From Mediatized Emotion to Digital Affect Cultures: New Technologies and Global Flows of Emotion

Katrin Döveling[1], Anu A. Harju[2] (iD), and Denise Sommer[3]

Abstract

Research on the processes of mediatization aims to explore the mutual shaping of media and social life and how new media technologies influence and infiltrate social practices and cultural life. We extend this discussion of media's role in transforming the everyday by including in the discussion the mediatization of emotion and discuss what we conceptualize as digital affect culture(s). We understand these as relational, contextual, globally emergent spaces in the digital environment where affective flows construct atmospheres of emotional and cultural belonging by way of emotional resonance and alignment. Approaching emotion as a cultural practice, in terms of affect, as something people *do* instead of have, we discuss how digital affect culture(s) traverse the digital terrains and construct pockets of culture-specific communities of affective practice. We draw on existing empirical research on digital memorial culture to empirically illustrate how digital affect culture manifests on micro, meso, and macro levels and elaborate on the constitutive characteristics of digital affect culture. We conclude with implications of this conceptualization for theoretical advancement and empirical research.

Keywords

emotion, affect, mediatization, digital culture, new media

Introduction

In today's "global village" (McLuhan, 1964), the flow of information is regarded as an integral part of everyday life (Livingstone, 2009). New technologies permeate everyday life at the personal, social, and global level (Döveling & Knorr, in press; Hjarvard, 2008) and have transformed into an invisible infrastructure of everyday life (Hutchings, 2017). Yet, these developments in media technologies not only engender prompt exchange of information and opinion but also foster a globally mediatized emotional exchange, leading, as we argue, to *digital affect cultures*. Although mediatization processes (see, for example, Krotz, 2007) have been linked to other social processes associated with modernity, such as globalization, commercialization, and individualization (Krotz, 2009, 2014), only little research has been conducted on the connection of mediatization and emotion. Social media are emotional media (see, for example, Tettegah, 2016), and the study of emotions in and through new media (e.g., Papacharissi, 2014, 2015) is drawing attention not only in communication studies but also in neighboring disciplines (Döveling, Harju, & Shavit, 2015; Kuntsman, 2012). Insight into this complex spectrum of mediatized emotion becomes highly relevant as we are witnessing flows of affect online that resonate with political campaigns, terrorist attacks, natural disasters, and celebrity death. Mediatization theory (Deacon & Stanyer, 2014; Hepp, 2012; Hepp, Hjarvard, & Lundby, 2015; Hjarvard, 2008) affords important insight on the interconnectedness of media and social life, of social processes, culture, and the everyday (see Ekström, Fornäs, Jansson, & Jerslev, 2016). Yet, how online processes of mediatization shape emotion and indeed figure in the production of what we conceptualize as *digital affect cultures* still remains unclear.

[1]Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt, Austria
[2]University of Helsinki, Finland
[3]Ostfalia Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften, Germany

Corresponding Author:
Anu A. Harju, Department of Social Research, Media and Communication Studies, University of Helsinki, Unioninkatu 37, P.O. Box 54, 00014 Helsinki, Finland.
Email: anu.a.harju@helsinki.fi

Each medium has its own affective culture (Hjorth & Arnold, 2013) it fosters. Recently, Papacharissi (2015, p. 2) has employed the concept of "affective publics" to explain the ways in which on social media "networked publics come together and/or disband around bonds of sentiment," further describing these as "affective, convening across networks that are discursively rendered out of mediated interactions." It is such "mediated feelings of connectedness" (Papacharissi, 2015) and how these construct pockets of digital affect cultures that we explore in this article. To do so, we see emotion as a discursively constructed cultural practice (see, for example, McCarthy, 1994; Scheer, 2012) and, in terms of affect, as a situational, contextual, and relational performance that has the capacity to form communities of practice. These communities of practice not only share a common goal and a shared understanding but also engage in a temporally continued manner in a shared endeavor (Eckert, 2006) that positions the community in relation to the world; for example, sharing in commemorative practices online constitutes such a community. This, in turn, leads to the formation of discursively constructed digital affect cultures, characterized by emotional alignment that gives rise to feelings of belonging.

Depending on the research stream and discipline, the terms "emotion" and "affect" are defined quite differently. The term emotion regularly implies in-built, in-person, a psychological construct, often seen as resulting from evolution and also personal appraisal (see Lazarus, 1991; Scherer, 2001) that become active in social sharing (Rimé, Philippot, Boca, & Mesquita, 1992). On the contrary, affect is often seen as something outside-of-person, discursive, and relational, as well as reactive and pre-cognitive. Our contention is that affect is something people engage in, a practice of relational nature or, as Scheer (2012) puts it, a "practical engagement with the world" (p. 193). Viewing affect as a cultural practice enables us to move beyond the individual actor and the embodied emotion perspective and understand emotion in a larger framework as something that people *do*. Indeed, as argued by Burkitt (2014), emotions can be seen as the outcome of particular relational configurations, or "relational scenarios," where each participant brings to the scenario something new that constitutes the emotion as a fluid moment. The relational dimension inherently signifies emotion as collective (Gergen, 2009) and is particularly suitable for conceptualizing affect in the digital context of human connectedness.

As a cultural construct, digital affect cultures are inherently normative and infused with relations of power where, depending on the context, some emotional scenarios are normalized at the expense of others; the cultural intelligibility of affect is thus context-dependent (see Ahmed, 2004). As a cultural practice (McCarthy, 1994), emotions "make sense" in the culture they are produced in, and online there are many sub-cultures of emotion. It is here that the processes of mediatization play a crucial role: in today's global, digitalized world, hegemonic emotions as powerful and normative affective flows traverse the Internet, thereby shaping the construction and expression of emotions worldwide (e.g., Döveling & Sommer, 2017). Emotions are cultural products governed by implicit norms of what and how we should feel (see, for example, Hochschild, 1979, 1983) and how we should express and "do emotions" in any given relational scenario. However, like any cultural practice, normalized performances of emotions, too, can be subverted and social media offer a unique platform for such contestation.

We draw on existing research on contemporary digital memorial culture (Christensen & Gotved, 2015) to empirically illustrate our theoretical framework. Global disruptive events evoke spontaneous acts of remembering online (Sumiala, 2013). Memorials, particularly spontaneous and temporary memorials (Doss, 2008) typical of the Internet, harbor meanings that reside in their affective dimension. As Doss (2008) argues, it is the cultural negotiation of public grief that constructs the diverse meanings recoverable in temporary memorials. Furthermore, social media allow not only a temporal, spatial, and social expansion of grief (Brubaker, Hayes, & Dourish, 2013) but also the expansion, continuation, and reconfiguration of the relationship with the deceased (Christensen & Sandvik, 2016; see also Christensen & Willerslev, 2016).

In what follows, we first outline the theoretical basis of the notion of digital affect culture we wish to develop in this article. We then discuss digital memorial culture to empirically illustrate our theoretical insights. The article concludes with suggestions on how to move forward with this new perspective on globalized emotion and what relevance it bears for media studies, research in memorial cultures, global mediatization research, as well as emotion and affect research in the digital era.

Theorizing Digital Affect Culture(s)

Like social life, communication is embedded in cultural conditions. Culture is organized as a system of symbols on all the different levels of communication. Communication is thus rooted in and transmitted by culture as well as being accessible through interpretive action (Lüddemann, 2010; Nassehi, 2008). Viewed as a set of rules, culture also regulates social action and is therefore closely connected to communicative phenomena, thus linking communication to social practice (Mauss, 1990). According to Tenbruck (1996) and Soeffner (1988), culture encloses all human action and the meanings they produce, and thereby provides a frame of reference for social action, implicitly structuring social life (Jäckel, 2010; Nassehi, 2008). Emotion, likewise, is an integral dimension of all social life (McCarthy, 1994) and needs to be included in theories on mediatization. With our conceptualization of emotion as a cultural practice, in terms of affect, we hope to bring these dimensions of culture, emotion, and media into dialogue.

Affect as a Cultural Practice in a Mediatized World

Online mediatization processes have several distinct characteristics, challenging and changing the spatio-temporal configurations of events as these are both reported and experienced in a mediated manner (Muschert & Sumiala, 2015, p. xix). As the dominant role of institutional (mass) media as the generator of news is challenged, counter-accounts of events (which in our "post-truth era" are not always correct) are circulated, underlining how social reality is represented as a continually evolving assemblage mixing diverse accounts. These divergent representations are then remixed, circulated, and reproduced. The dualisms of truth/false, virtual/real, or authentic/fabricated, for example, are being questioned (Muschert & Sumiala, 2015) and the boundaries between these become blurred. Furthermore, with digital media, collective authoring and collective dealing with emotions via narratives and imagery (Harju, 2015; Lindgren, 2015; Miguel, 2016) are becoming more common, implying not only the collective foundation of emotions but also the symbolic dimension of emotion production and interpretation.

In our theorization of digital affect culture, we draw on media and cultural studies and start with conceptualizing *affect as a cultural practice* being transferred and shaped by communication while at the same time influencing our communicative action. These communicative processes span the established, culturally significant memorial practices that inform practices in the digital realm (Faro, 2015), with mediatization shaping established rituals (e.g., Christensen & Sandvik, 2016; Pantti & Sumiala, 2009). Adopting the perspective of practice allows us to take into account the cultural as well as situational differences in *doing* affect, the meanings attached to specific emotions, and the normative dimension inherent in normalized practices as the preferred way of doing things. This also applies to emotions, showing up as social display rules (see also Hochschild, 1979, 1983), disclosing, for example, unspoken grieving rules (Doka, 1999) or social stigmas.

In our conceptualization of emotion in terms of affect as cultural practice, we incorporate what Wetherell (2015) sees as entanglement and acknowledge that rather than being a property of an individual, emotion is a socio-historical performance that spans not only the individual but also time and space as it invites new participants as it travels the digital terrains. As Wetherell (2015) points out, "affective practice is a moment of recruitment, articulation or enlistment when many complicated flows across bodies, subjectivities, relations, histories and contexts entangle and intertwine together to form just this affective moment, episode or atmosphere with its particular possible classifications" (p. 160). Wetherell (2013) also highlights the relationship between discourse and emotion in meaning-making. Thus, with a practice perspective, we can also move beyond individualized feelings to instead explore the flows of emotion forming digital affect cultures online.

We examine three levels of social media use where the range and focus vary from micro to meso to macro levels. The distinction between these three levels is an analytical one as they all intersect and feed into each other, implying that the emotional flows in any given affect culture are not one-directional. Just as these levels are intersecting, diffuse, and multi-directional, so are the offline practices of emotion enmeshed with the online ones. The distinction is also not intended as hierarchical as to the origin or priority of emotional flow, but rather to illustrate the dynamics between local and global, the personal and the public. Below, examples from research in the field of digital memorial culture (see Christensen & Gotved, 2015; Döveling et al., 2015) show that affective culture is manifest on these three intersecting levels:

1. The *micro level* illustrates the small-scale social media use for personal ends where the emotional attention is inward rather than outward and the focus is local: for example, a personal loss (Whitehead, 2015), yet the loss experienced does not have to be limited to a family member but is rather defined in terms of emotional intensity and attachment.
2. The *meso level* sees groups of emotionally resonant individuals come together over a specific theme, for example, grieving parents (Christensen & Sandvik, 2015; Döveling, 2017; Hård Af Segerstad & Kasperowski, 2015) find support via digital media, but also groups drawn together by circulation of mediatized violence (Sumiala, 2011).
3. The *macro level* entails globalized emotional flows negotiated collectively via various discourses and imagery; for example, global commemoration of victims of terrorist attacks (e.g., Jarvis, 2011; Sumiala, Tikka, Huhtamäki, & Valaskivi, 2016) or even celebrity death (Harju, 2015; Sanderson & Cheong, 2010; Van den Bulck & Larsson, 2017).

On the micro level, the focus is local, and social media use is aimed mostly at personal ends. When due to circulation the scope and audience widen, the emotional reach gradually transforms the mediatized emotional bonding into something detectable on the meso level. This does not mean that it always has to proceed in this manner, and it is perfectly feasible for digital affect cultures to emerge and manifest on only one or two of the analytical levels. For example, in the context of loss and mourning, social media "as a diverse hub of social interaction caters for expressions of grief of a more transient nature [and] anonymous, less structured expressions of grief are increasingly frequent" (Harju, 2015, p. 124). Anonymous emotional bonding is a specific feature of the macro-level manifestation of digital affect

culture where emotion as a social adhesive is resonant with wider socio-political issues that transcend the individual.

Toward Digital Affect Culture: Core Characteristics

We have elsewhere outlined how *digital emotions* manifest on a micro, meso and macro level that all intersect. We now want to develop this further and discuss the core characteristics in the constitution of digital affect culture:

1. *Discourse*: The digital realm constitutes a unique discursive space (e.g., Markham, 2004) where participation and orientation are guided by emotional interaction chains (see Collins, 1984, 1987); a form of emotional communication, the commemorative hashtag #PrayForParis on Twitter serves as an example of an "established solidarity symbol" (Collins, 2004). Social sharing forms an integral component of online discourse leading to a digital affect culture: culture, here, can be seen as "the assemblage of those discourses within which emotions come to be" (McCarthy, 1994, p. 277). As emotions within divergent discourses (such as love, fear, and anger) construct subject positions that are mobilized in digital contexts, a discursive arrangement is engendered that gains traction within online circulation (see also Kuntsman, 2012). The various emotional discourses mobilized online also construct the "other" in varying ways (Ahmed, 2004), for example, presenting the "other" as a similar other (Markham, 2013), offering reassurance and validation, or a distant, suffering other (Chouliaraki, 2006) able to evoke empathetic alignment (Döveling & Wasgien, 2015). It should also be noted that emotions are not value-free. Discoursal subjectification can also lead to the production of a culturally unintelligible other (Butler, 2006 [1990]), often inflicted with marginalization (e.g., Harju & Huovinen, 2015). The discursively constructed subject positions are always emotionally infused and always relational: a marginal position is only marginal because it exists in relation to the hegemonic.

2. *Alignment*: The discursively constructed subject positions invite emotional identification. When people emotionally, ideologically, culturally, or socially align with similar others, they inevitably also disalign with the contextually unrecognizable other. It is thus important to note that alignment is not only positive: the constitutive limit of alignment is disalignment (Harju, 2015, 2016, 2017). Thus, the unintelligible other often invites demarcations of emotional boundaries and fosters the construction of us and them manifested in processes of disalignment, leading to the emergence of divergent, even opposing groups and polarization of emotion. In digital contexts, "alignments are regularly formed around emotional resonance" (Harju, 2017, p. 75) where similar others join in an imagined community (Anderson, 1983/2006). Because in the emotionally diverse digital landscape the digital pathways tend to construct artificial meeting points that lead to manifold relational scenarios (Burkitt, 2014), emotional resonance acts like a conduit bringing people together (Papacharissi, 2015): emotion can thus be seen as a relational resource used for alignment.

3. *Belonging*: Engagement on social media tends to be affective (Papacharissi, 2015), and digital affect culture fosters "mediatized emotional bonds and collective imaginations" (Sumiala, 2013, p. 119) that prompt a feeling of cultural and social belonging. It is here where the "social sharing of emotions" (Rimé et al., 1992) as a cross-cultural phenomenon becomes relevant, highlighting a vital point: humans need social affiliation and strive for belonging to social groups (Cohen & Metzger, 1998). The digital individual is fundamentally engaged in social constellations (see Harju, 2017). As a form of emotional resonance, sense of belonging is established as global flows of emotion condense into pockets of cultural, social, and ideological intelligibility where one emotion makes sense while others necessarily do not. As discussed above, the discursively constructed subject positions are not void of emotion; on the contrary, emotional interpellation is an integral part of the identification process.

Emotions within a given community gradually become normative as discoursal demarcation of communal boundaries is constructed. Rapidly evolving social media platforms such as Facebook, used by 1.9 billion people worldwide (Statista, 2017), foster distinct forms of emotional connection and incorporate the usage of diverse communicative tools (Van Dijck, 2013), such as symbols, emojis, and images (e.g., profile pictures). Such multimodal communication is complex and nuanced and requires cultural interpretation. Döveling and Sommer (2008, 2012) theorize that a collaborative meta-appraisal (a joint assessment and evaluation of media users' individual appraisals) takes place in media use. In contrast to individual judgment processes, collaborative evaluation does not only relate to assessing the novelty or pleasantness of the mediated message: emotions themselves are appraised in such a way that media users check how well their emotional reactions toward the media correspond to the feelings of their peers and thereby negotiate the appropriate assessment. This may be one explanation for "emotion contagion" as users continually negotiate the flow of emotion online in a relational and reciprocal manner.

Media information is processed during different phases of social interaction before, during, and after media use. Socially shared norms directly influence individual appraisal mechanisms at all phases of media use and may directly affect expressing one's emotions (Manstead & Fischer, 2001), involving emotional (re)appraisal and change. Therefore, the social dimension within online appraisal (Manstead & Fischer, 2001) is vital for understanding the role communication plays in the construction of digital affect culture(s) in "the social construction of reality" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967).

New Technologies and Global Flows of Affect: Empirical Evidence

Digital memorial culture is a new research field. In what follows, we will empirically elaborate on our theorization of digital affect culture with examples from research in this developing field: the focus is on two culturally prominent and contemporary themes that frequently enter mediatization and circulation: memorizing in conjunction with terrorist attacks and memorizing celebrity death. Through these examples, we will illustrate how the micro, meso, and macro levels of digital emotional culture intersect in order to breathe life into the theoretical construct, as well as point out the workings of the core characteristics of discourse, alignment, and belonging.

Online Grief in Times of Terror

The first example addresses a global mediatization phenomenon: online communication after terror attacks. After the terrorist attacks in Paris (2015), Berlin (2016), and Manchester (2017), users on Facebook and Twitter expressed their compassion and solidarity worldwide. The death of innocent people is intensely felt around the world (Döveling, 2015a, 2017) although people with closer geographical proximity are more emotionally affected. This can be seen as fear and anger (Mainiero & Gibson, 2003) in communicative acts of *discourse*, while emotion also influences individuals participating in commemoration in distant countries *aligning* emotional expressions globally (Finseraas & Listhaug, 2013) and thereby creating a sense of *belonging* even in distant participants.

Previous studies show that growing up in post-9/11 America does affect not only the development of adolescents and children (Eisenberg & Silver, 2011; Stein et al., 2004) but also people's identities and beliefs (Bartel, 2002; Cho et al., 2003; Sadler, Lineberger, Correll, & Park, 2005). One of the purposes of mediatized terror is the widely felt fear (Ruby, 2002), and the effectiveness of terrorist attacks, that is, the dispersion of the presence of terror, is increasingly achieved by media visibility (Jenkins, 2006; Rohner & Frey, 2007). Consequently, mediatized terror has produced global *discourses* as well as a broad *alignment* of those in fear of terrorism versus those potentially responsible. Along these lines of solidarity, feelings of *belonging* and *exclusion* have been built up around the world.

This "new age of terrorism" (Jenkins, 2006) is characterized as war in and through social media (Weimann & Jost, 2015), and it is intricately intertwined with mediatization resulting in an increased focus on terrorism (Collins, 2004; Poferl, 2017). While it is unclear whether Twitter provides people with reliable information in times of crisis (Carmichael, 2015), citizen journalists and grieving citizens nevertheless flock to social media when disruptive events take place. This instigates flows of emotional communication that generate digital affect cultures of differing orientation. Terrorist groups also use different media to communicate, to spread their ideology, and to recruit members. While this is generally conceived as disturbing (Galily, Yarchi, Tamir, Samuel-Azran, 2016), it speaks of the diversity of types of emotional resonance in digital spaces, not all of which are positive.

Regarding discourse, not only verbal communication but also pictorial symbols act as "symbols of solidarity" (Collins, 2004), connecting people around the globe: "Je suis Charlie" or "Pray for Paris" became common repertoire for shared feelings of grief and bewilderment, as well as for emotional alignment and belonging in a given digital affect culture. Such emotional communicative acts become cultural practices as similar events evoke comparable reactions, and new meanings are assigned to pre-existing symbols. One of the distinct features of new media is the digital artifact's capacity to invite to community (Harju, 2017) as "the digital artefact comes to define the emotional and ideological landscape of the space it creates and contextualizes" (Harju, 2016, p. 65). In this regard, studies of specifically designed bereavement network sites provide helpful insights. Applying the symbolic interactionist perspective, Döveling and Wasgien (2014, 2015) find that shared grief discloses ritualistic interaction chains as well as symbols (e.g., lighting virtual candles) in texts (see also Christensen & Sandvik, 2015). Emojis illuminate how the social web affords emotional communication in suffering and coping practices that are comparable to those offline and how "in coping with such a challenging situation and the associated emotions, dynamic interpersonal and intrapersonal emotion regulation processes come into play" (Döveling, 2015a, p. 110). It is especially in permanently distorted and traumatizing situations that emotional alignment (Döveling, 2017) fostered by digital affect culture becomes vital.

One example illustrating the intersection of all three levels of analysis (micro, meso, and macro) is the Manchester bombing in May 2017. Among the victims was an 8-year old Saffie Rose Roussos. Although most victims were young, Saffie was the youngest and received wide media coverage within hours of the incident. On the *micro* level, we can situate her grieving family who suffered a personal loss, sharing their emotions online where they also received

support and belonging. Support communities were soon formed online, this manifesting the digital affect culture developing on the *meso* level by alignment processes. Commemoration in this way is also a way of ensuring continued bonds and keeping the dead alive, in the life of the still living (Bell, Bailey, & Kennedy, 2015; Christensen & Sandvik, 2015; Hård Af Segerstad & Kasperowski, 2015; Sandvik & Christensen, 2013).

Later on, dedicated social media memorial sites were set up for Saffie (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter), and via these, personal photos, emotional messages, and memories were shared, ending in wider circulation through various discourses. In Twitter, for example, such posts would join the thematic collection of terror attack victims' memorial messages (abundant in the context of Paris attacks), and thus, the once personal message is re-articulated as it becomes a part of a wider network of emotions and meanings ranging from political and social to cultural meanings and evaluations. At this *macro* level, global flows of emotion resonate differently with different people, forming diverging alliances (e.g., alignment and belonging). There is a gradual shift from personal loss and the death of a little girl to what it symbolizes: it soon becomes about mediatization of terror and what terror looks like.

In complex ways, personal loss and grief become entangled with political and social issues, but economic motives are also implicated as media circulate content from personal social media accounts, serving these up as part of their news stories. In terms of emotion and solidarity, Collins (2004, p. 53) delineates four stages that unfold after a disruptive global event: after the initial individual reactions and shock (= discourse), the emotional landscape shifts toward "establishing standardized displays of solidarity symbols" (= alignment), after which there is a "solidarity plateau" (= belonging), with the fourth stage culminating in gradual return to normality. His categorization encompasses the three levels where digital affect culture manifests. However, although emotion travels, it is not bound to one direction over another.

Global Mediatized Fandom

The second example illustrates *global affect cultures* as these emerge in the context of fandom (see, for example, Gray, Sandvoss, & Harrington, 2017). Fans are a significant feature of contemporary mediascape (Booth, 2010; Sandvoss, 2005), and fandom aptly illustrates the emotional construction of community via *discourse*. Celebrity fandom shows how we increasingly belong by participating in popular culture (Driessens, 2012) and how it organizes social order. Celebrity culture is also something we *do* (Couldry, 2012), and it is through mediated rituals and ritualized practice (e.g., commemoration) people come together online (Sumiala, 2013) in the sense of *alignment* (see Harju, 2016). Such mediated participation evokes a sense of *belonging* through emotional identification with distant others (e.g., Pantti & Sumiala, 2009).

Fan cultures provide ample evidence of how emotion travels as the shared sense of loss is discursively negotiated in a community of similar others (Harju, 2015). More often than not, these are communities of strangers brought together by emotional attachment, "discursively called in to being" (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 4). Celebrity death evokes intense emotions, resulting in waves of not only co-constructed grief (Van den Bulck & Larsson, 2017) but also co-constructed empathy, crucial in coping with grief (Neimeyer & Jordan, 2002).

Fandom emerges on all the three levels of micro, meso, and macro, and as such, fan loss offers a potent exemplar of the workings of digital affect culture. On the *micro* level, the fan object (e.g., a celebrity) is part of the relational scenario formed by the fan, which affords personally meaningful interaction. Intensity of emotion is a constitutive feature of identity-defining fan relation that on a fundamental level resonates with the self. For this reason, the death of a fan object requires a reworking of the fan's identity (Harju, 2015; Sandvoss, 2005). Feelings of loss as well as the reworking of fan identity are regularly carried out collectively in online contexts that facilitate easy interaction: this illustrates the *meso* level of affect culture. Such fan collectives engage in co-construction of identities; they co-construct narratives as coping mechanisms and partake in envisioning continuance with the fan object, the fan community, and their self in new ways in the changed situation (Harju, 2015, 2016). As noted by Harju (2015), public mourning online

> can be seen as a sequence of acts of remembering: it is a performance that has two functions; first, the alleviation of grief, and second, solidifying and "making real" the fandom undergoing change due to the death of the object of fandom. (p. 143)

This "making real" of the new condition in which fandom can continue to exist (e.g., Bielby & Harrington, 2017) is negotiated collectively, illustrating the process of *discourse*, all the time the digital environment shaping how memorizing and collective emotion work can take place. Sharing in such practices of co-construction serves as building blocks for feelings of *belonging*, and participants feel validated and supported in their respective communities.

Fandoms are often global cultural phenomena that greatly depend on media and the processes of mediatization for both their spread and breadth. On the *macro* level of digital affect culture, celebrity death sets in motion global waves of emotion that sweep the Internet, inviting new participants to join in on commemorative performances that also *align* them. At this level of emotional sharing, personal emotions become colored with additional meanings drawing on the wider celebrity culture while being shaped by societal display rules. For example, implicit grieving rules reveal cultural values and evaluation of emotions: disenfranchised grief (Doka, 1999, 2002) is the result of unrecognized, socially

unsanctioned grief that falls beyond what is normatively considered "normal" grief. Yet, when examined as an interactional deficit, disenfranchisement presents as an emphatic failure (Neimeyer & Jordan, 2002), that as a relational phenomenon can also be negotiated. Emergent social spaces online, for example, facilitate celebrity-death-induced grief (Harju, 2015; Van den Bulck & Larsson, 2017) and other forms of disenfranchisement. This illustrates how the constant interplay of discursive mechanisms and different stages of alignment and disalignment becomes apparent.

Discussion and Implications: Toward a New Perspective on Globalized Emotion

Digital affect culture is shaped by the social sharing of culturally and discursively constructed emotions. Conceptualizing online interaction as symbolic interaction and emotion as a cultural practice in terms of affect, we note that symbols as well as emotional flows connect people around the globe, revealing the three core characteristics of digital affect culture: *discourse, alignment*, and *belonging*. Mediatized everyday communication leads to emotional exchange, triggering collective meta-appraisals of mediatized events (Döveling & Sommer, 2008, 2012). Such communication fosters affiliation, resulting in discursive, emotional, and often also ideological alignment (Harju, 2015, 2016). In line with the idea of socio-emotional meta-appraisal, display rules serve a normative function as they ensure emotional negotiation, reflections about the appropriateness of emotional communication, and eventually its alignment. Such emotional resonance may occur on an interpersonal or a global scale.

Yet, discursive and emotional alignment is not restricted to occur around the positive, but emotionally resonant collectives equally gather around violent events (Sumiala, 2011; Sumiala & Tikka, 2011), mediatized victimhood (e.g., Hakala, 2015), and darker spheres of the emotional landscape. The discursively constructed "invitation to community is, at the same, invitation to disagree" (Harju, 2016, p. 74) and generates alignment as well as disalignment. Alignment as a co-constitutive emotion practice connects individuals emotionally with one another (Buck & Powers, 2011) and constructs symbolic communities generating feelings of belonging. The feeling of belonging may in itself be effective in coping with a disruptive or traumatic event (e.g., Döveling, 2015b). A sense of security (see, for example, Lagerkvist, 2017) can be established through belonging to a digital affect culture that transmits emotions of solidarity and where ritual performances and participation in them are contextually normalized.

Thus, the three core characteristics of digital affect culture are strongly intertwined and manifest on the micro, meso, and macro levels that intersect. We have proposed that affect cultures emerge in different digital spaces with variation among these. Drawing on empirical studies in the field of digital memorial culture, we have illustrated the numerous mental, physical, and social benefits of sharing emotion online. Rather than focusing on individual cases or the emotional repertoire of a single individual, we have opted to look at the emotional landscape of the digital terrain in the form of communities of practice. Altogether, the findings show that social media foster personal empowerment and a shift in attentional deployment (Döveling, 2015a, 2017), in and through digital affect culture. We note that crises especially challenge the analytical integration of the different subareas of culture into the analysis, yet at the same time offer potential insight into changes in globalized emotion in the changing digital affect cultures.

What we have attempted to achieve with our conceptualization of digital affect culture is to shed light on the emotional dimension of digital media, to show how the affective flows in the digital terrain (see also Garde-Hansen & Gorton, 2013; Tettegah, 2016) might have very different logics than the emotional flows outside the digital realm. This is not to say we adhere to a binary distinction between the online and the offline: on the contrary, we view the online as embedded in the offline and the practices in these realms as being intertwined and mutually constitutive. However, it is worth considering how these spaces, respectively, might foster divergent conditions for emotional resonance among distant individuals and how the technological affordances of new media facilitate the speed of dispersion of emotion as well as help construct alliances of emotional and relational congruence (Harju, 2017). Importantly, the unique spatio-temporal characteristics of digital media allow participating in digital affect cultures not only in spatially dispersed locations but also in temporally variant ways either within seconds of an event that elicits an emotional reaction or, due to "affective traces" (Papacharissi, 2015), long after the initial reaction. Digital affect cultures thus have certain durability while being flexible as changing relational and emotional flows shape the culture as they enter it.

Having focused on digital memorial culture as the empirical source to illustrate our conceptualization of digital affect culture, this study leaves open avenues for further research on emotion in areas of politics and populism, for example, and also more specifically regarding equality, normativity, and evaluation in the context of digital culture where emotions also serve as constructions of value. Polarized emotion-based opinion seems to be on the increase that, at its worst, can lead to an increase in nationalism, marginalization, and racism in the contemporary global context of mass migration and discourses of terrorism. We thus need to further understand how events and topics are framed by emotional scenarios and presuppositions that discursively (dis)align people partaking in these emotional discourses and who may simultaneously belong to multiple digital affect cultures fostering and encouraging different views. As a theoretical lens, digital affect culture allows us to integrate emotion into examinations of

digital culture as something people do and culture into emotion that might help understand the digital existence from a micro, meso, and macro perspective.

As the development of digital affect cultures is a continuous process, research on digital culture and emotion would benefit from longitudinal analysis. It is only within such a long-term sequence that we can comprehend changes. As this overview shows, long-term and internationally oriented studies are rather rare, which further highlights the need to investigate the emotion landscape online from a global perspective.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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ORCID iD

Anu A. Harju https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8407-3981

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Author biographies

Katrin Döveling (PhD, University of Erfurt, Germany) is a professor of Media and Communications at Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt in Austria. Her research interests include affect, media and emotions, online communication, global mediatization, and crises communication.

Anu A. Harju (PhD, Aalto University, Finland) is a postdoctoral researcher in media and communication studies at the Department of Social Research, Media and Communication Studies, University of Helsinki. Her research interests include media sociology, social media and identity, representations of death online, and commemorative media practices.

Denise Sommer (PhD, University of Jena, Germany) is a professor of Communication and Media Theory at the Ostfalia University of Applied Sciences in Braunschweig/Wolfenbüttel, Germany. Her research interests include communication theory, attitudes and persuasion, media and migration, and ethics.