SITUATING EMOTION IN DIGITAL CULTURE: SENTIMENT, AFFECT AND ONLINE PERSONA

P. DAVID MARSHALL CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY
AND JANEY UMBACK CURTIN UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

This introduction to this issue works to map how emotion is situated in contemporary digital culture. It is derived from an international online symposium led by the authors and including leading scholars in this area of study and investigation from more than 5 countries in November 2021. The article works to identify and summarise the material generated by each of the scholars and further links it to the complex domain of persona and digital persona. It specifically explores six distinct topics of digital identity and expression in its intersection with sentiment and affect: 1. Facial Recognition and Expression; 2. Emotion and Technological Interface; 3. Emotional Intelligence in Digital Culture; 4. New Forms of Digital Sensitivity in Social Media and Online Platform Activity; 5. Emotion, Performative Presentation and Curation: Emoji, Hashtags, and Memes; and 6. Digital Mood Synchrony and Digital Contagion. The conclusion then summarises the direction of the Symposium and how it intersects with the articles that are part of this special issue.

KEY WORDS

Emotion; Digital Culture; Facial Recognition; User Experience; Affect; Atmosphere; Sentiment; Digital Sentiment; Persona; Digital Curation; Neuroscience; Emotional Intelligence (EI); Artificial Intelligence (AI); Digital Emotional Contagion; Mood Synchrony

INTRODUCTION

In November 2021, an interesting event directly related to the theme of this special issue took place. As you can probably imagine - given it was still during the era of COVID-19-related isolation and low levels of travel - the actual event was *virtual*. In an academic sense, we called it a Symposium, but it was its theme and its related title that were alluring to its participants: "Situating Emotion in Digital Culture". The title, with its adjective of "situating", identified the fundamental thought and work of the symposium's participants. Investigating the place of emotion is complex: its situation is further layered and restructured in our expanding digital world and culture. The team of participants in the symposium began this investigation of the relationship between and among emotion, situation and digital experience.

The Symposium helped us generate the direction and material for this issue that links it to a nuanced understanding of how our concept of persona is reconfigured in the digital cultural world as it intersects with specific forms of emotional expression that are generated through online experiences.

In this introduction, we have worked to summarise what ideas we advanced in the Symposium through our participants and - in the conclusion - how they ultimately intersect with the articles in this special issue. This introductory article is in many ways an integrative investigation of the many themes that emerged from the event, and its team of scholars[1]. The scholars contributing to our symposium each brought with them a range of expertise in the investigation of place and movement of emotion in digital culture. Together, this team discussed the clear intersections between place, movement, and emotion, with the digital transformation of persona in contemporary culture.

This introductory essay will work through the 6 topics that guided our discussions and investigations of emotion in digital culture in the Symposium and then how each scholar who contributed, conveyed about the place of emotion in our transformed world that is reorganised by its digital reconfigurations is advanced in this introduction to this special issue.

In the widest understanding, the concept of emotion is difficult to placate into existing disciplines. Even in its history, emotion only became a widely employed term or word in the 19th century and in the precursory millennia it was often identified as 'affect'(Spinoza), 'passions',

[1] It is best to identify the scholars who all contributed to the material in this Introduction through their presentations and discussions in the "Situating Emotion in Digital Culture" Symposium available via YouTube. Their names are identified connected to their particular contributions throughout this introductory article, but it is also valuable to fully list them here: **Ian Tucker**, **Darren Ellis**, **Maurizio Mauri**, **Marjo Kohlemainen**, **Carolyn Pedwell**, **Jacob Johanssen**, **Taina Bucher**, and **Tony Sampson**. The link to the YouTube-based symposium is available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZADJFsKvFR8

'perceptions', 'appetites' across emerging sciences and philosophy. Moreover, emotion is something that cannot be sequestered into the individual self. Critical to understanding emotion is its etymological link to the concept of movement. It is thus important to see that emotion is implicated both historically and currently into the relations between people, things, activities and imagined and real other beings, as well as news stories, legends and tales shared by humans and humanity through its many platforms and forms of sharing and convey.

In this issue's attempts to *situate* emotion in digital culture and in the constitution of our personas, we are not only placing emotion but recognising its continual movement, transformation and allocation of emotion in its migration and permeation in online cultures. Thus, this issue is critically investigating the emotional and correlational structures that digital emotion produces. In this introductory essay, we will work through six specific areas/topics/ themes that address the placing of emotion: the first of these is an investigation of online configurations of facial recognition and expression and how they are translated into algorithmic meaning and perception.

Topic 1: Facial Recognition and Expression - Screen Transformation & Curation (Marshall ed. 2021 @ 5:15m)

Whenever we see a face and what it is conveying, it affects our own facial forms of expression. Digital culture produces a patterned way of seeing others - and seeing ourselves. Our opening contributor to the symposium Dr Maurizio Mauri explained the development of online facial recognition and he made it clear that mapping and understanding facial recognition was the pathway for understanding "user experience", what is classified within transnational marketing terminology as UX. Drawing from Don Norman's work from the 1980s (Norman & Draper, 1986) and the 1990s (as he began working for Apple Computers in a blend of psychology, computer science and mathematics) (Norman, 2014 (1993)), Mauri defined user experience "as the overlap between products and the needs of the user" in a clear manner that links " different disciplines" including "engineering, marketing, graphic and industrial design and interface design" (Mauri in Marshall et al. 2021).

As Mauri explained, although we have many device-like techniques and readings to "assess user experience", "nowadays, we don't have mainstream techniques to accept this specific portion of experience and its relation to emotion during an experience on the Web." Nonetheless, these techniques of mapping our emotion have expanded over the last 30 years: Mauri identified that he started to work with the second version of this reading of facial expression and now he is on to the "tenth version of this software, thanks to the improvement", as he explained, with the "relationship of emotion and expression recognition with "artificial intelligence and machine knowledge: little by little, this software became much ***better*** in detecting, recognising, and somehow attributing weight to specific emotions" (Mauri 2021).

Interestingly, Mauri further explained that the emergence of this software facial recognition/expression work was massively dependent on the research of the psychologist Paul Ekman and his specific early studies in the late 1970s in Papua New Guinea (Ekman 1993): the key point that Ekman generated from this study of Papua facial expression is that it is "universal": "his conclusion was that the facial expression for local people born in New Papua was comparable with the people from Western society" (Mauri, 2021). This led Ekman, according to Mauri, to build a "sort of alphabet" of facial expression through an investigation of "each single muscle of the face until the point he was able to create the so-called Facial Action Coding System [known as FACS],

where it's possible to use the action unit in a so-specific configuration of the muscle of the face to recognize all basic emotions" (Mauri, 2021). According to Mauri, there is controversy in the wider scientific community about acknowledging the accuracy of a "basic emotion". The software generated from Ekman's FACS development thus led to clear categorisations: "there is not only 'fear', 'happy', 'sad', 'disgust', 'anger' and 'surprise', but there is also a neutral face that shows if emotions are not there" (Mauri, 2021). The complexity, in many ways as it moved into software analysis, became standardised into these clear FACS patterns that Ekman developed originally and that were integrated into our intelligence machines over the next 40 years.

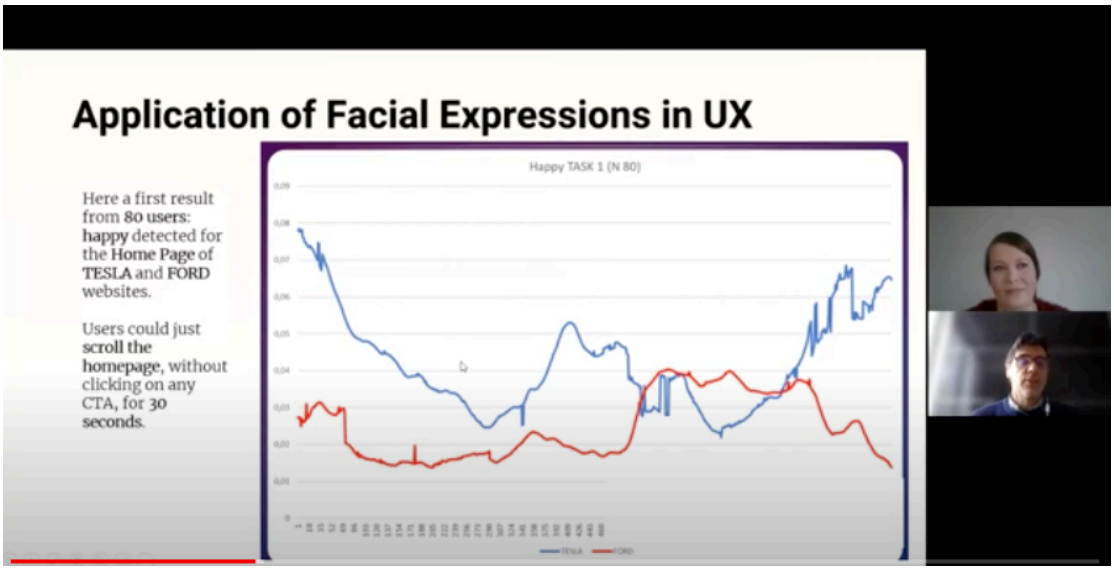
From Mauri's explanations, it is very clear that expressions and emotions have been converted into forms of data and thereby categorised in our online worlds. Data is collected and analysed in what Mauri identified as "the dimensional model where you have to access the **valence** [in an x-y-z axis structure) with **arousal**. Valence in this emotion data convergence is the "hedonic quality of emotions" that are identified in terms of a full range: "negative, neutral, or positive" (Mauri, 2021). The third dimension that is part of this facial expression analysis is called "dominance" and it identifies which form of expression is strongest and potentially continuing longer. "The application fields", according to Mauri, of this 3D structure, "are many… [with] one of the most recent being the so-called ***consumer neuroscience and neuromarketing***" (Mauri, 2021). Although this work in mapping a kind of neuro-intelligence through facial expression has connections to major research figures such as the affective computing leader Rosalind Picard (2000) as well as back into dimensions of clinical psychology, it has clearly been something that has moved heavily into the advertising and promotional sector and their reconfiguration of online and social media moments of conveyed facial/emotional expression.

Mauri's investigation of how we react to online images was part of his major research with 160 students and how they perceived the web-based advertising homepage images of Tesla and Ford (Mauri et al. 2021). Indeed, we were all asked to respond to one of their advertised images in the Symposium. Much of this research was how his team were investigating the move from emotions to what Mauri identified as "micro-expressions": "moving a part of my eye or moving the mouth can provide expression of confusion, of interest, or boredom. They are not really emotions, but are affective states that can be detected, counted and then measured in this field of user experience" that Mauri developed in his *Frontiers in Psychology* article on the reactions of students in his comparative study of how youth connected or disconnected to advertised imaging by major corporations (Mauri et al., 2021).

In a manner similar to his research, Dr Mauri asked us to identify which one - the Ford or Tesla advertised image online - would have been preferred - in a "first impression" by us and by these students and also what is our human facial expression reaction to any act of viewing (Mauri, 2021). The sentiment explored through these advertisements was relative happiness and this is the research work that Mauri developed in his study of marketing and facial micro-expressions and emotions. As identified in his report and his article, it turns out that Tesla's image produced a more positive "affect" for its homepage than Ford for these student observers.

Dr Mauri's work generated a range of interesting directions for our collaborative discussion. Particularly relating to the dimensions of facial expression and recognition structures that are now part of the online marketing industry, equally connected to corporate AI work generated by social media platforms, and Google. Generative AI is also used by neuromarketing scientists who have refined this reconstruction of digital emotion, sensitivity, and patterns of connected identities and personas in our transformed human world. Dr Marjo Kolehmainen from Tampere University, with

her research on "digital therapy and online counselling and screen and facial expressions", identified that "it's very important to understand the screen as an alive surface that has producing capacities. It can enable something novel to happen, it has a very transformative effect on the interaction processes, or it can limit something" (Kolehmainen, 2021). In her recent publications, Kolehmainen has generated valuable understanding of affect particularly in how virtual therapy sessions, known as teletherapy, became a normalised form of psychological interaction during the COVID-19 pandemic (Kolehmainen, 2022). She relayed some of that information by identifying how individuals in therapy and any and all virtual environments want to "escape from [their] screen and visual information [and] "switch off their videos" (Kolehmainen 2021).



Dr Maurizio Mauri's work on UX and Facial Expression in his study of 80 users observing Ford and Tesla Ads: Dr Mauri is here responding to Dr Marjo Kolehmainen's insights where she identifies "the screen as a very live surface that has producing capacities. It can enable something novel to happen" (19:43- 23:10)

Dr Jacob Johanssen further identified the "role of the screen" in Dr. Mauri's development of facial expression and emotion online. Johanssen explained that "so much of online interaction is really determined and driven by how technology already - and social media platforms in particular - … aim to shape our emotional expressions" (Johanssen, 2021). He explained that our interactions online "are not only …driven by algorithms and how platforms work and so on, but they are also really affect-driven. I would make a clear distinction between affect and emotion: our engagement [online] is affect-driven and that also means there is no latency; there is no introspection; there is no time to pause. We might talk about [identifying] emotional intelligence, but I think a lot of our way of sort of emotionally or affectively engaging online is always in the now and there is not time for reflection." (Johanssen 2021). It is very clear that Dr. Johannsen identified the gaps between affect and emotion that are even more fully explained in his recent book and research that studied

affective/emotional reactions and feelings to both contemporary broadcasting reality television and social media transformations of the self (Johannsen, 2018).

Drawing from Dr Mauri's industrial studies of promotional connection, it is useful to extend this further into what can be described the corporate potential "reading" of viewers as a form of algorithmic correlation and attribution of our experiences from what we express and reveal in online/social media platforms (Marshall 2022). As the students observe and express their emotional connection to images and websites connected to Ford and Tesla, they (the students) are also curating themselves. Similarly, the industry gaining this data on our activities as "viewers" are transforming this curation into a form of data correlation that leads to further connections. Ultimately, the production of images and reading of expressions, produces a second curation - a guiding framework by these corporations as they "learn" and datafy in future their way of holding on to positive affect to emotion in their advertising (Marshall 2022a).

Dr Carolyn Pedwell shifted this focus on curation/correlation with its conversion of facial expression into forms of industrial "recognition" that were structured into the computation systems from the 1990s onwards. She identified that the "MIT Media Lab led by Rodney Brooks (Brooks 1999) and [along with] others who were trying to develop these robots that learn and unfold their interaction with their environment and through effective kinds of negotiation. MIT developed a kind of MIT/Ekman typology of emotion [in order to] program computationally *emotion* into these robots that then unfolds through their actions in the world" (Pedwell 2021).

Drawing from the related study of Elizabeth Wilson (entitled *Affect and Artificial Intelligence*) (2010)), Pedwell further elucidates that the "Ekman/MIT scale [that became part] computation [development]... creates a framework for emotion that leaves out **shame**. So, robots can apparently sense - and also reflect back - happiness, sadness, anger, disgust but not shame." (Pedwell, 2021) As Pedwell further clarified, Wilson's identification of the oversight on shame is drawn from Sylvan Tomkins' work: "shame is really important for Tomkins (2008) in indicating one thing: interest." And, as Pedwell explained, the typological structuring of emotion and affect and its further reconfiguration in "computationalisation" actually "legislate for us what can be considered intelligible feeling - [that is], feeling we are able to feel in these digital circuits".

Pedwell's work on affect and its now regularised reconstruction into our algorithmic identification (Pedwell 2022) - and its privileged correlation to human sentiment - was very valuable and applicable to this computerised reconstruction of facial expression and its movement through culture. Pedwell's discussion enabled Mauri to further identify the levels and layers of emotion that were part of his work on facial expression and emotion. So, from his perspective "shame is considered a secondary emotion" that is connected to a particular situation that is difficult to generalise because of that particularity. Mauri's conclusion then was: "So, from a computational standpoint it would be much harder to detect shame because you need to add information about these cultural origins of emotion reaction" (which do not necessarily move from culture to culture). These insights about the expression/visualisation of emotion demand - in terms of research of our computational world - a greater contextualization of particular emotional configurations. Thus, it is important to potentially integrate a further concept of how we are read and we read others: along with the algorithmic correlation generated by digital media industries, there is what Marshall identified as co-relation: "we co-relate (that is, connect to others) all the time in all these different environments" (Marshall 2021; Marshall 2022).

Dr Tony Sampson also added around the use of facial expression recognition technology and its reading of emotion that the data created is algorithmic and loses connection to the original human emotion. As Sampson explained, "when [emotion] gets translated into an algorithmic world, it's actually got nothing to do with the original emotion" (Sampson, 2021). In a sense, Sampson was identifying the complexity of emotion is nowhere near the computational translation that has become integrated into our now reformed programmatic advertising world (Eriksson et al. 2019) that maps a form of monetizable intelligence on its interpretations of individual and collectivised human cultural expressions.

Topic 2. Emotion and Technological Interface (Marshall ed. 2021 @ 37m)

Investigating emotion cannot help being complex given how difficult it is to fully attribute meaning related to emotional feeling. In this second section of our investigation of situating emotion, we focussed on what its relationship to technological interfaces and how this transforms the play of emotion quite profoundly. Our two key collaborators and co-hosts of the symposium, Darren Ellis and Ian Tucker, have investigated developments in digital culture. The two researchers have successfully mapped digital emotion as a conceptual link to affective atmosphere (Ellis & Tucker 2020, 102-104). Their work indicates that the transformation of emotion into data creates different settings and environments for the reading and placing of emotion. The changed atmosphere of digital life generates new interrelationships, but also new conceptualisation about our own digital reconfigured identities - what we can call digital persona.

Ellis and Tucker's research background is linked to social psychology. Ellis was able to define emotion and its long history of our reading valuably: "the ability to recognise an emotional expression and correlate it to this complex practice we call emotion and a particular emotion into recent computers… is really an ancient human skill and it has evolved over millions of years. Most kinds of recognition of emotion are non-conscious: so now with digital technology we are trying to move into the black box of the soul and trying to understand this kind of micro-communication that we probably don't really understand consciously." (Darren Ellis 2021)

One of the most valuable contributions on the relationship between individuals and technics significantly prior to the age of the internet, is Gilbert Simondon's development of "individuation" (Simondon 1992; Simondon 2005) that Ellis and Tucker privileged and is also further integrated into the contemporary technological interface by Sutherland and Wark (Sutherland and Wark 2015). Ellis situated it into his thinking and research where individuation is the process of developing the individual. Tucker expanded on this by explaining that individuation is a psychological construction in relation to the environment (Tucker 2021).

Thinking through the technological interface that we all experience pushed us to imagine our contemporary world with a transformation of the meaning of the face on screen. Ellis made a valuable insight related to this: "There is this old saying, isn't there, that the face is the mirror of the soul and that actually the face is, in some way, the interface to what's happening beneath. That we can somehow create technology that enables [itself] to get into this deep inner being of our soul with its operation…is what technologists desire and marketers really want to know. They want to get beyond everyday activity to find out what is really kind of happening within a person: I find that [development] fascinating" (Ellis 2021).

Ian Tucker expanded on this interplay with face and technical interface: "we need to be really mindful of this claim toward [technological] authenticity" (Tucker 2021). In a fundamental

way, Tucker explained how these technologies work towards “micro-analysis of micro-expressions” and a data-based aspirational reach towards a “true [and verified] authenticity” (Tucker 2021). He claims we should be focussed and investigative of “interface online differences” where “and how AI-based technologies impact and relate to different parts of the effect-to-emotion continuum” (Tucker 2021). Moreover, Tucker also described how our own implementation of emotion cascades and escalates differently on social media platforms like Twitter: he calls the social media play around emotion “problematic” and generates different kinds of “connection" (Tucker 2021).

Carolyn Pedwell drew from this thinking around interface even further. Her key point was that it is increasingly difficult for us to imagine our lives in an “on - and offline divide given how plugged in we are with ubiquitous computing and algorithms” (Pedwell 2021). She extended this thinking further in a valuable way:

> I guess we have always been mediated in particular ways, we've always been technological. But if we're thinking about the unfolding impact of our current and new technologies, particularly digital culture, smart, and algorithmic media, we tend to think about how this might change the ways that we think we engage. If the advent of written cultures meant that you didn't have to keep everything in your head the same way that an oral culture would have necessitated, what does it mean to have all the world's information at a click that's already been organised for you in particular ways? We could think of lots of negative implications of this, given that it’s corporations that are organizing it and ordering it in certain ways. But we could also think, and this is what Serres does, about what that might open up more affirmatively or interestingly in terms of how we navigate the world (Serres 2015). One of the provocative claims he makes is that on one hand we might say that we're becoming more algorithmic, more procedural, more computationally oriented as humans. On the other hand, maybe that opens up space, to the extent that we delegate these functions to our digital media, for us to engage in more intuitive ways with the unfolding of the world. To not be taking up so much brain space to have to do this kind of taking in, organising, and remembering information. We actually have more capacity to develop what he calls inventive and enduring intuition. How do younger generations have the capacity to engage with the world in terms of movement, flow, affect, and sense? In a way that might mean we engage with it differently and perhaps in some quite interesting ways. What does it mean for example, to move away from analysis or rational thought as our primary mode of engagement, to actually think about the kind of more affective means or intuitive means of being in everyday life? I say they are provocative because I think there are all sorts of questions and critiques that could come out of it; it's just interesting to think about what difference our new media might mean for how we are in the world. (Pedwell 2021)

In a thoughtful response to Pedwell’s reading of the move between our own appropriation of emotion in technologically reformed communication and sentiment, Marjo Kolehmainen delineated the distinctive difference between “individual emotions and… experiences” and how “concepts like atmosphere… also highlight collective emotions and collective experience” (Kolehmainen 2021). She identified that our thinking about social media - especially related to youth - there are “cuts and divides that digital cultures produce” (Kolehmainen 2021). In dealing

with vulnerability in and between groups such as "ethnic minorities and sexual minorities" different sentiment and emotional affect constructions - develop "offline and online": in other words, these online and offline settings produce different affective atmospheres and "we all need to be very aware about what kind of dichotomies we are producing when talk about digital cultures" (Kolehmainen 2021).

Tony Sampson further "segue[d]" the discussion of atmosphere in relation to collective affect and emotion in a direct re-reading of the atmospheric structures created before and during what came to be called the Cambridge Analytica scandal that was shaped on Facebook in 2016 and transformed by data scientist and eventual whistleblower (who worked for Cambridge Analytica) Christopher Wylie (Wylie 2018). Sampson made it clear that aspects of online "user experience" and forms of marketing and data that Cambridge Analytica produced for politically structuring the 2016 Presidential election, defined the way that affective "atmospheres are kind of collected" (Sampson 2021). Drawing from Tero Karppi's work in his book *Disconnect* (2018), Sampson further elucidated that the collection of data on platforms like Facebook also produces "look-alike audiences which is this kind of black box lucrative marketing device that they sell". He added that "what Karppi argues is that there is not just sort of raw information [from the site], but a lot of kind of sentiment is captured as well around these people: so, part of this atmosphere is commoditised and poured into those systems" (Sampson 2021).

These valuable insights by our symposium contributors suggest that interfacial platforms reconstruct our collective and individual selves. Emotional value and calibration reconstruct our human cultures into an affective atmosphere that becomes 'datafied' by social media platforms. As a result, we become datafied, collective versions of ourselves and our relationship to other forms of promotion.

Topic 3. Emotional Intelligence in Digital Culture (Marshall ed. 2021 @ 52.56m)

Critical to current thinking, writing, research, education, knowledge and - to be fully accurate - human culture - is artificial intelligence. Certain authors - and perhaps Richard Yonck (2020), and Reena Lenka (2021) have attempted this in the greatest way - emotional intelligence has been regularly and systemically integrated and linked with the expanding dimensions of artificial intelligence. The work of White and Katsuno (2022) further identifies that linking emotion with artificial intelligence has begun a major area of research for more than 30 years from Japan to Europe and North America. As mentioned earlier, affective computing is an area of research that has datafied areas of emotion that are often believed to be only discerned in academia in "qualia" readings and investigation: as Wang et al. summarise in their written article, "affective computing involves two distinct topics: emotion recognition and sentiment analysis" (Wang et al. 2022, 19).

The various dimensions and directions of artificial intelligence development were immediately identified by Maurizio Mauri. He gave an interesting example that helped us think through, specifically, the ethical dimension of AI. By bringing up the 2015 scandal around Volkswagen and how they had for years calibrated and reported their motor vehicles' carbon emission standards generated totally falsely and inaccurately. Nonetheless, their vehicles had generated the algorithm that Volkswagen had used to generate its data related to their low-level emissions compared to other motor vehicle companies. It was entirely false - as Mauri explained - the algorithms employed "were able to fake something" (Mauri 2021). These years of algorithmically creating information about the lower level of carbon emissions that their vehicles generated, led many consumers to choose to purchase Volkswagens over other vehicles for, in

essence, a better "user experience" in their contemporary lives. Mauri concluded that AI will envelope our world: "In my opinion, artificial intelligence is our destiny because, sooner or later, there will be a big improvement in understanding the brain and replication of the function of the brain. It will be just a matter of time that the machine, algorithm and systems can extract much more information [into our world and selves]: we have to deal with this [transformation]" (Mauri, 2021).

Ian Tucker elaborated on a few other dimensions of artificial intelligence and its longer history in computer-related culture. On a first level, Tucker debated how "AI has somehow become an equal to humans with human-kind of capacities". Drawing from Hannah Zeavin's book entitled *The Distance Cure: A History of Teletherapy* (2021), and his own investigations and applications, Tucker explained the emerging use of chatbot-like technologies "where you create a kind of automated form of therapy to support people in mental health" (Tucker 2021). Its development relates quite specifically to the now more than 40-year application of ELIZA on computers (Weizenbaum 1983): the technique was "replicating what therapist would do, but actually [generated] and just [provided] the means for users to kind of reflect: [it thus] "acted more as a kind of diary or a kind of mirror." (Tucker 2021) Drawing from Zeavin's teletherapy developments, Tucker developed a project (Tucker et al. 2023) that used the chatbot to understand and rate empathetic responses; but he discovered that beyond this calibration, the teletherapeutic chatbot "could also facilitate feelings of support in people that might use it, *just by being there*." (Tucker 2021) These developments in psychotherapy actually identify further elaborative extensions of Emotion Artificial Intelligence integration into our cultures and the managing of issues and concerns.

Topic 4: New Forms of Digital Sensitivity in Social Media and Online Platform Activity (Marshall ed. 2021 @ 63m)

The next topic had a clear relationship to the industrial, individual, and collective permutations of digital emotional intelligence and how it moves through our cultures and leads to formations of identity and related personas. It was an investigation into how *digital sensitivity* has emerged and fits into our online platforms and our structuring of our relationships we make via social media. Being digitally more sensitive is something that has clearly expanded - and normalised - in the recent era of the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequence of greater portions of our collective lives and connections are made through our technologies like Zoom and Microsoft Teams (Marshall & Qyll 2022b) for work and beyond.

Carolyn Pedwell identified how these forms of digital sensitivity even as they may have emerged through ELIZA came to be universally part of contemporary social media curation and correlation of all participants: "If you think of Amazon's ALEXA Home Assistant, who in the United States at least, has increased computational abilities to sense the emotional tenor of people's voices so she can sense if you have a sniffle in your voice and you are coming down with something and therefore recommends a recipe for chicken soup: it is, of course tied into particular profit-generating structures. In fact, everything ALEXA and her counterparts do [think of SIRI perhaps or any social media invite structure] - [which] are part of the structures of "surveillance capitalism" (Zuboff 2019) and platform capitalism and they are eliciting and producing affective relations and sensitivities for the generation of profit." (Pedwell 2021) As Pedwell explained, the systems connect us to certain products as well as processing who we are in a reconfiguration of data: "we are being nudged… pushed, constituted and shaped toward certain profit-generating outcomes for these multinational corporations." (Pedwell 2021).

The digital sensitivity is, in some ways, a form of further conversionary commodification of our worlds. Darren Ellis - drawing on his work on Simondon that we have discussed earlier - identified the process of individuation that technology can foster in an affirming way and "bring about some great kind of well-being for the world and for individuals." (Ellis, 2021) Ellis' thinking was recognising this technological commodification of our affective connections can also produce some positive outcomes: "I was also quite interested in my relationship - personally - with technology throughout the lockdown and how that really facilitated a lot of my work and changed my work practices in positive ways. It has been beautiful to be able to go into people's front rooms and engage with them much more effectively and in different kinds of ways that I have never engaged with people before at work." Ellis advanced on this further and explains that "he likes that kind of sensitivity that technology can bring to our lives in our [reformed] kind of community and new ways of communicating with each other." His thoughts on technology's capacity to personalise and connect also have the dangers and potential anxieties that we also feel. For instance, he explained, "that our data is being captured and, in some ways, it is changing our behaviours in a negative kind of way: [we sense] that digital platforms just want to increase the stickiness of our platforms." (Ellis 2021) Drawing from Simondon's duality around technology and individuation (Simondon 1992), Ellis further identified that he is "manipulating the black box of what I call our soul into forming more and more dangerous attachments with [social media] platforms." (Ellis 2021).

In many ways, our thoughts on the growth of digital sensitivity connected quite directly to Brian Massumi's work on how pervasive affective atmospheres construct forms of value in our contemporary culture. Massumi does identify that this atmosphere is often fitted into the pervasive political economy of capitalism; but his objective is refocusing our affective atmosphere and a new direction in affective value (Massumi 2018). Marjo Kolehmainen extended this thinking related to the "capitalization upon affect or emotion" and "how our emotions become information and data… for transnational companies". She then directly explained that: "I think [about] how to situate emotion in digital culture is so much about what goes beyond our intentions and control" (Kolehmainen, 2021).

Topic 5: Emotion, Performative Presentation and Curation -Emoji, Hashtags & Memes (Marshall ed. 2021 @ 72:24m)

Our next topic and theme investigated the performative manner in which we express emotion in digital culture and how they - the various techniques and icons we employ, deploy and read - are another elaborate reconstruction and curation of emotion in digital culture. Via text, social media and sometimes in a variety of other techniques the play of emotion into emoji, hashtags and memes has become regularised over the last decade.

Carolyn Pedwell accurately linked our various uses of these iconic signs of online culture. For instance, Pedwell explained that memes "involve forms of crafting, making and collaboration that bring online and offline together… They are allowing us to follow particular events as they unfold in time. They are emergent: the same as hashtag politics…. They are allowing us to follow particular events as they unfold in time and to engage with change as it is happening in a certain way" (Pedwell, 2021). Through the example of the hashtag, #BlackLivesMatter, Pedwell identified that these memes and hashtags go beyond the algorithmic focus of social media platforms to create "lots of different kinds of political projects and movements that are popping up in intersectional forms of engagement." Pedwell concluded with the idea that this form of connecting

to political movements and sentiments "prevents us from just having the closure of … "surveillance capitalism" (Zuboff 2019) and that nothing can exceed it" (Pedwell 2021).

The discussion of these performative icons expanded with David Marshall identifying that the use of emoji is a form of emotional translation and a particular way to "take away from a direct relationship to how you are feeling". "Emoji is really interesting because it is almost like a linguistic transformation of emotion [a pictogram] and it doesn't deaden it, but it "happifies and sometimes neutralises it". Expanding on Pedwell's insights, Marshall also identified that "hashtags, emerging from Twitter, were originally informational [like metadata (Zappavigna 2018) that libraries used for centuries], but also a collectivising emotional sort of structure" (Marshall 2021).

Tony Sampson added that these icons were a form of data collection for platforms such as Facebook. The massive response to social media posts on all sites has been the "like" button as Sampson explained, and this has led companies like Meta to build "behavioural data collection" and no doubt were "part of a wider marketing technique" (Sampson 2021) clearly connected to emotional connection and attribution. Darren Ellis further elucidated "that Facebook in 2018 released some of their data about how people used emojis and emoticons", and thus our data was calibrated to reveal the most and least popular emoji use. According to Ellis, Facebook said the least popular was the man-in-a- suit levitating emoji.

Source: Emojipedia: "Man in Suit Levitating Medium Skin Tone": Facebook 15.0 (Emojipedia, 2023)

The actual source of this image was from the album by the Specials in the early 1980s and, as Ellis explained, it was originally designed to replicate Peter Tosh, a two-tone singer and song-writer from that era. The emoji has never taken off and even though it has been coloured browner (in the longer ethical tradition that transformed emoji more than 5 years ago), it remains an oddity and is rarely used.

Emoji application and use transforms in a variety of cluster use. There are - no doubt - generational differences, but also major efforts by billions across age and gender to affectively connect and express what might be described as second-order humour often blended with other emotions. In contrast, hashtags are often more direct in their messages and connect to sentiments that have political and cultural significance.

Topic 6: Digital Mood Synchrony and Digital Contagion (Marshall ed. 2021 @ 81:48m)

Our final topic in working the place and movement of emotion was most directly related to Tony Sampson's research and work. On a first level, this section worked to address how mood is synchronised across and among social media participants and online culture. The topic of digital contagion, along with "mood synchronicity" has also been investigated across multiple disciplines. Researchers including Tony Sampson, have integrated cognitive science and pathways to understanding philosophy and meaning in contemporary culture. Sampson's work cleverly suggested that our contemporary culture has been transformed by social media reconstructions of our lives and connections. Emotional contagion and mood synchrony developed for several centuries; but linking these to our digital world(s) has been a valued pathway that Sampson has pursued in his work (Sampson 2012; Sampson 2016; including another that is co-edited by Darren Ellis: Sampson et al: 2018).

As Sampson explained, enveloping our reading of contemporary structures mood, feeling and contagion is the past thoughtful work by scholars such as Gabriele Tarde that we can now employ to understand the emotional structures of digitally mediated lives. Emile Durkheim, Sampson added, developed the notion of collective consciousness (Némedi, 1995), but through Tarde and eventually into our 21st century Sampson explained that it moved to a notion of "associative unconscious" (Tarde, 1903; Tarde 1901). These elements - along with Massumi's affect resonance/resonation and affective atmospheres (Massumi 1995) - all play in and around our collective attachment in digital culture. Ultimately Sampson identified that what we rely on in understanding digital emotion contagion and mood synchrony is directly connected to Tarde's pre-development in his concepts around affect theory and how it operates in human unconsciousness and consciousness. (Sampson 2021) Key related and contemporary thinkers that have played in this space include Nigel Thrift and, equally significantly, Bruno Latour. Both of their works are useful "reading" contemporary digital culture and how it plays with relations, associations, place and, ultimately, senses and feelings.

CONCLUSION (Marshall ed. 2021 @ 100m)

As is evident from the incredible group of scholars who took part in our Symposium, our collective work has generated remarkably valuable ideas. Our discussion of concepts, and thoughts around the relationship between emotion, affect, sentiment, and feeling, as they relate to the complex reconfiguration structure of digital culture, helped reveal the affective atmosphere of our contemporary lives. This special issue takes these thoughts and sentiments, and its authors explore them in nuanced ways that help us understand the fundamental transformation of the formations of persona when it is refabricated and reconstructed through an environment of digital interaction and feeling.

Tony Sampson's article in this issue explores our new world of user experience and its transformation of the feeling and promotional construction of positive emotion as British universities (and beyond) have reconstructed their connection to their potential students over the last 20 years. Helle Kannick Haastrup develops in her article an exploration of emotion in influencer culture through an investigation of their sentiment and connection that climate-related influencers

play across the emotional spectrum. David Marshall's mapping of emoji defines how pictograms have historically curated our lives and connections well before its emoji's emergence and integration into our sense, emotion and presentation of our online selves. In addition, Adriana Szili's work – not as focused on emotion in digital culture - is also published in this volume: it deals with the persona of teachers and concludes with its emotional impact in contemporary education both for scholars and students. Collectively, all of this work helps us understand the digital reformation of affect and its unrelenting transformation of our formation of fictive reconstructions of our selves via social media and online spaces. The place of emotion in our personas certainly needs to be explored further. This special issue at least identifies its digital mutation and persistent integration into our human formation of collective and, more significantly, individually shared identity: the digital persona.

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