ready access to a range of media outlets or popularity (acquiring the most 'friends' on Facebook or 'followers' on Twitter, for example). Moreover, although as noted above, the Blatter racism scandal resulted in public calls for his resignation, the challenge to Blatter's power remained largely symbolic. As he ironically noted when discussing the credibility of allegations of bribery and corruption in FIFA, 'they [member associations] gave me the power and the confidence [to lead FIFA]' (Murphy, 2011), a power that extends beyond traditional forms of media into the new mediated public sphere. Thus, Blatter is not only representing his personal views on Twitter, but also those of the association (accumulating close to 241,000 followers on the social networking site). That hierarchies persist in this new media ecology is further exemplified by the fact that, on the day that Blatter claimed that there is no racism in football, the FA charged Suárez over the aforementioned alleged racial slur. More recently, the discrepancy between the power of football authorities and players on these media platforms has been demonstrated by the decisions of a series of football clubs to prohibit players from using social media services to express their opinions about their football club, team-mates or supporters, with players facing harsh fines and penalties for commenting on issues concerned with the game (*Guardian*, 2012).

The complex relationship between power and emotions on social media is also evident in the new surveillance strategies exercised on these online platforms, as is exemplified by the recent Fabrice Muamba racism scandal, in which Liam Stacey, a 21-year old Swansea University student, was reported for posting racially offensive comments on Twitter about the Conganese footballer Fabrice Muamba, shortly after he had collapsed with a cardiac arrest during the FA Cup quarter-final in March 2012. That the incident resulted in Stacey being suspended from his University, de-registered as a player with Treorchy rugby club, and sentenced to 56 days in prison counsels against viewing social media as a new public domain for unfettered emotional expression immune from power hierarchies. His lawyer stated that, 'He [Stacey] has been made an example of and surely this will do enough to

prevent others from acting in a similar way' (*BBC News*, 2012). The High Court Judge's description of the incident as 'extremely racist' and, thereby, 'extremely offensive', reveals that issues of 'race' have particular salience in England's emotional climate. It is also evident, regarding substantial prison sentences for using social media to encourage indictable offences during the 2011 UK Riots, that issues of power and surveillance remain fundamental to social media.

Therefore, while social media are integral to empowering and expanding the *demos* into what might be call a 'global village', it cannot plausibly be suggested that social media have completely empowered the powerless, or democratised emotional expression, with the online public sphere remaining highly exclusive, subject to technological error, and used by some authorities to censor democratic speech with an efficiency beyond that of traditional surveillance methods (Curran, 2011b). What is novel is not the democratisation of the public sphere, then, but the recognition that democracy can be enhanced through 'mediated' public communication (online and off), as is demonstrated by the abovementioned British racism scandals, many of which resulted in severe punishments and arrests. The importance of these online public spaces is that they establish a new mediated space for public debate, and new conceptions of society in general, through the process of reflexivity that accompanies technological innovation. The 'mediated crowd' represents such a process, with social media helping to shape public consciousness by situating users in the reflexive position of both subject and object (Baker, 2012b, 2013). Popular rhetoric that social media facilitate a so-called democratic public sphere, therefore, requires critical scepticism and interrogation, with our analysis of a series of contemporary race-related media scandals suggesting that, despite the impact of social media as conduits for widespread emotional expression, they also contribute to the formation of new hierarchies and social divisions that have the capacity to compromise democratic values in some respects.

Conclusion: The interplay of emotions and power in the new media ecology

In this paper we have argued that emotions and power are central to considerations of media scandals, with the public mediation of scandalous transgressions of public significance demonstrating that emotions and power are inexorably intertwined. We conclude by reflecting on the implications of the Blatter racism scandal for the analysis of the relationship between power and emotions in two dynamically different media sphere environments: the television studio broadcast that first attracted attention to his words, and the online social media networks that stimulated new symbolic spaces and affective modes of discursive exchange. While there has been a growing interest in emotions research, there remains a relative absence of such work regarding relations of power and domination. Twentieth-century sociological media theories tended to conceive audiences as subjects of media authorities and the passive recipients of media representations. Though such approaches largely discounted the emotional orientations of the audience (as a means to resist extant economic and political power structures) at a time when 'one-to-many' media dominated the media landscape, they are in any case less applicable to a twenty-first century media ecology in which scandals that challenge those structures of power can erupt outside the principal, formal media sites within the domain of social media.

There are at least three interrelated issues surrounding the Web 2.0 phenomenon that require sociological engagement: the changing relations between the production and consumption of mediated content; the mainstreaming of private information posted to the public domain; and the emergence of a new rhetoric of 'democratisation' (Beer and Burrows, 2007). This is not to suggest that Web 2.0 is an entirely democratising force. New social media are complex, ambivalent, dynamic, laden with tensions and subversions. Their proliferation means that they are of increasing sociological significance, and it is imperative to understand how their communicative relations are being constructed and, indeed, ushered in by existing and emergent discursive frameworks. We have argued that understanding the causes and effects of media scandals necessitates recognising that emotions play a crucial role in motivating thought and action, with the moral outrage regarding Blatter's scandalous transgression

emerging from a common 'emotional climate' (sensitivity to accusations of racism) and a prominent institutional grievance (held by the English government, football authorities and fans against FIFA as embodied by Sepp Blatter). Examining the implications of social media without analytical consideration of emotions would be technologically determinist, while assessing the effects of these new communication technologies without considering the role of power may lead to moral emotivism.

The Blatter racism scandal has been deployed as a starting point to explore the dynamics of power and emotions more generally within the environment of new social media (although the initial communicative 'meeting point' was within legacy media). It can be suggested that the development of social media may have the effect of decentralising power relations and facilitating socio-cultural change in a variety of ways, including stimulating new modes of social interaction through the technical capacity of media users to host, disseminate and debate information without primary reliance on mainstream media organisations. To date, however, established public and commercial media 'brands' continue to dominate the online world (Curran, 2011) and to stimulate the busiest discussions among social media (as in the case of the Tiger Woods scandal – see Rowe, 2011: 140). By initiating instant, mobile public communication, social media such as Facebook, Twitter and SMS can be high-speed vectors of scandal that exacerbate the distantiation of time and space that has already been much advanced by 'legacy' media. In operating at a global scale, social media are most effective as scandal 'coordinators' through hashtags and 'trends' (such as #MyTramExperience; #FIFA; #BlatterOut). At the same time, considerations of power and emotions articulate with variations in locality - what Duncan Watts (2006) terms 'social distance' – that condition the differential efficacy and relevance of scandals across locations (see Newman, et al., 2006). In connecting diverse, dispersed social networks and communities, new media 'publics' can be formed, making collective interaction more personal and direct, with popular scandals encouraging change in the affective domain where new social media are most advantaged within socio-political discourse. Easier access to the thoughts, feelings, and conversations involving major 'players' and interested constituencies may be gained than through conventional forms of gatekeeper-dependent media, although much of the content of everyday social media exchange consists of banal accounts of routine quotidian activities. Finally, social media promise to help democratise the public sphere because they make it harder, as Wikileaks has dramatically demonstrated (though, again, in cooperation with major news organisations like *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*), to suppress information. Users can now upload, share and debate issues via public forums and social networks, but they are also potentially exposed to 'mirroring' technologies of surveillance and detection.

It is important, therefore, to take into account how social media can be harnessed by the already powerful, either through appropriation by large information technology and media companies such as Google, Yahoo and News Corporation, or, as in the case of Facebook, becoming powerful *via* social media. While power is apparently decentralised in the mediated public sphere, new social media have not simply displaced traditional power structures in favour of free public communication in sport and other domains (Hutchins and Rowe, 2012). Despite the rhetoric of a democratised public sphere, the power of publicity (agenda setting and 'spin') remains a salient issue regarding social media. Traditional power structures persist and may, in fact, be reinforced by them. While the networked public sphere and social media are integral to public debate, a deeper knowledge of specific actors, dynamics and networks is necessary to understand how emotions and power inform the mediation of scandal and of other socio-cultural phenomena. Effective scandal management by organisational elites now requires engagement both with formal 'intermediaries' in the electronic, print and online media and with audiences (including 'accusers') via diffuse social media. It is important to consider the extent to which this practice demonstrates the democratising power of 'popular publicity' or, as in the case of the Blatter scandal played out on Twitter with his direct involvement, an opportunity for the already powerful to project their voices further, and so to reinforce their power in the affective domain of 'intimate', mediated communicative exchange.

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[i] On 24 February 1999, the Macpherson Report was published after a judicial inquiry found that the Metropolitan Police investigation into the murder of Stephen Lawrence (an 18-year-old black man murder in London in 1993 as part of an unprovoked, racist attack) was hindered by institutional racism: 'The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people' (Home Office, 1999).

[ii] Blatter's original comments came at a time when Chelsea captain John Terry was being investigated by the police and the Football Association over alleged racist remarks made to Ferdinand's brother, QPR defender Anton Ferdinand, in a recent game between the two sides (*BBC News*, 2011).

[iii] Blatter's racism scandal also coincided with another in English football in which Liverpool's Luis Suárez was charged by the FA for alleged racist comments towards Ferdinand's Manchester United team-mate, Patrice Evra. On Saturday 15 October 2011, during a match between Liverpool FC and Manchester United FC, Evra made a complaint about Suárez to the referee during and immediately after the game. The Football Association (FA, 2011) investigated Evra's complaint and, on 16 November, charged Suárez with misconduct. The charge brought is that Suárez used abusive and/or insulting words and/or behaviour (i.e. 'negro' and 'blackie') towards Evra contrary to Rule E3(1), and that this breach of Rule E3(1) included a reference to Evra's ethnic origin and/or colour and/or race within the meaning of Rule E3(2) ('the Charge').

[iv] According to Suárez, he used the word 'negro' in a way with which he was familiar from his upbringing in Uruguay. In this sense, Suárez claimed, it is used as a noun and as a friendly form of address to people seen as black or brown-skinned (or blackhaired).

[v] Despite subsequently making a formal apology during a television interview with *Sky News* (2012), Suárez was widely criticised for the incident, with Sir Alex Ferguson, Manchester United's manager, calling Suárez 'a disgrace' to Liverpool and suggesting that he should never play for the club again.

[vi] British Transport police said that a 34-year-old woman had been arrested on suspicion of a racially aggravated public order offence. The video footage, which sparked a Twitter trend with the hashtag #MyTramExperience on Monday, shows a woman complaining about ethnic minorities living in Britain. She starts by saying: 'What has this country come to?…with loads of black people and a load of fucking Polish. You ain't English either. None of you are fucking English. Get back to your own fucking, d'you know what?' (*Guardian*, 2011).