Affect and emotion have come to dominate discourse on social and political life in the mobile and networked societies of the early 21st century.

This volume introduces a unique collection of essential concepts for theorizing and empirically investigating societies as Affective Societies. The concepts promote insights into the affective foundations of social coexistence and are indispensable to comprehend the many areas of conflict linked to emotion such as migration, political populism, or local and global inequalities. Adhering to an instructive narrative, Affective Societies provides historical orientation; detailed explication of the concept in question, clear-cut research examples, and an outlook at the end of each chapter.

Presenting interdisciplinary research from scholars within the Collaborative Research Center “Affective Societies,” this insightful monograph will appeal to students and researchers interested in fields such as affect and emotion, anthropology, cultural studies, and media studies.

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Routledge Studies in Affective Societies
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Routledge Studies in Affective Societies presents high-level academic work on the social dimensions of human affectivity. It aims to shape, consolidate and promote a new understanding of societies as Affective Societies, accounting for the fundamental importance of affect and emotion for human coexistence in the mobile and networked worlds of the 21st century. Contributions come from a wide range of academic fields, including anthropology, sociology, cultural, media and film studies, political science, performance studies, art history, philosophy, and social, developmental and cultural psychology. Contributing authors share the vision of a transdisciplinary understanding of the affective dynamics of human sociality. Thus, Routledge Studies in Affective Societies devotes considerable space to the development of methodology, research methods and techniques that are capable of uniting perspectives and practices from different fields.

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Audience emotions are not yet established as a theoretical concept, neither in audience research nor in emotion and affect studies. This chapter outlines an understanding of audience emotions based on research and theory in the social sciences (sociology) and the humanities (theater and performance studies). The concept is developed from our research on physically present audiences in live events and goes beyond comprehending emotion as an individual psychological or physiological process. It stresses forms of expression, display, and feeling that emerge from the affective relations between a potentially heterogeneous social collective and a performance, an artifact, or any other act or object that forms part of a common focus of attention. While audiences have mostly been studied with respect to mass media and, more recently, digital media, the concept of audience emotions underlines the relevance of immediate audiences, that is of audiences that are bodily co-present at an attended event. We are thus concentrating on audiences that interact jointly with and are corporeally directed toward a common focus of attention. Audience emotions are not a mere aggregation of the emotions of other emotions, do not represent an "inner" state of being, but are an action, a dynamic activity. Audience emotions are thus an important element of the audience's activities and of their involvement in an event. (3) Reflexivity: Audience emotions connect an audience or part of an audience with a specific situation and the entire event. At the same time, they constitute specific relational dynamics within members of the audience themselves. Audiences not only act as a heterogeneous ensemble of individuals, but as individuals relating to an audience of which they are part as audience in a way that bestows them with agency and power. This is why audience emotions have been associated with political potentiality as well as with threats to social order since antiquity. (4) Temporality and spatiality: Audience emotions are characterized by a certain spatio-temporal immediacy depending on the fundamental co-presence of bodies, on spatial-material settings, institutions, discourses and interpretative frames that structure an event. But they can also exceed the temporal frame of the present by influencing and affecting subsequent events, or by evoking a strong and/or long lasting impression on memory, prompting people to seek out similar intensive collective experiences again. (5) Shared contingency: Although audience emotions are shaped and formed by a multifactorial set of elements pertaining to a performance, an artwork, or object in focus, this array of elements is not the only powerful influence on audience emotions. They enact an experience of shared situative contingency, which is why their emergence is, to some extent, unpredictable and also uncontrollable. This moment of social contingency is often experienced as an intense and empowering experience, crossing the boundaries between the individual and the collective as well as between the audience, the event, and their broader context.

In the following, we will briefly sketch major trends in audience research and outline crucial factors that have resulted in the neglect of audience emotions. We will then develop our understanding of audience emotions by elaborating on the five key characteristics mentioned above and by discussing the potential of the concept for understanding societies as Affective Societies.

Audience studies, performance, and the focus

Audiences have been the subject of extensive theoretical reflection in the social and cultural sciences (for an overview see Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). Although their association with masses and collectives (Blumer, 1954) has stirred heated theoretical debate, there is surprisingly little systematic empirical research on bodily co-present audiences across various sociocultural fields such as theater, music, or dance. One most notable exception is media audiences. A large part of audience studies is devoted to audiences of mass media and, more recently, digital media, and some ethnographic studies have addressed interactions between audience members and forms of interaction mediated by digital technologies (Sullivan, 2013; Webster & Phalen, 1997; Papacharissi, 2015). However, the interactive dimension of bodily co-present audiences and the interdependence and connectedness of audience
From this backdrop, audience emotions can be understood as collective emotions directed toward the object of audience attention and, at the same time, directed to the audience itself, within the frame of a specific event. This dual perspective allows us to ask how audience members relate to (1) what is constituted as the focus of attention, (2) to one another, and (3) to other aspects of an event (such as objects or the spatial setting). Thus, the acts of observing, hearing, or perceiving and of being observed, being heard, and being perceived are fundamental aspects of audience emotions. As audiences are affected by their focus as well as by themselves and their surroundings, audience emotions are not only a “reaction” to what is happening, they also perform and reflect specific situational entanglements and communicate an embodied evaluation of them, whether by way of laughing, crying, and clapping or by other forms of collective bodily expression and display.2 Last but not least, audience emotions are often experienced as ecstatic and intensive moments of communization and as a social relationship based on the subjective feeling of (parts of) the audience in that they—even if only temporarily—share an emotional experience of the world (→ affective communities).

**Shortcomings of audience research**

So far, audience research has mostly neglected the diversity and the artistic as well as social and political potentials of audience emotions. There are several barriers to a better understanding of audiences and, in particular, audience emotions: a historical suspicion toward the emergence of collective emotions among a gathering of people and, more recently, a skepticism based on an understanding of modern societies as predominantly rational and enlightened formations (see Borch, 2012, for an overview). Specifically, the taming and suppression of affective dynamics and emotions are a conventionally established paradigm in the tradition of the analysis of societies (e.g., by Max Weber, Norbert Elias, Jürgen Habermas, Talcott Parsons). A better understanding of audience emotions is also obstructed by a tendency to confuse or merge individual and collective responses. Further, it is impeded by the fact that one specific formation of an audience—a disciplined, corporeally immobilized group of people concentrating to make sense of an event—is implicitly assumed to represent the analytical paradigm for audiences per se. Historical research, however, has shown that those audiences whose expressive conduct is strongly regulated are a recent and modern invention, starting from the 1850s to the end of the 20th century. Audience activities in the 21st century, with their uses of social media, interactive feedback loops, and other forms of participation (Burland & Pitts, 2014) seem to confirm that the model of the mostly immobile, silent, and concentrated audience is a historical exception and a theoretical construct rather than a historic reality (Kattwinkel, 2003).

Against this background of the (allegedly reduced) repertoire of emotional expressions, most existing studies on the emotions of audiences consider emotions to be internal and individual psychological phenomena (Schoenmakers, 1992; Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998, ch. 3). Therefore, their methodologies typically address individual audience members, for instance, in the form of questionnaires offering different scales for “engagement” or “attention” and relating them to physiological measures of arousal of a relatively small number of selected individuals (Stevens et al., 2014). In order to understand our perspective on audience emotions, it is important to recognize how these methodologies one-sidedly focus on audiences that have been subject to a history of self-discipline and their related dispositifs, such as concert halls for classical music or playhouses for middle-class theater. In particular, the rise of bourgeois culture has led to a massive disciplining of affects. This disciplining encompassed both the repression of undesired emotions and the generation of desired emotions (Kolesch, 2006). Before the 19th century, strong affective displays like shouting, crying, or spitting had been common at music, theater, or rhetorical events (Campbell, 1987). From the 19th century onward, audiences increasingly tended to be sanctioned for “expressive behavior” and for all activities which might undermine full concentration on the performance at hand, such that even “noise made by unwrapping chocolates” was offensive to theater actors in the 1950s (Kershaw, 2001, p. 142). Except for framing activities at very specific, highly conventionalized points, like applause before and after the marked end of the performance, audiences had to reduce their activities to the operation of specific sensual modalities only, such as listening in concert halls, seeing in museums and galleries, seeing and listening in the theater, etc. Audiences were thus transformed into mere perceptual apparatuses. What once was active participation became “passive” experience which could then be addressed as a psychological phenomenon: “Spectators are thus trained to be passive in their demonstrated behaviour during a theatrical performance, but to be active in their decoding of the sign systems available” (Bennett, 2014, p. 54).

**Key features of audience emotions**

To overcome the shortcomings of audience research mentioned above, we stress the following five key features of audience emotions: collectivity, activity, reflexivity, spatiality and temporality, and contingency.

**Collectivity**

While most existing studies on audience emotions often confuse individual and collective reactions, we understand audience emotions as forms of collective...
emotions (von Scheve & Salmela, 2014; Sullivan, 2015). It is crucial for the specificity of audience emotions and their societal relevance to note that immediate audiences are a temporal gathering of (mostly) strangers coming together at a certain place and sharing a short span of time together to watch a performance or see a work of art. Audience emotions are thus intricately linked to the specific modality of being a member of an audience. They display how collectives are affected by and affect performances and how these dynamics affect audiences themselves (→ social collectives). The common tendency to think of an audience as a single entity cannot do justice to the heterogeneity assembled in an audience or to the variety of audience emotions. Audience emotions are the collective experience of a momentary corporeal synchronization and of a sensuous transmission. They reflect the emergence of intercorporeal resonances among a group of assembled people—a process often referred to as one collective body transgressing the individual bodies of the assembled audience members. Most audience emotions empirically depend on a “law of large numbers” in terms of forms of communication that presuppose coordinated collective action, such as the unison of sound produced by large numbers of voices, thundering applause, or standing ovations.

This collective dimension can also be actualized ex negativo when a single audience member experiences himself as being out of sync with the majority. Not being amused at what the rest of the audience is enthusiastically laughing at or being moved to tears by something that seems to leave others unmoved are audience emotions which are only possible in relation to and in contrast to fellow audience members.

Activity

The collectivity of audience emotions does not mean that audience emotions are just “passive” responses to an object or performance in attention. Although often referred to as “spontaneous,” audience emotions are a crucial part of the communicative, evaluative and energetic activity of audiences. This activity often is coordinated and prepared.

Audience emotions can be coordinated situationally with respect to certain formats. Thus, rhetorical formats, such as contrast pairs, may allow the audience to clap collectively at exactly the same time (Atkinson, 1984). Similar situational ways of affecting audience emotions can be found in the case of religious sermons, but also, in a less verbal manner, with respect to certain moves in football games (Knoblauch, Wetzel, & Haken, 2019). Audiences may be instructed explicitly to perform certain “choreographies” either bottom up, by fans or social movements, or top down, by event managers and organizers. The “capo” orchestrating the collective emotions of football fans, the cheerleaders in a basketball arena, or the “claque” of a political speaker initiating applause are paradigmatic cases. In some contexts, audience emotions can be highly ritualized and become part of the “script” of these performances, such as cheering in pop-music concerts or at comedy shows. Furthermore, with the use of social media, activities such as posting, liking, or tweeting become important catalysts as well as expressions of audience emotions. The agentive and collective dimension of audience emotions is also a crucial economic as well as a political factor, with corporations and companies using them to create and/or reinforce a special bond between brands and their consumers and with social movements or political parties trying to enact forms of participation, empowerment, or voter commitment.

Even the presumed “inactivity” of an audience may be ritualized, such as the short hush after the final move of a symphony where no one wants to spoil the moment by applauding, or the silence during the transubstantiation at a Catholic mass. These collective forms of silence can be considered as performances of specific emotions, such as awe (in terms of “aesthetics” or “religion”).

Audience emotions are not only coordinated, they are often also prepared in advance. Knowledge relevant for audience emotions may be transmitted beforehand, that is by fanzines, social or other media. As the coordination of audience emotions depends on the knowledge of different conventionalized forms and collective repertoires of emotions (→ emotion repertoires), they also vary according to the venue, its cultural sphere and corresponding affective arrangements (→ affective arrangement). Audience members can also prepare themselves (through dressing, makeup, equipment with flags or other emblems, ritualized behaviors, etc.) before the event in order to facilitate the generation of audience emotions.

Refl exivity

To enable audiences to act as collectives, audience members need to direct themselves not only to the focus of the audience’s attention, but also to the audience as audience. Thus, audience emotions are reflexive in a very specific manner. Members of an audience are not only perceiving, acting, or performing, but are being seen by other audience members as undertaking these actions. This reflexivity is essential for audience emotions: Instead of being instances of imitation, as mass-psychological theories maintain (Brooker & Jermyn, 2003, pp. 1–2), collective displays like clapping, cheering, or singing depend on audiences orienting themselves toward the conduct of others and on collective forms of communication. The diverse ways in which audience members relate (or do not relate) to each other, how they act and interact with one another and with objects, technologies, spatial settings, and the specific temporal order of an event, distinguish audience emotions from other kinds of emotions.

This relationality of audiences is twofold: First, audiences are affected by the shared focus that co-constitutes them as an audience. Second, there are also intra-audience relations. If these relations are homogenous and intensive, they may be compared to what Durkheim (1912/1965, pp. 250ff) calls “efferescence.” In most empirical cases, they are highly variegated, thus
evidencing the heterogeneity of audiences. In immersive theater, for example, there may only be one audience member interacting individually with a performer, while in a sports stadium, thousands of fans may be coordinating their activities in order to sing or gesture collectively. While individualized audience members may act in a multitude of ways, the affective relations between audiences — as collectives — and the focus of their attention can take typical communicative forms — like applause, booing, stage diving, and so forth — displayed and performed in the collective corporeality of an audience.

**Spatiality and temporality**

The situational entanglements audience emotions perform and reflect are characterized by certain forms of spatiality and temporality. Audience emotions are affected by material settings and architecture, by objects, atmospheres, and media technologies (Quirk, 2011). These spatial alignments can be materialized (e.g., in the architectural construction of theater buildings or sports stadiums), but they may also be situative, as in the case of the physical formation of a street musician’s audience forming a circle. Audience emotions can be experienced as an intensive, transitory moment of synchronized immediacy and commonality; they can also unfold sequentially and spatially — sequentially, such as in the metachronal rhythm of the “Mexican wave,” performing enthusiasm and elation; spatially, such as by walking from stage to stage at a music festival (Heath, vom Lehn, & Knoblauch, 2001). As markers of intensity and transpersonal collectivity, audience emotions exceed the temporal frame of a live event by affecting future behavior, by prompting people to engage with future situations in specific ways, and by leaving a strong and/or long-lasting impression (→ Midān moments).

**Shared contingency**

Highly metaphorical language is often used to describe audience emotions and their enactive, transmissive potential (“contagion,” “emotional infection,” “electricity,” etc.). These metaphors indicate that audience emotions are not determined by material settings, genre conventions, cultural practices, etc., but that they always are processes and experiences of shared social contingency. The generation of a sensual sphere of shared movements and actions and the emergence of a mutual, albeit temporary, feeling of belonging is as unpredictable as it is uncontrollable. The potential to act as a collective body paradoxically results from a highly contingent occurrence, thus bestowing audience emotions with the transgressive power to transcend the self-conscious identity of individual audience members and generate a momentary feeling of community and belonging in a gathering of mostly strangers. This contingency has provoked a long tradition of suspicion toward audience emotions and various efforts to enclose and contain them.

**Relevance of audience emotions**

Audience emotions are episodic realizations of affective relations between audience, performance, and the surroundings. Based on routines and patterns of behavior shaped by collective knowledge, cultural practices, and repertoires of emotion, but also influenced by material and situative settings, genre conventions, social structural aspects like class, age, or gender, and regimes of power, audience emotions perform the collective engagement with others attending the same live event, feeling and sensing others’ actions and reactions. Audience emotions thus constitute temporary moments of social cohesion and belonging. The temporal community formed by audience emotions lies on the border between “emotional communities” (Rosenwein, 2006) and affective communities (→ affective communities). While emotional communities share certain values, ideas, and social structural elements like class, status, or age, as in the highly homogeneous audience of a classical music concert, affective communities constitute intermediary realms of affective exchange and collective immediacy which transgress socially defined categories and culturally valorized positions. Understanding the specificity of audience emotions and their potential to instigate processes of communitization thus has important ramifications for future research on collectives and collective agency. This is because audience emotions indicate the relevance of shared emotions for experiences of social cohesion, whereas personal or collective interests, values, and shared ideas appear to be secondary for the experience of community.

Until recently, audiences have been and are still considered as a kind of public. Some highly disciplined, individualized, and standardized audience formations were even considered as an idealized model of the public, without regard for the uncontrollability or even the destructive potential of audience emotions. In contrast, theater audiences have been constructed as a homogeneous public sphere of bourgeois society. Today the conceptualization and better understanding of audience emotions is a key factor in researching the impact of audience activities in various fields of civil societies and their relevance for the comprehension of contemporary neoliberal systems at large, where being a member of an audience becomes a ubiquitous and everyday experience. Audience emotions emerge not only as an outcome of certain venues, but also as a driving force for social gatherings and for attending public events. Conducting research on audience emotions is thus an essential aspect of grasping the functions and current modifications of public spheres. Accordingly, the study of audience emotions may contribute significantly to a contemporary understanding of the public and its transformations in various global communities.

**References**
