

## **Media Resentment**

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### **Abstract**

Reports worldwide are telling of diminished trust in the news media (Flew 2021), and there is an ongoing discussion on how suspicion and contempt towards journalism – and the media more generally – are growing (Carlson et al. 2021). Many have taken this situation as a problem and threat to democracy and reason (Dahlgren 2018; Neuberger et al. 2023). But how can we understand this expression of discontent towards the media and journalism? In this paper, we develop the concept of “media resentment”, which we consider to be a useful tool when trying to understand contemporary developments. We view media resentment as a *complex of feelings* that are both individual and social, embodied, and ideal (Burkitt 1997; Williams 1977). Crucially, this concept makes it possible to situate and analyse these cognitive and emotional evaluations of the media in relation to socio-political conditions and ideological struggles. Although media resentment is a feeling that is experienced and expressed by individuals, it is less a psychological than a sociological concept: it points towards the intersection between individual assessments of the media and the wider web of social and political relations in which individuals’ evaluations of the media are formed and shaped. The paper suggests a definition of media resentment as the feeling that the media – intentionally or unintentionally – are denying you or endangering what you have rightfully earned, whether by not giving it to you, by directly telling you to abstain from it or by intervening in social processes so that your enjoyment of what you have earned becomes impossible. The paper is mainly conceptual but draws on preliminary results from an interview study from Sweden (n=80).

**Keywords**

Resentment, Trust, Journalism, News Media

**Bio**

Fredrik Stiernstedt is Professor of Media and Communication Studies at Södertörn University, Sweden. Peter Jakobsson is Associate Professor of Media and Communication Studies at Uppsala University. Together they are currently researching media trust (or lack thereof) in Sweden. Their most recent joint publication is: Jakobsson, P., & Stiernstedt, F. (2023). Trust and the Media: Arguments for the (Ir)relevance of a Concept. *Journalism Studies*, 24(4), 479-495.

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