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# *A Multifaceted Approach to Emotional Sharing*

**Abstract:** *This article aims to explicate the concept of emotional sharing against the background of interactive and situated approaches to affectivity, and to contextualize emotional sharing within the broader context of emotion research. It brings together research on situated affectivity with the debate on collective emotion. Emotional sharing is defined via four requirements and distinguished from other phenomena in the broad field of collective emotion, especially from mechanisms of emotional convergence and other forms of affective we-experience. The paper makes use of the recently proposed concepts of affective scaffolding and affective arrangement to explore how emotional sharing is always enacted in socio-relational dynamics and embedded in socio-material contexts which enable, shape, and modulate the unfolding of emotional sharing and regulate who is likely to participate.*

**Keywords:** shared emotion; inter-bodily resonance; situated affectivity; affective scaffolding; affective arrangement; emotional convergence.

## **1. Introduction**

The aim of this article is to explicate the concept of *emotional sharing* against the background of interactive and situated approaches to affectivity, and to contextualize this concept within the broader context of emotion research. The understanding of emotional sharing developed here loosely follows Peter Goldie (2000), who adopted this concept from the phenomenologist Max Scheler (1954) and introduced it into current emotion research. The core idea is that emotional

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sharing involves two or more individuals who share the intentional directedness *and* the affective experience of an emotional episode. Emotional sharing, as a specific form of *affective we-experience* (Hanich, 2019, pp. 168–88), is sometimes confused with other forms and often not considered at all in the received literature. In line with the assessment that ‘we should acknowledge that the term “shared emotion” refers to a motley of overlapping phenomena that do not make up a single natural kind’ (Michael, 2016, p. 1), the concept of emotional sharing is meant to bring more conceptual clarity into the philosophical debate on collective affective intentionality. Moreover, it helps relating this debate to research on processes of emotion transfer and emotional convergence (Parkinson, 2011; 2020). Thus, the second main aim of this paper is linking various strands of emotion research. In particular, it brings together research on inter-bodily resonance (Fuchs and Koch, 2014; Mühlhoff, 2015) and situated affectivity (Griffiths and Scarantino, 2008; Colombetti and Krueger, 2015) with the debate on collective emotion (von Scheve and Salmela, 2014; Schmid, 2016). This makes manifest the crucial role the social and material environment plays in facilitating the synchronization of affective experience and, thereby, enabling individuals to experience emotions together. This issue has been mostly neglected in the philosophical debate on collective emotion.

This paper builds on an embodied and interactive approach which will be elaborated in Section 2. Next, I introduce a working definition of emotional sharing via four requirements that need to be met for an emotional episode to count as an instance of emotional sharing (Section 3). In the following section, I distinguish emotional sharing from other phenomena of social or collective affectivity, thereby showing how the concept of emotional sharing is contextualized in this complex field of research (Section 4). Finally, the last two sections discuss current research on inter-bodily resonance and situated affectivity in order to explore how emotional sharing is always enacted within specific socio-relational dynamics (Section 5) and embedded within specific socio-material settings (Section 6). It will be investigated how social and material contexts enable, shape, and modulate episodes of emotional sharing, thereby also regulating who is likely to participate. This underscores that the analysis of various forms of affective we-experience should be connected with investigations into the social, political, and technological conditions of shared affective experience. The paper ends with a short conclusion

summarizing the key findings and indicating some directions for future research (Section 7).

## **2. Towards an Embodied and Interactive Approach to Shared Affective Experience**

Developing a concept of emotional sharing is complicated by the fact that emotions are, arguably, ‘the most complex phenomena of subjective experience’ (Fuchs and Koch, 2014, p. 1). Corresponding to this complexity, there are numerous competing theories of what an emotion is. To simplify this highly complex field, researchers usually follow one of two broad strategies to reduce the experiential complexity into a simplified model. On the one hand, there are approaches that focus on cognitive components, discussing emotions primarily in terms of appraisals (Frijda, Kuipers and ter Schure, 1989; Lazarus, 1991; Scherer, Schorr and Johnstone, 2001). On the other hand, there are approaches that study emotions mainly in terms of physiological mechanisms (James, 1884; Prinz, 2004) and expressive behaviour (Ekman, 2003). Correspondingly, the two most frequently discussed processes accounting for emotional convergence in interpersonal settings are group-based social appraisal (Smith, 1993) and mimicry-based contagion (Hatfield, Cacioppo and Rapson, 1992; 1994).

In recent years, there have been significant attempts to overcome the dichotomy of cognitive theories and somatic feeling theories in emotion research. Within social psychology and the cognitive sciences, alternative mechanisms underlying interpersonal emotion transfer and emotional entrainment in social settings ranging from dyads to large gatherings have been discussed (Collins, 2004; Parkinson, 2011; 2020; Elfenbein, 2014). Within the philosophy of emotion, the dichotomy of cognitivist and somatic feeling theories has come under pressure by what one might want to call a phenomenological turn in philosophy of emotion (Goldie, 2000; Helm, 2002; Ratcliffe, 2005; 2008; Schmid, 2008; 2009; Slaby, 2008a,b). The gist of these approaches is that the intentional and the phenomenal aspect of an emotion cannot be separated. Emotions are ‘felt evaluations’ (Helm, 2001; 2002), evaluations that are immediately felt. They are at once evaluations and feelings or, in short, they are ‘evaluative feelings’ (Helm, 2009). It is impossible to consider emotions independent from the way in which they are felt without losing grip of their emotionality, just as it is impossible to consider emotions

independent from their evaluative character without losing sight of their intentionality.

Building on these trends, the aim of this article is to further develop the concept of emotional sharing within the framework of an embodied and interactive approach to affective intentionality. To begin with, we need to ask: what is an emotion according to the embodied and interactive perspective pursued in this paper? Let me sketch my answer by distinguishing the framework within which my proposal is embedded from the influential component process model of emotion (Scherer, Schorr and Johnstone, 2001; Scherer, 2005; 2009). According to the component process model, an emotion consists of five components: a cognitive component, having the function of evaluating objects and events; a neurophysiological component, which functions as system regulation and makes itself manifest in bodily symptoms; a motivational component, which prepares and directs action and shows itself in action tendencies; a motor expression component, which serves a communicative function and is predominantly visible in facial and vocal expressions; and a subjective feeling component, monitoring internal states of the organism and the organism–environment interaction and becoming aware in affective experiences.

The component process model emphasizes that emotions serve a world-disclosing function. Emotions are ‘relevance detectors’ (Scherer, 2005, p. 701). They make manifest what is relevant, meaningful, and significant in the environment. However, by restricting the disclosing function in the way the component process model does, one does not capture the full complexity of an emotion, for at least two reasons. First, emotions are never pure evaluations of the environment, as they always involve a self-evaluation and self-implication (Slaby and Stephan, 2008). An emotion does not only reveal something about a situation, it also reveals how it is *for me* to be in that situation. It makes manifest what is relevant to me, what is of concern for me. Thus, the intentionality of an emotion is of a two-fold nature: it discloses evaluative qualities of a given situation as well as the state of mind of the emoter in light of that situation. An emotion combines world-disclosure and self-disclosure, a felt evaluation of something and a felt self-evaluation. Second, the claim that the evaluation rests solely in the cognitive appraisal and is separated from the affective experience is based on an unjustifiably narrow understanding of feelings, according to which feelings are bodily sensations devoid of intentionality. Against this narrow notion of feeling, I follow Goldie

(2002, p. 242) in claiming that ‘emotional feelings are inextricably intertwined with the world-directed aspect of emotion, so that an adequate account of an emotion’s intentionality, of its directedness towards the world outside one’s body, will at the same time capture an important aspect of its phenomenology. Intentionality and phenomenology are inextricably linked’. Ratcliffe (2008, p. 35) further advanced this argument by suggesting that a bodily feeling does not need to have the body as its object. An experience can be made *through* bodily feelings, and nevertheless be *directed towards* something other than the body.

This leads to the core claim of the embodied approach to emotion within which this paper is embedded, namely that bodily feelings are not the by-products or effects of emotions, but the very medium through which emotions are constituted and experienced. More generally, emotions are constituted and experienced through *bodily resonance* (Fuchs, 2013), which includes all kinds of bodily sensations which ‘correspond, on the one hand, to autonomic nervous activity (e.g., raised heartbeat, accelerated respiration, sweating, trembling, visceral reactions), on the other hand, to various muscular activations, bodily postures, movements and related kinaesthetic feelings (e.g., clenching one’s fist or one’s jaws, moving backwards or forwards, bending or straightening oneself, etc.)’ (Fuchs and Koch, 2014, p. 3). In contrast to approaches that aim to dissect emotions into various components, this view maintains that the cognitive appraisal and the bodily experience are inseparable. Emotions are intentional and embodied; they are a form of affectively embodied intentionality (Helm, 2002). Moreover, the affective-intentional world-disclosure involves an inevitable self-implication, as it is always oneself who is affected (Slaby and Stephan, 2008). Finally, such an embodied approach allows one to emphasize that bodily resonance also plays a major role for the action readiness which is characteristic of emotions (Frijda, 1986). It is primarily the bodily arousal and muscular activation that makes us ready to act. ‘Emotion may thus be regarded as a bodily felt transformation of the subject’s world, which solicits the lived body to action’ (Fuchs and Koch, 2014, p. 4). Finally, we need to consider how emotions are regularly facilitated, modulated, and regulated by the natural, social, and technological environment. This will be addressed in Sections 5 and 6, which investigate how emotions are enacted in socio-material settings and enhanced or restricted by the specific arrangements of those settings. But before we proceed to the interactive and environmental dimension of emotional life, the

following two sections will further specify the concept of emotional sharing (Section 3) and distinguish it from other forms of shared affective experience (Section 4).

### 3. A Working Concept of Emotional Sharing

I propose the following working definition of emotional sharing: we should speak of emotional sharing in cases in which two or more individuals have the same type of emotion and share (a) the directness towards an object and (b) the concrete affective experience in such a way that the involved individuals are (c) aware of the plurality of part-taking individuals as well as (d) the togetherness of the experience. Hence, emotional sharing is defined via four requirements that are each necessary and collectively sufficient for a collective affective experience to count as an instance of emotional sharing. As I am relying on previous work here (Zahavi, 2015; Szanto, 2016; León, Szanto and Zahavi, 2019; Thonhauser, 2018), I am only summarizing the core ideas.

(a) *Intentionality*: What constitutes the intentionality of an emotion is highly contested within current debates. Some hold that emotions are similar to perceptions (Roberts, 2003; Prinz, 2004; Salmela, 2011), implying that they have a mind-to-world direction of fit. Others maintain that emotions are primarily motivational states (Scarantino, 2014; Deonna and Teroni, 2015), suggesting that they have a world-to-mind direction of fit. The embodied approach developed in the previous section claims that an emotion is a bodily felt evaluation of a situation involving a self-evaluation and a tendency to act, thus displaying both directions of fit (or, neither, if one prefers to say so). I take this to show that the notion of ‘direction of fit’ does not contribute to our understanding of emotion (Schmid, 2009, pp. 62f.). Instead, emotions — or affective states more generally — should be classified as a class of mental phenomena *sui generis* that cannot be reduced to the cognitive or conative type of intentionality (Helm, 2002, p. 27). Much more could be said about this. In the context of this paper, however, which is primarily concerned with the concept of *sharing* and not the nature of emotion, my aim is only to defend the following claim: regardless of how one precisely conceives of the intentionality of an

emotion (what an emotion is about), emotional sharing implies that two or more individuals share that aboutness.<sup>1</sup>

(b) *Affectivity*: For an emotional episode to count as an instance of emotional sharing, it is not sufficient that emotions are *directed towards* or *about* the same object. In addition, the involved individuals must also share the affective experience. In other words, emotional sharing implies *synchronic affective convergence*. Affective experience allows for various degrees of synchronization between individuals. As a consequence, emotional sharing should also be seen as a gradual matter rather than an on/off question (Salmela, 2012). In other words, emotional sharing comes in various degrees of bodily coordination and intensity.

(c) *Plurality*: The plurality requirement explicates that emotional sharing requires more than one participant, and it requires that partaking individuals are aware of the plurality of participants. Far from merging into a collective body or mind, individuals who are involved in emotional sharing are aware of each other as co-subjects of that affective experience.

(d) *Sense of togetherness*: In addition, emotional sharing also requires that individuals are aware of experiencing the emotional episode together. This does not imply that each individual needs to be aware of every other participant and experience a unity with her. The awareness of plurality and togetherness can also take the form of an open horizon, which will usually be the case in larger gatherings. For instance, audiences at sports events or political rallies can be said to be engaged in episodes of emotional sharing despite it being impossible for a single participant to trace all other participants (Thonhauser and Wetzels, 2019).

The thrust of this definition will become clearer in the following section in which the concept of emotional sharing is distinguished from other types of collective affective experience.

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<sup>1</sup> Following Goldie (2000, p. 193), who is broadly in line with the embodied approach to emotion outlined in the previous section, we can distinguish two cases. In some cases, the emotions of two or more individuals are about the same (token) thing; e.g. two parents sharing the love for their common child. But individuals might also share an emotion in cases where their emotions are about different (token) things; e.g. two parents sharing the love for their respective children. Both cases can count as instances of emotional sharing.

#### 4. Distinguishing Emotional Sharing from Neighbouring Phenomena

How does the concept of *emotional sharing* relate to other concepts of shared affectivity? To answer this question, let me note first that the term *sharing* is notoriously ambiguous. Following Echterhoff, Higgins and Levine (2009, p. 497), we can distinguish four meanings in which emotions might be said to be shared. (1) Sharing might mean ‘communicated or disclosed to others’; in that sense, emotions are shared when they are expressed by an emoter and perceived by an observer. (2) Sharing can also mean ‘divided up into portions’; this alludes to sharing in the sense of being distributed among individuals. (3) Sharing might signify ‘partaking in a consensus’, as in the case of individuals ‘sharing an opinion’; this does not imply that individuals are aware of the communality or that the communality is based on any interaction. Finally, (4) sharing might mean that something is ‘held and experienced in common’, which implies that there is awareness of the communality and an interactive process through which the communality is achieved. Let us have a look at each of these meanings and how they are used in current emotion research.

(1) *Sharing as ‘communicated or disclosed to others’*: Over the last three decades there has been a growing body of research on the social sharing of emotions (Rimé *et al.*, 1991; 2020; Rimé, 2009). According to its basic definition, ‘social sharing involves: (1) the re-evocation of the emotion in a socially shared language; and (2) at least at the symbolic level, some addressee’ (Rimé *et al.*, 1991, p. 438). The social sharing of an emotion can take the form of a direct communication in which an individual openly speaks about an emotional episode to others, or more subtle forms in which the addressee might only be present in a symbolic form, e.g. when writing a letter. It has been suggested that the social sharing of emotions not only serves crucial social functions, but is so integral to the emotional process that it should be considered a basic component of an emotion (Rimé, 2009). These are intriguing findings contributing to our understanding of the interactive nature of emotions and the social functions they serve (Wilutzky, 2015). However, it is obvious that this branch of research addresses sharing according to the first meaning. This can be related to an important distinction in phenomenological accounts of interpersonal emotional experience, namely the distinction of empathy, sympathy, and sharing (Scheler, 1954; Stein, 1989; Zahavi and Rochat, 2015; Thonhauser, 2018). Following this distinction, cases of



sensing the feeling of another individual (empathy), or having sympathy for that individual, do not count as cases of emotional sharing in the stronger sense defended in this paper. Empathy and sympathy are cases of individual emotions that are caused by and directed towards the emotions of other individuals, not cases of affective we-experience in which several individuals experience an emotion together.

(2) *Sharing as 'divided up into portions'*: There is one prominent proposal suggesting that sharing an emotion should be understood in the sense of it being divided up among several individuals, namely Schmid's (2008) token-identity account of shared emotion. Schmid offers the following examples of what it means for something to be *genuinely shared*: 'Consider the case in which I propose to share a bottle of wine with you. Certainly, I do not thereby suggest that you and I each open a bottle, the two bottles being of the same vintage, or brand' (Schmid, 2009, p. 69). The same goes for sharing other items like a car: 'The point is to use *one and the same (token) car together*. The idea is this: one car, many users, one cake, many pieces, one apartment, many inhabitants, and so on, and so forth. This is what I will call the straightforward sense of sharing' (*ibid.*, p. 69). However, this supposedly straightforward sense of sharing leads to a problem for Schmid's account. If we divide a cake into portions, each individual only eats her piece. Similarly, if we pour out a bottle of wine, each individual only drinks her glass. This, however, cannot serve as the sense of sharing that is required by Schmid's account (Thonhauser, 2018, pp. 1005f.). In a later paper, Schmid suggests that we need to envision a *participatory sense of sharing* 'in which participation does not *dissolve*, but rather *strengthens* the whole to which the parts are parts' (Schmid, 2014, pp. 12f.). But this has not satisfied critics who doubt that the token-identity account offers a plausible notion of affective we-experience (León, Szanto and Zahavi, 2019; Martens and Schlicht, 2018). However that may be, I submit that the second meaning of sharing is not relevant in the field of shared affective experience.

(3) *Sharing as 'partaking in a consensus'*: As already indicated in Section 2, current research in psychology and cognitive science is focused mainly on the processes potentially accounting for emotional convergence in interpersonal settings. The two processes most prominently discussed are mimicry-based contagion (Hatfield, Cacioppo and Rapson, 1992; 1994; Hatfield, Rapson and Le, 2009) and group-based social appraisal (Smith, 1993; Smith, Seger and Mackie, 2007;

Smith and Mackie, 2015). Researchers in both camps tacitly assume that to share an emotion means that an emotion is ‘felt simultaneously by a large number of individuals’ (Goldenberg, Saguy and Halperin, 2014, p. 582). Thus, researchers working in those fields of research use the term sharing according to the third meaning. A suggestion regularly to be found in the literature is that ‘group-based emotions tend to be shared within a group (such as Americans or university students), and shared even more strongly by members who identify more with the group’ (Smith and Mackie, 2015, p. 351). This is a prototypical example of the third meaning of sharing. That group-based emotions tend to be *shared* within a group like university students means that they are *distributed* among individuals belonging to that category. It does not imply that this distribution is based on any interaction, or that individuals are aware of their communality. It has been shown that interaction among group members and awareness of similar concerns, appraisals, and emotions might strengthen group-based concerns and thus increase the likelihood of similar group-based appraisals leading to similar group-based emotions (Yzerbyt, Kuppens and Mathieu, 2016). However, group-based emotions can also occur under the condition of no interaction whatsoever.

Moreover, many assume that the sharing of group-based emotions by group members who are in close physical proximity to each other is best explained by emotional contagion (Moons *et al.*, 2009, p. 750). Indeed, the mimicry-based model of emotional contagion, introduced by Hatfield, Cacioppo and Rapson (1994), ‘has almost become a dogma in cognitive science’ (Dezecache, Jacob and Grèzes, 2015, p. 297). Recently, however, the plausibility of this model has been questioned. Most importantly, it has been pointed out that there is little empirical support for the mimicry-based model of emotional contagion (Parkinson, 2020). First, it is unlikely that the display of an emotion by the sender always and automatically elicits the same emotion in the recipient, e.g. ‘the perception of another’s display of anger is likely to trigger fear and submission, not anger’ (Dezecache, Jacob and Grèzes, 2015, p. 298). Second, empirical findings ‘strongly suggest that emotional mimicry depends on a prior implicit interpretation process rather than direct matching of movements’ (Parkinson, 2020, p. 3). Thus, in contrast to the traditional view according to which emotional contagion happens in a ‘relatively automatic, unintentional, uncontrollable, and largely unconscious’ way (Hatfield, Cacioppo and Rapson, 1992, p. 153), there is growing evidence that contagion involves some form of appraisal (Elfenbein, 2014). This is

supported by new studies showing that the transfer of emotion is modulated and regulated by social factors (Wrobel and Imbir, 2019).

The important distinction to be made in the context of this paper is the following: whereas psychological research on emotional contagion addresses *mechanism of emotional convergence*, emotional sharing constitutes a form of *affective we-experience*. To avoid further confusion, let me add that there is also a sense in which philosophers within the phenomenological tradition use the term emotional contagion to label a form of affective we-experience (Hanich, 2019, pp. 175–78).<sup>2</sup> According to that view, *emotional contagion* is supposed to only transmit the quality of an emotion without its directedness towards an object. By contrast, *emotional sharing* implies that the affective experience *and* the aboutness of that experience are shared. In other words, in an episode of emotional sharing, the involved individuals not only display convergent affective experiences, they are also directed towards the same object.

(4) *Sharing as ‘held and experienced in common’*: It should be clear by now that the concept of *emotional sharing* addresses the sharing of emotions in the fourth sense. It means that an emotion is ‘held and experienced in common’, which implies that the communality is constituted by interaction and accompanied by awareness thereof. According to received literature on group-based emotions and emotional contagion, sharing can either be caused by the cognitive basis of an emotion (the group-based emotions of several individuals are based on similar group-based appraisals) or by the automatic process of emotional contagion. This leads to the conclusion that affective sharedness is either located exclusively in cognitive processes or exclusively in physiological processes. The concept of *emotional sharing*, by contrast, helps to overcome the dichotomy implied by those two approaches. It addresses emotional communality which is based on social interaction in close physical proximity *and* consciously experienced by the involved individuals. Let me reiterate though that the concept of emotional sharing does not address mechanisms of emotional convergence (I submit that it is compatible with different mechanisms of inter- and intra-group coordination), but rather describes a form of affective we-experience.

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<sup>2</sup> For a critical discussion of how emotional contagion is traditionally defined within phenomenological research *cf.* Thonhauser, (2020).

These conceptual distinctions can be further elaborated when considering the social sharing of emotions, group-based emotions, and emotional contagion in relation to the four requirements for emotional sharing introduced in the previous section.

First, the *social sharing of emotions*, as defined by Rimé *et al.* (1991), does not meet any of the four requirements of emotional sharing. This is the case because it is not meant to describe an affective we-experience, but rather the disclosure and communication of an emotion episode. However, the social sharing of emotions might not only lead to attention, empathy, and sympathy on the part of the addressee, but also to different forms of affective we-experience (Rimé, 2009; Rimé *et al.*, 2020).

Second, *group-based emotions* only fulfil, if at all, the first of the four requirements. A group-based emotion does not require any synchronization of affective experience, it does not require a plurality of participants, and it does not require an awareness of such plurality or a sense of togetherness. This is the case because experiencing a group-based emotion does not depend on social interaction and does not imply that others are experienced as co-subject of the emotional episode. Indeed, it does not even require that any others are present at all. For a group-based emotion, it is sufficient that an individual self-identifies as member of a social category and experiences an emotion based on the social identity this self-identification evokes (Smith, 1993).

Finally, *emotional contagion*, understood as a mechanism leading to *emotional convergence*, does not meet any of the requirements, for the same reason as in the case of the social sharing of emotions. Understood as a type of affective we-experience, emotional contagion does not satisfy the first requirement. Emotional contagion — if there is, in fact, such a form of we-experience — might be defined as a case in which the expressive behaviour alone leads others to ‘catch’ an emotion, without it being the case that the emotions of the involved individuals are about the same object. In other words, emotional contagion might be understood as a case of shared affective experience based on ongoing interactions establishing and maintaining bodily coordination and emotional entrainment, but without shared intentionality. Classical phenomenological accounts hold the view that emotional contagion is defined by the absence of an awareness of plurality and a sense of togetherness (Scheler, 1954; Zahavi, 2015). However, this has recently been disputed (Hanich, 2019, pp. 175–8)

and is a topic for further debate. For the purpose of this paper, it suffices that the difference to emotional sharing has been elucidated.

### 5. Interactive Dynamics of Emotional Sharing

After this explication of the concept of emotional sharing, the remaining two sections will discuss the interactive and environmental dynamics of emotional sharing. In this section, I focus on the *intercorporeal dynamics of affective experience*, showing how ongoing processes of *inter-bodily resonance* and the sedimentation of *habitual interaction patterns* and *affective styles* enable, shape, and modulate emotional sharing. In the subsequent section, I turn to the role that socio-material contexts play in the facilitation, modulation, and regulation of emotional sharing.

Reflections on the body are sometimes considered as reasons to be doubtful about the possibility of emotions being shared (Connor, 2013). A combination of two intuitions leads to that assessment: first, the idea that groups cannot have a body, that they do not live under the condition of embodiment; second, that having a body is seen as necessary for experiencing an emotion. Combining these two intuitions, it seems obvious that groups cannot experience emotions in anything other than a metaphorical sense. However, I believe that argument to be misleading (Thonhauser, forthcoming). Most importantly, emotional sharing does not presuppose a group body as the owner of the emotion. Instead, emotional sharing is constituted by inter-bodily resonance. Hence, the concept of emotional sharing is well-served by interactive accounts of intentionality and affectivity, which combine Merleau-Ponty-inspired branches of phenomenology with core ideas of enactivism (Gallagher, 2001; De Jaegher and Di Paolo, 2007; Fuchs and De Jaegher, 2009; Colombetti, 2014). The key idea is that ‘primary intersubjectivity’ is a ‘set of embodied practices and capabilities’ (Gallagher, 2001, p. 83), which are both developmentally primary and continue to be the primary way of interacting with others.

An embodied and interactive approach to emotional sharing implies a developmental and a facilitation claim. The *developmental claim* holds that it is a background of common habituations which enables emotional sharing. The *facilitation claim* suggests that emotional sharing requires ongoing ‘online’ interaction to be established and maintained. This is the same as to say, in terms of situated affectivity, that emotions are scaffolded ‘both synchronically, in the unfolding of

a particular emotional performance, and diachronically, in the acquisition of an emotional repertoire' (Griffiths and Scarantino, 2008, pp. 437f.) Let us take a closer look at these two claims.

### *5.1. The synchronic facilitation of emotional sharing in inter-bodily resonance*

The facilitation claim states that emotional sharing is enabled and supported by ongoing interactions that make possible rhythmic coordination and emotion entrainment in collectives of various sizes. The recent affective turn in various disciplines underscores the importance of studying the local interactions underlying bodily synchronization and emotional entrainment in real-life settings (Slaby and von Scheve, 2019). This is especially vivid in the Spinoza-Deleuze-inspired theory of *affective resonance* (Mühlhoff, 2015), and in the theory of *interaction rituals* (Collins, 2004), inspired by Durkheim (1964) and Goffman (1967). These approaches emphasize the intrinsically social nature of emotion and the positive effects of being in emotional synchrony with others (Páez *et al.*, 2015). Recent empirical studies also provide ample evidence of the value of participating in collective gatherings of emotional entrainment and shared flow: 'At the individual level, it increases well-being and happiness; at the intra-group level, it boosts collective efficacy and collective self-esteem; at the social level, it enhances social cohesion and integration even with a broader group; and finally, at the symbolic level, it affects positive and self-transcendence beliefs about the benevolence of people and world in general' (Zumeta *et al.*, 2016, p. 717). In contrast to the rather static perspective on shared emotions dominant in philosophy of emotion, these findings suggest that it is crucial to relate the concept of emotional sharing to empirical investigations into the dynamical mechanisms leading to affective convergence in various social settings. In this paper, I account for those findings within an embodied and interactive framework to emotion inspired by the Merleau-Pontian branch of phenomenology. In particular, I will employ the notion of inter-bodily resonance, which I consider a promising way to account for the interactive dynamics facilitating emotional sharing in local interactions.

The embodied approach introduced in Section 2 claims that emotions are constituted by *intra-bodily resonance* (Fuchs and Koch, 2014). The gist of this proposal is that an emotion necessarily involves bodily processes like facial expressions, muscular tension, and voice

modulation, and that an emotion is, at least partly, constituted by the feedback received from those bodily processes. At the same time, those bodily processes are the *expression* of an emotion — through various forms of bodily resonance, an emotion becomes visible to the outside. In other words, the bodily processes co-constitutive of an emotion, like a tense facial expression when angry, are at the same time what makes an emotion perceivable to others. Most importantly, even when individuals are not actively perceiving each other's emotions, the intra-bodily dynamics taking place in each body, through their expressive dimensions, potentially affect other bodies and might elicit corresponding intra-bodily processes in them. If several bodies come to enact similar affective expressions, this might lead to a process of mutual facilitation and enhancement, a 'circular interplay of expressions and reactions running in split seconds and constantly modifying each partner's bodily state, in a process that becomes highly autonomous and is not directly controlled by the partners' (Froese and Fuchs, 2012, p. 213). Whenever bodies engage in such dynamics of mutual affecting and being affected, they 'become parts of a dynamic sensorimotor and inter-affective system that connects both bodies by reciprocal movements and reactions' (*ibid.*, p. 213). Thus, *intra-bodily resonance* is intertwined with *inter-bodily resonance*. This suggests that it is the norm rather than the exception that the processes relevant for the facilitation and regulation of emotions are socially distributed across the interplay of several individuals.

The concept of inter-bodily resonance allows us to address the interactive dynamics involved in the facilitation, modulation, and regulation of emotional episodes. Such processes are ubiquitous in so far as bodies are regularly immersed into dynamics of affecting and being affected. Most importantly for the context of this paper, inter-bodily resonance is a promising way of accounting for the convergence of affective experience that is a necessary — although not in itself sufficient — condition for emotional sharing.

### *5.2. The diachronic scaffolding of emotional sharing through bodily habituation*

A reflection on how affective convergence comes about in local interactions needs to be complemented by a diachronic perspective. We need to account for the development that individual bodies have undergone to enable them to engage in dynamics of shared affective

experience. This has been studied from various perspectives. In sociology of knowledge it is researched in terms of *shared cultural knowledge* (Knoblauch, 2017). Practice theory studies it as *processes of subjectivization* which enable individuals to become competent interaction partners (Brümmer, 2015). Enactivist and ecological approaches address the issue in terms of *shared affective affordance structures* (Krueger and Colombetti, 2018). Finally, phenomenology discusses this topic in terms of *shared bodily habitualization* (Wehrle, 2013). In this section, I address this issue via a discussion of two key ideas introduced in Merleau-Ponty's (1945/2012) *Phenomenology of Perception* and adopted (sometimes explicitly, other times implicitly) in current research.

To begin with, Merleau-Ponty introduced the notion of the *habitual body* in an aim to go beyond a dualism between conscious action and automatic behaviour (Weichold, 2015). According to Merleau-Ponty, we need to understand the body as the vehicle and medium of action and perception. More specifically, Merleau-Ponty points to the task of studying how the sedimentation of habits and skills acquired through past activities enables the body to know its way around the world (Colombetti, 2016). Bodily habits and skills are neither a matter of full conscious control nor a matter of mechanical responses to stimuli. They involve a degree of conscious monitoring but are usually accomplished without conscious awareness. For example, once we have acquired the capacity to walk, we do not have to think about the position and movement of our limbs, while the movements of our limbs are flexible enough to allow us to walk on various terrains, with variable speed, etc. Fuchs understands an individual's body memory as the totality of 'bodily capacities, habits, and dispositions as they have developed in the course of one's life' (Fuchs, 2012, p. 10). He distinguishes six forms of body memory, two of which are relevant in the context of this paper, as they pertain to the domain of social interaction. First, there is 'intercorporeal memory', which Fuchs (*ibid.*, p. 14), following Stern (1998), understands as tacit relational knowledge, that is, bodily knowledge about the most basic ways of interacting with others. This tacit knowledge is acquired from early childhood on and enables the most basic forms of social interaction. Second, we need to consider 'incorporative memory', which Fuchs (2012, p. 15) understands as the ability to act according to social roles and expectations. This includes bodily skills and dispositions developed through imitation, e.g. the habitus of one's family, social stratum, or culture. Both forms of embodied memory are developed from early childhood



on and shape one's social appearance and interaction patterns by being actualized when a suitable situation occurs.

According to Merleau-Ponty (1945/2012), embodied memory crucially involves the sedimentation of *affective styles*, that is, characteristic manners of comportment (including ways of speaking, bodily postures, gestures) that are typical for an individual, but also common among a socio-cultural group (Colombetti and Krueger, 2015; Colombetti, 2016). An individual's affective style includes 'not just their customary emotional responses and movement repertoire, but also their characteristic patterns of attention and habits of interpretation' (Maiese, 2016, p. 4). It is a specific "'style" of experiencing the world', which is 'sedimented in the body' (*ibid.*) over time. Affective styles are dynamic patterns that are shaped in interactions with the social and material environment. They become incorporated into the habitual body but remain susceptible to ongoing modification. Moreover, they can change depending on social context (Colombetti and Krueger, 2015), e.g. the same individual might display different affective styles when with her family, in the classroom, or with her sports team.

The notion of an affective style can be linked to recent studies in social psychology showing the role of cultural display rules for emotion regulation and emotion recognition (Matsumoto *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, sociological research has shown that *feeling rules* govern how we ought to feel in given situations. Hochschild (1979) investigated how individuals engage in *emotion work* to cope with feeling rules. In other words, individuals actively work to manage their feelings so that they fit with social expectations. Von Scheve (2012, p. 1) suggests that the sociological notion of emotion work can be linked with models of emotion regulation in social psychology (Gross, 2007) to investigate how 'emotion regulation is systematically shaped by culture and society'. Building on these strands of research, Slaby (2016) suggested that feeling rules, which are distributed among a socio-cultural group, are prior to and formative of the affective styles of individuals. In other words, individual affective styles are always enacted against the background of culture-specific *repertoires of emotion*: 'Emotion repertoires endow individuals and collectives with the agency and security to display, negotiate, and thus regulate felt experiences in socially and culturally appropriate ways' (Poser *et al.*, 2019, p. 241).

Now, the crucial claim in the context of this paper is the following: if individuals are socialized into the same repertoire of emotion, this

enables them to not only smoothly comprehend each other's emotional expressions, but also to enact emotional episodes together. Repertoires of emotion serve a connecting function in social life by stabilizing patterns of affective interaction and, as such, they are crucial for the facilitation, but also the regulation, of emotional sharing. Building on this claim, it is reasonable to assume that bodily habituations and emotional sharing tend to form self-sustaining circles. Participation in certain episodes of emotional sharing leads to the development and stabilization of corresponding affective styles within the relevant repertoire of emotion. On the other hand, bodily habituations into specific repertoires of emotion limit with whom emotional sharing is likely. This is the case because the habituation of a body within a specific repertoire of emotion implies a disposition to be more prone to engage in dynamics of emotional sharing with individuals who are familiar with the same repertoire. In other words, a repertoire of affective-intentional experience sediments itself through ongoing interaction in specific socio-relational and socio-material settings, which in turn facilitates further engagement in dynamics of inter-bodily resonance with individuals who belong to the same emotion culture. As a consequence, socio-cultural proximity can be seen as an enabling and limiting factor for emotional sharing (Ahmed, 2014).

## 6. Socio-Material Context of Emotional Sharing

Focusing too narrowly on the synchronic mechanisms leading to emotional synchronization in local interactions risks ignoring the social, political, and technological conditions that factor into the shaping of episodes of shared affective experience. Taking into account the diachronic scaffolding of emotional sharing through bodily habituation was an important step towards an approach that is better equipped to address those dimensions. In this section, I advance further in this direction by contextualizing the concept of emotion sharing within the framework of situated affectivity. In terms of this debate, one can say that the previous section focused on how emotions are intersubjectively scaffolded, whereas this section focuses on the material scaffolding of emotions. We might distinguish again between synchronic and diachronic forms of material scaffolding. In reality, however, all those dimensions of affective scaffolding intersect. Thus, the distinctions I am introducing here are mainly for analytic purposes.

Let us briefly consider the core idea behind the notion of affective scaffolding (Colombetti and Krueger, 2015). This conception brings together the situated perspective on emotion (Griffiths and Scarantino, 2008) and the framework of the scaffolded mind (Sterelny, 2010). The key idea is that emoters rely on external resources to enhance their affective experience and engineer their environment to meet their needs. Thus, scaffolding addresses how affective experience depends on the environment and how individuals actively modify their environment to influence their affective experience. Scaffolding has two key ingredients: first, the coupling (that is, mutual influence and constraint) between an agent and its environment; second, the active manipulation of the environment by an agent, which makes manifest ‘the extent to which affectivity is not just a matter of *passively* undergoing bodily and experiential changes, but also of *actively* modifying one’s environment for the sake of one’s affective life itself (to sustain, amplify, dampen it, etc.)’ (Colombetti and Krueger, 2015, p. 1160).

Colombetti and Krueger focus on cases in which an agent seeks to actively and consciously manipulate the environment (*ibid.*). Slaby (2016) criticizes this narrow focus on simple cases that fit what he calls a user-resource model; that is, cases where an individual employs a device (like a smart phone) to modify her affective experience. Instead, Slaby suggests turning to more complex situations, ‘scenarios in which a social domain draws individuals into certain modes of affective interaction’ (*ibid.*, p. 1). In other words, an emoter might not always be aware of how the environment is scaffolding her affective life, and she might not be the one who does the manipulation. The environment might also be manipulated by others for purposes that are beyond the interests of the influenced individual (think of the design of supermarkets to increase sales or the design of workplaces to improve productivity). More specifically, Slaby is interested in what he calls ‘mind invasion’ (*ibid.*); that is, instances in which a social domain, so to say, ‘hacks’ individuals to turn them into exponents of the domain-specific repertoire of emotion, often against the individual’s prior orientations. Slaby suggests that this is what regularly happens at the workplace, in sports teams, in academic departments, and many other spheres of social life.

Slaby, Mühlhoff and Wüschner (2017) have recently proposed the concept of *affective arrangement* to account for how specific socio-material settings frame local, affect-laden interactions. This concept is meant to shed light on the ‘unique constellation of a particular affect-

intensive site of social life' (Slaby, 2019, p. 116). Such *affect-intensive sites of social life* are settings which appear to be particularly effective in drawing individuals into dynamics of emotional sharing. Slaby, Mühlhoff and Wüschner (2017) identify sports stadiums, concert arenas, places of worship, or the sites of political rallies, but also more mundane locations like corporate offices as such sites. The specific settings of those sites have the power of drawing individuals into inter-bodily dynamics that make it hard to resist the emergence of shared affective experience. Taking into account the materialization of emotion cultures into socio-material settings, and the scaffolding of emotional sharing within those settings, is crucial for understanding the social, political, and technological conditions of emotional sharing.

To conclude this line of argument, let me link those considerations with the issue of how emotional sharing is environmentally scaffolded. I will do so with help of an example. Consider how the complex inter- and intra-group dynamics among football audiences are materialized into the organization of stadiums. A stadium enables a large gathering to jointly attend to an unfolding event and, at the same time, to monitor what is going on within the audience itself. Moreover, in many sports the audience is divided into supporters of the competing teams, thereby stipulating agonistic forms of intergroup interaction while enhancing levels of intra-group coordination and coherence (Knoblauch, Wetzels and Haken, 2019; Thonhauser and Wetzels, 2019). As a consequence, following a game in a stadium facilitates episodes of emotional sharing within specific sectors of the audience. Those episodes often serve a communicative function, both towards the in-group and towards agonistic parts of the audience. This gives an indication of how the complex and multifaceted emotion culture of football is diachronically and synchronically scaffolded by the socio-material organization of a stadium, including the stadium architecture, the divisions of fans across the ranks, as well as specific repertoires of emotion among sub-groups of the audience. If one wants to comprehend what is going on at an affect-intensive site like a stadium, one needs to take into account the entire complexity of the socio-relational and socio-material contexts enabling, shaping, and modulating the emotional dynamics taking place at that site.

## 7. Concluding Remarks

To conclude this paper, let me summarize the key findings and discuss some questions for future research. As shown in Section 3, the received literature typically locates the possible sharedness of an emotion either in physiological mechanisms or in cognitive processes, depending on the underlying conceptualization of emotion. By contrast, the embodied and interactive perspective supported in this paper, via its understanding of emotions as felt evaluations constituted by intra- and inter-bodily resonance, is better suited to account for the bodily *and* the cognitive dynamics involved in episodes of social or collective affectivity. Against this background, the notion of *emotional sharing* refers to cases in which the partaking individuals share the aboutness of an emotion in a situation of inter-bodily resonance. Such a focus on the connection of emotional entrainment and collective intentionality is well-suited to overcome dichotomies of cognition and affect, or of intentional experience and causal mechanism in emotion research.

Furthermore, this paper has explored how emotional sharing is facilitated or restrained by the specific arrangement of the social and material environment. This suggests that an analysis of emotional sharing needs to be combined with considerations about the social, political, and technological conditions of shared affective experience. This is a corrective to most philosophical work on collective emotion, which mostly ignores the socio-material setting within which affective we-experience is embedded. On the other hand, research on mechanisms of emotional convergence is usually rather unspecific about the forms of shared affective experience which are facilitated through those mechanisms. Thus, both branches of research will profit from a perspective that combines a nuanced taxonomy of different forms of affective we-experience with a focus on the interactive and material conditions factoring into the shaping of shared affective experience.

A final remark: this paper builds on an embodied and interactive approach to emotion inspired by the Merleau-Pontian branch of phenomenology, connecting the concept of emotional sharing with research on situated affectivity, using the notion of inter-bodily resonance as a link. It remains to be explored in more detail how this approach relates to other frameworks focusing on the embodied and interactive dynamics of affective life, e.g. to a Durkheimian or a Deleuzian understanding of affect.

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