

# Tara Skadegaard Thorsen:

## Interpersonal Validation in Collective Emotions

### RESUMÉ

I denne artikel foreslås det, at interpersonel validering af kollektive følelser afhænger af en persons mulighed for at dele følelser med andre medlemmer af en gruppe. Det gør det muligt, at kollektive følelser, der haves i isolation, kan blive interpersonelt valideret. For at udvikle hovedargumentet præsenteres der i artiklen to påstande:

Først foretages en konceptuel afklaring af forskellene mellem kollektive følelser, delte følelser og andre gruppefølelser. Det argumenteres, at kollektive følelser adskiller sig fra, og ikke kan reduceres til, delte følelser. I forlængelse heraf argumenteres det, at både delte og kollektive følelser er specifikke typer gruppefølelser. Herefter skelnes mellem kollektive følelser og andre gruppefølelser, som eksempelvis smitsomme følelser. Slutvis beskrives, hvordan kollektive følelser er strukturelt relateret til delte følelser.

Dernæst introduceres en skelnen mellem, hvad der i artiklen kaldes objektivt gruppemedlemskab og intersubjektivt gruppemedlemskab. I sporet af Joonas Taipales adskillelse af gruppeidentitet fra gruppemedlemskab (2017) tager denne artikel fat i Taipales begreber med en yderligere distinktion under gruppemedlemskab, inspireret af Edith Steins definitioner af "community" (fællesskab/kommune) og "society" (samfund) (2000). Intersubjektivt medlemskab relaterer til Steins begreb om "community" og har at gøre med, hvordan andre mulige medlemmer i en gruppe ville anerkende en persons medlemskab i gruppen.

Interpersonel validering af kollektive følelser udlægges hermed som afhængig af en persons intersubjektive gruppemedlemskab, hvilket igen afhænger af, hvordan mulige andre anerkender en person som medlem af en gruppe. Forståelsen af mulige andre er inspireret af Dan Zahavis læsning af Edmund Husserls diskussioner om intersubjektivitet (Zahavi 1997; 2017).

Hovedargumentet for artiklen er hermed, at kollektive følelser kan valideres interpersonelt, hvis mulige andre medlemmer af en gruppe ville dele følelser med den person, der har en kollektiv følelse.

**ABSTRACT**

This article proposes that interpersonal validation in collective emotions depends on a person's possibility to share emotions with other members of a group. This allows for interpersonal validation of collective emotions in isolation.

To develop the main argument, the article presents two claims:

First, I introduce conceptual distinctions between collective emotions, shared emotions and other group emotions. I argue that collective emotions are different from and cannot be reduced to shared emotions. I further argue that both shared emotions and collective emotions are specific types of group emotions. Finally, I distinguish between collective emotions and other group emotions, such as contagious emotions, in order to finally clarify how collective emotions are structurally related to shared emotions.

Second, I introduce a distinction between what I call objective group membership and intersubjective group membership. To do so, I follow Joonas Taipale's distinction between group identification and group membership (2017), where I continue to distinguish between what I call objective and intersubjective group membership, inspired by Edith Stein's distinction between community and society (2000). Intersubjective membership relates to Stein's concept of community and depends on how other possible members of a group recognize a person's membership in that group.

I argue that interpersonal validation of collective emotions depends on a person's intersubjective group membership, which in turn depends on how possible others conceive of you as a member of a group. My understanding of possible others is inspired by Dan Zahavi's reading of Edmund Husserl's discussions on intersubjectivity (Zahavi 1997; 2017).

The main argument in the article is thus that a collective emotion is interpersonally validated if possible other members of a group would share that emotion with the person having a collective emotion.

**EMNEORD**

Collective emotions, group membership, shared emotions, intersubjectivity

**KEYWORDS**

Kollektive følelser, gruppemedlemskab, delte følelser, intersubjektivitet

## Introduction

If<sup>1</sup> you were politically active, you would still be part of your political group even when you were not around your peers. But if you were placed in isolation, and then had a collective emotion with your community, could your emotion be interpersonally validated by them?

In this article I propose that interpersonal validation in collective emotions occurs through the possibility to share emotions with possible other members of a group. By introducing an example of a person with collective emotions in isolation, I explore a paradigmatic example in which collective emotions cannot be explained through a person's environment.

The article examines the subjective experience of collective emotions. It limits itself to interrogating the possibility for interpersonal validation of collective emotions. In this sense, the article is a study into when and how collective emotions are had between several people.

I introduce two claims that are necessary for developing my main proposal. The first provides a clarification of the thematic context in which the main proposal will be advanced. I propose conceptual distinctions between collective emotions, group emotions, and shared emotions. I understand shared emotions as emotions shared between persons that are mutually aware of each other, where there is some spacio-temporal proximity between them, at least in their most basic cases<sup>2</sup>. I understand collective emotions as possible through group identification. I understand group emotions as the umbrella term of emotions that are group based, including shared and collective

---

<sup>1</sup> This article was only possible through the incredible and thorough advice, guidance and dialogue I have received. Thank you, Andreas Sidenius for your thorough comments and discussions on the paper. Thank you, Mira Skadegaard for your invaluable feedback and support. Most importantly, thank you Felipe León, without whom this article would never have been possible. Your advice, guidance and friendly discussions have shaped both the article and my thinking. Thank you to the anonymous reviewers, whose reviews cleverly challenged assumptions and shortcomings of the article.

<sup>2</sup> My understanding of shared emotions is informed by Felipe León, Dan Zahavi and Thomas Szanto's article "Emotional sharing and the extended mind" (2016).

emotions, and further emotions that are had with others through the influence of one's social or physical environment (Hatfield et. al. 2014; Hess et. al. 2014; Krueger 2015; 2018). These distinctions serve as conceptual clarifications, and in this way do not mean to suggest that different group emotions cannot influence each other or occur together. I merely distinguish between them in order to differentiate distinctive features of collective emotions from other group emotions.

Second, I introduce a clarification of group membership which constitutes part of the answer to the main question of the article. I propose that membership in groups can be both objective and intersubjective and build on Edith Stein's distinction between community and society (2000). Objective membership means factual membership, as is the case when delimiting a group of people, for example those taller than 170cm. Intersubjective membership means membership that depends on other members' validations of a person's membership in a group.

The article is divided into two sections. Section one focuses on delimiting the experiential criteria that should be met for an emotion to be collective. Here I establish the way in which I find collective emotions to be based on group identification. I further introduce the concept of togetherness, which informs a distinction between coincidental aggregates of similar emotions in groups, and emotions that are experienced together as a group. The preliminary delimitation of collective emotions introduced in section one shows in which way one can distinguish between an interpersonally validated collective emotion, and a collective emotion that is not interpersonally validated. In section two I then propose that interpersonal validation can occur through group membership. I propose a distinction between objective membership and intersubjective membership and argue that collective emotions can be interpersonally validated through intersubjective membership.

The article is structured around the guiding hypothetical example of a person having a collective emotion in isolation. This serves as a paradigmatic example of collective emotions where a person's emotional state cannot be explained through their social or physical surroundings. Isolation is used interchangeably with confinement. This means I do not consider the differences of experience when a person is simply isolated from the specific group that they have an

emotion with, and situations where a person is in solitary confinement. The reason for this is that for my purposes, it is not necessary to discuss degrees of isolation. It is relevant, however, that a person is isolated from the group she has a collective emotion with. It is important to note, though, that there are several factors that can influence a person's self-experience when in solitary confinement, such as losing the ability to differentiate between oneself and others (Guenther 2013; Gallagher 2014). Because of this, I restrict my use of isolation to account only for hypothetical cases where a person is not suffering from the consequences of solitary confinement. Isolation is understood here in terms of a person who is isolated from her community and entities that could influence her feeling with her community.

## 1. Collective emotions

Collective emotions are emotions that a person experiences having with a group or a collective that she identifies herself as part of. That is, collective emotions require group identification, and some sense of togetherness with the group she identifies with.

### 1.1 *Collective emotions, shared emotions and group emotions*

There is no consensus in the field of shared and collective emotions, regarding what the conditions of possibility for them are, nor which phenomena count as collective emotions. Some scholars argue that when a person has a collective emotion, she is emotionally affected by her social environment's emotional attitudes, also specified by some as emotional contagion (Hess et. al. 2014; Hatfield et. al. 2014). Others argue that shared and collective emotions are molded by a person's social and physical environment (Krueger 2015; 2018). Moreover, many scholars do not distinguish between shared and collective emotions (Salmela 2014; Krueger 2015; 2018; Thonhauser 2018).

I distinguish collective emotions both from shared emotions and from what I call group emotions. My account of collective emotions develops from Felipe León, Dan Zahavi and Thomas Szanto's proposed account of shared emotions (2016). They argue that shared emotions are realized through reciprocal other-

awareness and constitutive integration. Reciprocal other-awareness means that individuals are mutually aware of each other. This ensures that a shared emotion is experienced as being had together with others and as being had by more than one person. Constitutive integration means that a person's emotional experience is constituted through integration of that other person's emotional experience: "[...] the subjective character of an individual's emotional experience can extend to and incorporate the subjective character of another individual's emotional experience, such that both stand in a relationship of constitutive integration." (León et. al. 2016, sect. 1).

León et. al. distinguish between shared and collective emotions, as shared emotions depend on reciprocal other-awareness. They argue that collective emotions can't depend on this, since collective emotions are not had with some individual others with whom a person can be mutually aware, but with many, not necessarily individually differentiated members of a group. Collective emotions and shared emotions thus differ in the following way: shared emotions occur between individuals who are reciprocally aware of each other and constitutively integrate the emotional state of the other person as a condition for their own (León et. al. 2016). Collective emotions are had by individuals with members of a group, without there necessarily being reciprocal other-awareness.

Imagine a person who has been isolated from her community through imprisonment, due to political actions she has performed with her community. While in isolation, and when thinking of the situation of her community, she experiences collective emotions like anger and grief from the unjust actions that have been taken against them.

If an account of collective emotions is to cover phenomena such as a person having collective emotions in isolation, then reciprocal other-awareness cannot be a necessary condition. This means that if collective emotions can be had in isolation, they cannot depend on mutual awareness. Mutual awareness, however, may still influence the way in which a person has a collective emotion.

While shared emotions and collective emotions are different, they also have traits in common. Both are emotions that are experienced as being had with others. When I am happy with my best friend, I feel it as *us* being happy

together, and not just her and I respectively being happy (Drummond 2002; Zahavi 2015; León 2018). Shared emotions and collective emotions are both incidences of more than mere coincidences of similar emotions (Salmela 2014). For example, imagine a café full of sad people. At this café, people go to end relationships. Despite the very individual nature of each person's emotional state, there is a great collection of sad feeling within one group of people; namely people who have just broken up with their partners at this specific cafe. This being the case, the accumulation of sad individuals still does not account for a collective emotion (not to mention shared emotions) since no individuals at the café are sad together. In this way, there is a difference between on the one side, coincidental similarity of emotions, and on the other, shared emotions and collective emotions.

From the account developed here of collective emotions, and based on the account introduced by León et. al. on shared emotions, I further distinguish collective emotions from other group emotions. I understand group emotions to be an umbrella term for emotions people have with others, including shared emotions and collective emotions. Moreover, group emotions also account for what some scholars call emotional contagion (Hatfield, Carpenter and Rapson 2014; Hess et. al. 2014; Salice and Taipale 2015).

Emotional contagion means that the emotional states of some person/persons can influence another person's emotional state through a contagious effect. Many scholars argue that emotional contagion acts as a precursor to collective emotions (Hatfield et. al. 2014). But if collective emotions in general should also include collective emotions that are had in isolation, then contagion cannot be a necessary precursor of collective emotions. A person in isolation will not be able to have collective emotions that derive from contagion, since that person is isolated from anyone they could "catch" an emotion from. Similar to mutuality, contagion might still influence the experience of a collective emotion, while it is not a necessary condition for collective emotions.

Edith Stein puts forward an argument against reading collective emotions as a result of contagion in her book *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities* (2000). To Stein, collective emotions have a distinct intentional and phenomenal structure (Stein 2000), which can be described as a "we-mode" (Szanto 2015). Contagion, in contrast, is intrinsically self-centered (Zahavi 2015). In this way,

a collective emotion does not derive from contagion since contagion does not require a person to identify with others for them to catch an emotion.

To exemplify this distinction between contagion and collective emotions, imagine a person at a football match, with a crowd of people who are yelling excitedly at the game. She is not a fan and doesn't care much about football, but she gets strongly affected by the atmosphere at the stadium and feels excited. When she is out of the vicinity of the yelling crowd, she no longer feels any excitement and doesn't really understand why she was so excited in the first place<sup>3</sup>.

This can be deemed emotional contagion. Importantly, the visitor at the football match doesn't identify with the crowd she catches an emotion from. That is, while she does in the situation have an emotion with the excited collective of fans, she isn't having it as a person who identifies with the collective. In this way, contagion does not necessarily imply identification with a collective since contagion can occur without it.

So far, I have distinguished between shared emotions, collective emotions, and group emotions such as contagion. Shared emotions are had between subjects who are reciprocally aware of each other. Collective emotions are had by individuals who, by identifying with a group, experience collective emotions. Group emotions is the umbrella term for all emotions that are related to groups, including shared emotions, collective emotions, and contagious emotions.

At this point, collective emotions are conceptually distinguished from other group emotions. From this distinction it is possible to ask what the conditions of possibility are for collective emotions to be had in isolation.

## *1.2 Group identification*

For shared emotions, a necessary precursor for feeling with each other is that subjects identify with each other (León et. al. 2016). But in collective emotions, a person identifies with a group rather than an individual.

---

<sup>3</sup> This example was similarly introduced by Salice and Taipale (2015).



Group identification is different than identification in shared emotions as it is mainly self-referential. This means that when I identify with a group, I identify myself as fitting into that group. This self-referential side to group identification can also be explained through self-categorization. When a person self-categorizes, it means she understands herself as part of a specific category. In group identification, this means categorizing herself to be part of a specific group.

Group identification does not mean that a person identifies with individually differentiated members of a group (Tajfel 1984; Salice and Taipale 2015; Edith Stein 2000; Szanto 2015). It means that she identifies with the group as such.

In Joonas Taipale's 2017 article on the structure of group identification, Taipale argues that a person identifies with groups both through identification with a group type, and a group token (Taipale 2017). A group type is an abstracted ideal of a group member. This means that when a person identifies with a group, her identification is in many ways an identification with the group type, involving a pursuit of becoming the group type. Further, when she identifies with other members, she identifies with them through the way in which they are related to the group type, i.e. as tokens of the group type (Taipale 2017).

Group identification involves both self-categorizing as a member of a group and identifying with other members of a group in relation to the group type. Take the person in isolation. If she identified with her community while in isolation, she might be able to also feel anger or grief with them. That is, her identification makes it possible for her to feel that she has an emotion together with her community. In this way, group identification is a condition for collective emotions. That is, group identification involves a person categorizing herself as part of a group and allows her to experience an emotion as one she has together with that group. However, in contrast to togetherness in shared emotions, the togetherness a person experiences in group identification does not merit interpersonal validation, as it is mainly self-referential. In the following, the challenge of togetherness in group identification is further examined.

### 1.3 Togetherness

I have argued that the togetherness a person experiences in collective emotions occurs through group identification, explaining how a person can have a collective emotion in isolation.<sup>4</sup> However, this account of togetherness does not explain how collective emotions can be interpersonally validated.

For both shared and collective emotions, togetherness should make up the difference between a random collection of similar emotions and having emotions together. But while togetherness in both shared and collective emotions have that in common, togetherness plays different roles depending on whether an emotion is shared or collective. In shared emotions, togetherness occurs through reciprocal other-awareness (León et. al. 2016). In collective emotions, togetherness is experienced through group identification, which is self-referential and, in this way, does not ensure that anyone else mutually feels together with a person. This leads to a problem of interpersonal validation of collective emotions.<sup>5</sup>

In his 2015 article “Collective Emotions, Normativity and Empathy: A Steinian Account”, Thomas Szanto gives an account of collective emotions relying on some aggregation of shared emotions. Szanto does not want to reduce collective emotions to shared emotions, but he also recognizes that interpersonal reference might depend on some group-related sharing of emotions.

Szanto argues that members of a group can have collective emotions if there is what he calls a shared emotional culture, involving a shared appraisal pattern that relates to the group with which a collective emotion is had. Further, it is necessary that members of a group are mutually aware to have collective

---

<sup>4</sup> Togetherness is not necessarily emotional. You can act or intend or build things with others, without feeling with them, while still being together. As an example, togetherness plays a role when two people collaborate on building a house (Tuomela 2005), or when they walk together (Gilbert 1990).

<sup>5</sup> Togetherness is not only possible through identification or group identification. Imagine for example the person at a football match who did not identify with the crowd of fans that she was having an emotion with. While she did not have a collective emotion with them, she still felt together with the crowd. She wasn't individually cheering. In this sense, togetherness is a structural element of group emotions. In collective emotions, specifically, I argue that togetherness occurs through a person's identifying with a group.

emotions. This can either be directly through perception, or indirectly through some mediated manner, where cultural artefacts or similar informs shared appraisal patterns (Szanto 2015 pg. 16-18). His account is informed by Edith Stein's argument that collective emotions must have shared emotions embedded in them (Szanto 2015 pg. 3; Stein 2000, pg. 130-137).

Szanto's account of collective emotions inspires the one proposed in this thesis. However, following his account, a person in isolation cannot have collective emotions, since she cannot perceive others directly or indirectly. In this sense, Szanto's account does not cover phenomena of collective emotions in isolation. If one is to respect the proposition that a person can have a collective emotion in isolation, then collective emotions can't demand reciprocity in the same way that shared emotions can. I argue that togetherness can also be experienced through group identification. If I identify with a group, it is possible that I could feel together with them. However, togetherness in group identification is self-referential and as such cannot inform as to whether other people are also feeling with some other person. A person's identification with or having emotions with a group does not ensure that the members of a group have emotions with her.

Togetherness in group identification cannot account for interpersonal validation in collective emotions. In the following section I examine the possibility for interpersonal validation of collective emotions through a person's group membership.

## **2. Intersubjectivity in group membership**

When a person has a collective emotion, she experiences that emotion as one that other members of a group would have with her. But having her emotion based on group identification does not ensure that any other individuals of a group would recognize her as a group member. Group identification is a person's subjective identification with a group and does not imply that other members of a group would also feel with her.

In this section, I look at the role of intersubjectivity in group membership and the relationship between group membership and group identification. First, I

introduce Taipale's definition of both group identification and membership (Taipale 2017). Thereafter, I discuss a specific type of group membership that I argue is constitutive of interpersonal validation in collective emotions, by drawing on intersubjectivity as discussed by Dan Zahavi (1997; 2015; 2017).

Taipale argues that group membership is a matter of fact, as it is objective or institutional. Group identification, in contrast, has to do with a subject's identification with a group, and is in this sense subjective. Though group identification is only subjective, it also fosters group conformity, which in turn allows people who group identify to behave more like group members (Taipale 2017 pg. 4). In the following, I discuss the notion of membership. I concur that objective and institutionalized membership are ways to have membership in groups, and I add that membership might also be more than a matter of fact. I argue for an account of group membership that includes intersubjectivity, to properly account for interpersonal validation in collective emotions.

This section introduces a proposed distinction between what I call objective membership and intersubjective membership, inspired by a distinction between society and community<sup>6</sup>, developed by Stein in *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities* (2000). While a person is a member of a society due to institutionalization (i.e. objective membership), one is a member of a community due to the organizing force of living together (i.e. intersubjective membership) (Stein 2000 pg. 130; Szanto 2015).

Based on the account given of intersubjective membership in the following section, I end with this proposal: If possible other members of a group were to share an emotion that a person has with them, then that person has an interpersonally validated collective emotion.

---

<sup>6</sup> In the English translation of Stein's book "gemeinschaft" and "gesellschaft" is translated to "community" and "association" (Stein 2000). Thomas Szanto (2015) translates this to community and society, as does Gerhard Thonhauser (2018). I follow Szanto and Thonhauser's translation here. Stein borrows her distinction from the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (2017).

## 2.1 Group membership

Taipale (2017) argues that group identification describes the subjective experience of identifying with a group while group membership is the relation a person has to a group, regardless of her experience of what her relation to them is. That is, a person can identify with a group without being a member of a group, and similarly, she can be a member of a group without necessarily identifying with that group.

According to Taipale, group membership is understood as a person's factual belonging to a group, which is objective and/or institutional (Taipale 2017). Taipale exemplifies this with babies, who are, unbeknownst to themselves, still members of the human society, as they are protected as such through the law. Taipale's description of group membership does not go much further than this, as he focuses on the structure of group identification. Here, I take up group membership and distinguish between on the one side what I call objective membership, and on the other, intersubjective membership. Intersubjective membership, I argue, makes interpersonal validation of collective emotions possible.

Sometimes membership is straightforward and uniform, as when a person is a member of a political party, or when she has a passport confirming her nationality. Other times, criteria for membership in groups can be blurry, or even contradictory depending on the member you ask. That is, membership is not always settled, as it is not always objective facts or institutionalized practices that determine whether a person is a member of a group or not.

I develop my account of objective and intersubjective membership by turning to Stein's distinction between society and community. While societal membership can be explained as a mechanical, rational union, communal membership is a natural, organic union of individuals living with each other (Stein 2000, pg. 130). In this way, for pure societies (which, she argues, does not actually exist anywhere), every single member is lonely. But in communities, they live together.

This means that for group membership, the factual, mechanical membership shaped through institutions or similar, doesn't posit that people are together. This account of societies informs my concept of objective membership. For

example, objective membership can be objective in the sense that it could mean membership in a group of all people taller than 170cm. A person who is an objective member of this group does not have her membership develop from her living with, or organically developing a relation to other people taller than 170cm. It only means that she, objectively speaking, belongs in that group.

Intersubjective membership is inspired by Stein's account of communities. Here, "living with" each other defines and shapes communities. Intersubjective membership might be experienced through political events, where people come together over their shared beliefs in political agendas, and thus develop their group membership through their ways of living together and developing beliefs and opinions together, which in turn informs what membership in a group means.

Intersubjective membership is understood here as membership depending on other people's recognition of a person's membership in that group. That is, intersubjective membership is not a question of how people are institutionally grouped together. It is a question of how individuals would or wouldn't recognize other individuals as members of a given group.

For collective emotions, a person's group identification should match their intersubjective membership. It is not necessary that it matches objective membership, as only intersubjective membership involves other people. If my emotion is to be had with other members of a collective, it only matters that other members of that group recognize me as a member that they would have emotions with.

Consider a person who has been expelled from a political party and is thus no longer an objective member. She still feels collective anger with the party when they lose an election sometime after her expulsion. Could this person still have an interpersonally validated collective emotion despite her expulsion? For her collective emotion to be interpersonally validated, someone must have the emotion with her. If she was expelled despite different members disagreeing on whether she should be so or not, it would mean that, while some members would not have an emotion with her, others would. In this sense, her emotion could be interpersonally validated, as some members, based on their perception of her membership, could feel anger with her.

On this basis, I put forth three proposals of what intersubjective membership entails:

First, intersubjective membership is less settled than objective membership. Objective membership is a question of either being or not being a member. Intersubjective membership is not decided by one fact, but a plenitude of other people that interpersonally validate a person's membership. They can have contrasting opinions, but some group members can still validate one person's collective emotion. This leads to the next point:

Collective emotions do not require consensus from all possible members. On the contrary, a person can have a collective emotion with only a few other members of a group that would possibly validate her membership. In this sense, whether a person is an intersubjective member of a group does not depend on the number of people who would or would not validate that person's membership.

Finally, collective emotions do not depend on objective membership, but on intersubjective membership. That is, irrespective of a person's objective membership, if some other members of a group could feel with her based on how they perceive her group membership, she could have collective emotions with them. Intersubjective membership in this way plays an essential role for interpersonal validation, while objective membership does not matter to collective emotions.

In sum, independently of a person's subjective identification, membership establishes who is part of a group and who is not. Intersubjective membership, specifically, makes it possible for a person to have interpersonally validated collective emotions with a group.

At this point, it is relevant to look at who the people validating a collective emotion through intersubjective membership are. My proposal is that intersubjective membership is structured through *possible* others' recognition of a person's membership in a group. I develop my argument to lean on possible others in group membership in the next subsection.

Intersubjective membership allows for some interpersonal reference, which we have so far lost when moving from shared emotions to collective emotions. This

type of interpersonal reference is different from that of shared emotions as it depends on possible others in intersubjective membership, rather than mutual awareness. This leads me to examine how possible others can validate something. I draw on Dan Zahavi's work on formal intersubjectivity in the following in order to inspire a proposal of how possible others partake in collective emotions.

## *2.2 Horizontality of emotions*

In his 1997 Article "Horizontal Intentionality and Transcendental Intersubjectivity" Dan Zahavi discusses the role of the other in Husserl's definition of intersubjectivity. He specifically looks at the way in which intersubjectivity participates in how things meaningfully appear to a subject. That is, when a person perceives a thing, that thing is perceived not just as the surface or perspective presented to a person, but as a full, meaningful entity. This meaning with which an object appears is an intersubjective meaning pertaining to the horizon of a thing.

To Zahavi, intersubjectivity in horizons is explained as follows: when a thing appears for a subject, that thing appears in a meaningful way due to how possible others could perceive the thing from different perspectives. In this way, a thing's meaningful appearance is about other possible subject's perception of that thing, which takes part as the horizon of an actual subject's perception of a thing.

What I wish to emphasize by this is the role of the possible other. The horizon of a thing is made up of possible other perceptions of it, even though those other perceptions are not necessarily realized by anyone. They are simply possibilities.

Similarly, for interpersonal validation of collective emotions in isolation, one cannot depend on actual others' perceptions of a person's suitability as a member of a group. But a person could have her membership related to the horizon of herself, as an object to others. This would mean that a person's horizon, with regard to her membership in a group, depends on how possible others would validate her as a member.



For example, if I were to identify as a philosopher, that identification could match my membership if possible others would recognize me as a philosopher. My intersubjective membership in a group thus depends on possible others. But exactly who are those possible others determining my membership? Is it just any other person, or is it specifically a possible other member of the group I am a member of? Imagine I was seen by some as a philosopher, even though I never studied philosophy. Simultaneously, no educated philosopher recognizes me as a philosopher. Still, having gained a reputation as a writer through publishing popular literature, calling it philosophy, many people from the general society do think of me as a philosopher, not distinguishing me from any other educated philosopher.

To have a collective emotion with educated philosophers would require that the members of the collective recognized me as a member if we were to feel together. In this way, I cannot have a collective emotion with other educated philosophers without both identifying myself as a philosopher and having educated philosophers recognize me as a member. At the same time, group membership without collective emotions does not have to be settled only by other members. Possible others that would see me as a philosopher could affect what membership I have. Such a membership would only be limited, as other members would not feel together with me. In this sense, any possible others can influence what groups I am a member of, but this membership is only communal in the sense Stein puts forth, as membership where people can feel and be together if possible other members also recognize one's membership.

For the person in isolation, she can have an interpersonally validated collective emotion if interpersonal validation depends on possible other members of a group. If possible other members of her community would recognize her as a member, then her collective emotion could be interpersonally validated, seeing that the possible members would also share that emotion with her.

This suggests how collective emotions contribute to defining and delimiting membership in groups as it is negotiated by members of a group. Collective emotions have been researched with a focus on the influence that collective emotions towards other groups have on members of those other groups (Tajfel 1984). However, in this account, it is intragroup relations that are examined. This is so because the possibility of having interpersonally validated collective

emotions does not depend on possible others in general, but on possible members of a group<sup>7</sup>.

In sum, while collective emotions have to do with possible other members, the horizon of a person as a member of a group can have to do with any possible others. But the influence of possible others that are not themselves members of a group is limited and does not account for intersubjective membership, as they cannot validate a person's membership to allow them to behave and feel with other members of that group. Consequently, at this point, we can define intersubjective membership in collective emotions as being established between possible group members. A person's horizon involves possible other members. Their possibility to have a collective emotion with her by recognizing her as a group member makes up her intersubjective membership.

Turning back to isolation, if collective emotions are interpersonally validated through possible other members, then collective emotions do not require any actual others to validate a person's collective emotion. Collective emotions could in this way be had in isolation, if possible other members of a group would have that emotion with her. That said, would collective emotions not still require some level of actualization to be real? I understand this to mean that even if only one person were ever to actually have a collective emotion, it is still interpersonally validated if possible other members would have that emotion with her.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> The notion that collective emotions depend on possible other members of a group invites an examination of how members of a group together negotiate group membership. That is, while it might be possible to establish membership for people who are not themselves members of a group, collective emotions could affect other people's definitions or stereotypes, taking over the defining power of who is a group member and who is not, and what such members might feel. At the same time, it also invites an examination of what dynamics make members of a group exclude other people as non-members through not feeling with them.

<sup>8</sup> I argue that interpersonal validation of a collective emotion does not have to be realized, but I cannot argue that a person's membership in a group shouldn't be. This would require further research into the criteria for establishing intersubjective membership.

### *2.3 Ambiguities*

In this subsection, I engage with an ambiguity arising from this account of interpersonal validation in collective emotions, introduced in the previous subsection, regarding how membership is established if there is no uniform tendency among possible others of recognizing membership.

How do collective emotions influence group membership? Turning again to the example of a political party member, imagine that she has publicly spoken against the political line of the party, which has led to discussions of whether she should be excluded from the party. Simultaneously, the party is being publicly scrutinized by other politicians for something unrelated, which is why she feels collective anger about the scrutiny. Her collective emotion would be interpersonally validated even though some wouldn't agree to that validation. In this way, collective emotions participate in establishing membership. That is, if one member of a group validates another person's collective emotion, then other people who are members of that group, whether they themselves would validate an emotion or not, are part of the collective with which a person feels. That is, collective emotions are not democratic; it is not necessarily a question of how many people in a group would have an emotion with another person based on group membership. It is more a question of whether some members would. This means that collective emotions participate in establishing membership in a rather specific way, namely as negotiations. That is, who one person would recognize as a member can be contradicted by others, making a person an intersubjective member of a group, even if some other members wouldn't agree. While it might sound like a contradiction in terms, this possibility might offer an insight into what the role of the possible other in membership does, and how it differs from shared emotions.

To better understand what this means, it can be related to reciprocity in shared emotions. Sharing depends on actual reciprocation with anyone, while for collective emotions, the possible others one feels with is restricted to possible members of a collective. For example, I can share an emotion with a random person in an elevator without ever having to group identify with some common group. The only condition is that I can recognize the other person as a "you" to "me", and that they can reciprocally recognize me as such (León, et. al. 2016; Zahavi 2015).

When I have a collective emotion, I don't have it with just anyone. Instead, my emotion is limited to the possible members of group that I identify with. While I cannot distinguish them individually, interpersonal validation of my emotion occurs through the possibility that some members would have that collective emotion with me, by also recognizing me as a member of that collective.

### **3. Conclusion**

In this article, I distinguish collective emotions from both shared emotions and other group emotions like contagion. I argue that shared emotions are different from collective emotions in the following way: shared emotions are structured on reciprocal other-awareness, ensuring that they are had with actual individual others. Collective emotions do not depend on reciprocal other-awareness. Instead, collective emotions rely on group identification, and they are interpersonally validated through a person's intersubjective group membership. In this sense, interpersonal validation of collective emotions is structured on the possibility of sharing emotions with group members, without this leading to collective emotions being reduced to an aggregate of shared emotions. This does not mean that collective emotions cannot involve members being mutually aware, or even sharing emotions in a group. It only means that mutual awareness and sharing are not necessary for collective emotions.

This proposed account of collective emotions differs from other accounts, such as accounts relying on emotional contagion. I argue that emotional contagion is a group emotion, but it is not necessary for collective emotions. Since collective emotions depend on group identification, they are possible even in situations where a person cannot experience emotional contagion. This does not mean that contagion cannot influence how collective emotions are experienced. It only means that contagion is not necessary for collective emotions.

Collective emotions are based on a person identifying with a group, but this does not ensure that a collective emotion is interpersonally validated. Collective emotions are interpersonally validated depending on whether possible members of a group would share emotions with a person. Such a possibility depends on what I call intersubjective membership, which is the

type of membership that is determined by whether other possible members of a group would recognize a person as a member of that group. I distinguish intersubjective membership from objective membership, where objective membership is one of facts or institutions, and intersubjective membership is membership that depends on other possible members of a group's recognition of a person's membership in that group.

My distinction between intersubjective membership and objective membership is inspired by Edith Stein's distinction between communities and societies. The proposed account of intersubjective membership is inspired by Dan Zahavi's development of formal intersubjectivity, as inspired by Edmund Husserl's phenomenology. My account of collective emotions is both inspired and developed from Felipe León, Dan Zahavi and Thomas Szanto's account of shared emotions.

As a concluding remark, it should be emphasized that this account of collective emotions is a proposal of a structure of the way collective emotions are interpersonally validated, which can also account for collective emotions that are had in isolation. I recognize that some might question whether collective emotions can even be had in isolation. I also recognize that this account directly contrasts with some accounts of collective emotions. But it also further develops other accounts. In this way, my proposition does not develop ideas from a field of consensus on collective emotions. My hope is that it can be used as a clarification of the different ways group emotions might occur.

This article leaves open a few questions that are worth examining further. One question I find especially interesting is that of who the possible other is in collective emotions. For instance, can a person have her collective emotion interpersonally validated by possible other members of a group who are no longer alive, or who will become members in the future? This question might clarify or challenge the role of possibility set forth in this article.

## References

- Drummond, John J. 2002. "Forms of Social Unity: Partnership, Membership, and Citizenship." *Husserl Studies* 18: 141–156.
- Gallagher, Shaun. 2014. "The Cruel and Unusual Phenomenology of Solitary Confinement." *Front. Psychol.* 5: 585.
- Gilbert, Margaret. 1990. "Walking Together: A Paradigmatic Social Phenomenon". *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 15 (1): 1-14.
- Guenther, Lisa. 2013. *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and Its Afterlives*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Hatfield, Elaine, Megan Carpenter and Richard L. Rapson. (2014) "Emotional Contagion as a Precursor to Collective Emotions." *Collective Emotions*, ed. Christian Von Scheve and Mikko Salmela: chp. 8. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hess, U., S. Houde and A. Fischer. 2014. "Do We Mimick What We See or What We Know?" *Collective Emotions*, ed. Christian Von Scheve and Mikko Salmela: chp. 7. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Krueger, Joel. 2015. "The Affective 'We'." *Phenomenology of Sociality*, ed. Thomas Szanto and Dermot Moran: chp. 16. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Krueger, Joel. 2018. "Music as affective Scaffolding." *Music and Consciousness II*, ed. David Clarke, Ruth Herbert and Eric Clarke. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- León, Felipe, Thomas Szanto and Dan Zahavi. 2016. "Emotional Sharing and The Extended Mind." *Synthese*. DOI 10.1007/s11229-017-1351-x.
- León, Felipe. 2018. "For-me-ness, For-us-ness, and the We-relationship." *Topoi*. DOI 10.1007/s11245-018-9556-2.
- Ray, Devin G.; Diane M. Mackie, and Eliot R. Smith. 2014. "Intergroup Emotion: Self-Categorization, Emotion, and the Regulation of Intergroup Conflict." *Collective Emotions*, ed. Christian Von Scheve and Mikko Salmela: chp. 16. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Salmela, Mikko. 2014. "The Functions of Collective Emotions in Social Groups." *Institutions, Emotions and Group Agents*, co-edited by H. B. Schmid and A. K. Ziv: chp. 10. Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media.
- Salice, Alessandro and Joonas Taipale. 2015. "Group-Directed Empathy: A Phenomenological Account." *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 46: 163–184.
- Schmid, Hans Bernhard. 2014. "The Feeling of Being a Group – Corporate Emotions and Collective Consciousness." *Collective Emotions*, ed. Christian Von Scheve and Mikko Salmela: chp 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stein, Edith. 2000. *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, edited by Marianne Sawicki. Translated by Mary Catharine Baseheart and Marianne Sawicki (originally published in German in 1922). Washington D.C.: ICS Publications, Institute of Carmelite studies.
- Szanto, Thomas. 2015. "Collective Emotions, Normativity and Empathy: A Steinian Account." *Human Studies* 38 (4): 503-527.
- Taipale, Joonas. 2017. "The Structure of Group Identification." *Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht*, published online March 25, 2017. Topoi DOI 10.1007/s11245-017-9463-y
- Tajfel, Henri. 1984. "Foreword", "Introduction" and "Chapter 33." *The Social Dimension*, prepared for publication by Colin Fraser and Joseph M.F. Jaspers, vol. 1-2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thonhauser, Gerhard. 2018. "Shared Emotions: A Steinian approach." *Phenom Cogn Sci*: 1-19. DOI 10.1007/s11097-018-9561-3.
- Tönnies, Ferdinand. 2017. *Community and Society*. Reprint of 1957 edition, translation by C.P. Loomis. Dover Publications, Mineola, New York.
- Tuomela, Raimo. 2005. "We-intentions Revisited." *Philosophical Studies* 125: 327–369. Springer.
- Zahavi, Dan. 1997. „Horizontal Intentionality and Transcendental Intersubjectivity." *Tijdschrift Voor Filosofie* 59 (2): 304-321.

Zahavi, Dan. 2015. "You, Me and We – the Sharing of Emotional Experiences."  
*Journal of Consciousness Studies* 22 (1-2): 84-101.

Zahavi, Dan. 2017. *Husserl's Legacy: Phenomenology, Metaphysics and Transcendental Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.