

## **The (Alt-) Right Kind of Feelings– Emotional Expressions as Discourse in Swedish Right-Wing Alternative News Media**

*Magnus Danielson, Department of Media Studies, Stockholm University, Sweden  
[magnus.danielson@ims.su.se](mailto:magnus.danielson@ims.su.se)*

### **Abstract**

The influence of alt-right news on political discourse and public agenda, and its contribution to affective polarization, call for an extended understanding of how discursive emotionality in constructed this type of media. But even though most research acknowledge the importance and prevalence of emotionalization in alt-right media, few studies elucidate how such emotionality is constructed. This paper contributes both methodologically and empirically to that field of inquiry. Methodologically, by demonstrating how verbally expressed emotional experiences can be identified and structured according to emotion type, subject, object, valence, intensity, complexity, and context, and used as units of analysis when analysing discursive emotionality in media texts. Empirically, by analysing how expressions of emotional experience in in Swedish alt-right news construct emotionality in support of ideological positions and by characterizing political opposition. The results show that most expressions of emotional engagement are represented as responses to objects positioned on the spectrum the alt-right's objects of discontent; immigration, gender studies, left-wing politics, climate activism, mass vaccination, multi-culturalism, wokeness, queerness, and public service media. The expressions form a dichotomy between legitimate and illegitimate emotions in relation to those objects – a dichotomy marked by the opposites: strong – weak, reflected – spontaneous, honest – hypocritical, and sensible – hysterical. This dichotomy of emotional expressions also brings character-building into political discourse. Left-wing politicians are represented as putting spontaneous and misguided emotions ahead of rational

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thinking and national interests, and the emotional expressions by sympathizers are contextualized as gullible and marked by naivety, whereas alt-right representatives or concerned citizens are expressing emotions founded in rational thinking and insight. The emotional make-up of the news sites forms both an emotional community and an “emotional refuge” where emotional expressions of elsewhere questionable moral status may be expressed and given recognition.

### **Keywords**

Alt-right news, discursive emotionality, expressions of emotional experience, emotional refuge

### **Bio**

Senior Lecturer in Journalism, Department of Media Studies at Stockholm University. My fields of expertise are: investigative journalism, journalism and power, neurodiversity in popular culture, and mediated emotionality. At present I am engaged in a research project on emotions in the news funded by The Olle Engqvist Foundation

### **Recent publications:**

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### **ORCID-ID/Websites**

Orcid-id: 0000-0003-4846-4851

Researchgate: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Magnus-Danielson-2>

Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.se/citations?user=NBPJz0AAAAAJ&hl=sv&oi=ao>