

# Emotional expressions in the Swedish discourse on crime

## *A comparison of the 2018 Moderate and Social Democratic election campaigns*

### **Abstract**

The aim of the present article has been to explore how the public is encouraged to engage emotionally in criminal policy matters. By comparing how two of the largest political parties in Sweden – the Moderate Party and the Social Democratic Party – express emotions during the 2018 election campaigns, the article has illustrated an emotional political struggle over voters. Even though worry and (dis)trust are prominently articulated emotions by both political parties, they address these emotions in different ways and the parties also differ regarding which emotions they encourage in the public. The Moderate Party describes worry and distrust as a result of a correct evaluation of society's state, the constituted solution being to change social conditions through an advancement of state control. Instead, The Social Democratic Party portrays worry as a result of the uncertainty of the future, and the party encourage the public to invest in trust in others to overcome this worry.

*Keywords:* Criminal policy; sociology of emotions; political parties; worry; (dis)trust

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT are often described as emotionally-charged fields (Karstedt, Loader & Strang 2011). Analyses of Western criminal policy has also indicated that these emotional traits have become increasingly prominent in criminal policy discourse in recent decades (Pratt 2011; Tham 2022). For instance, political initiatives are often legitimised by referring to the desires and emotions of crime victims and those of the general public. In Sweden, the concept of "trygghet" (i.e. safety/security) dominates the criminal policy debate, which illustrates how the presumed emotions of the public also have come to guide crime policies in Sweden (Andersson 2010; Hermansson 2022; Sahlin Lilja 2018).

Although this account of an emotional criminal policy discourse appears to be widely accepted (Garland 2006; de Haan & Loader 2002; Karstedt, Loader & Strang 2011; Pratt 2007), little criminological research has addressed how political actors make use of emotions in distinct ways in order to advance their criminal policy. In the criminological tradition, the emotional tone of criminal policy discourse is often

understood by being contrasted to an assumed more rational response to crime (Karstedt 2011; Loader 2011). Furthermore, emotions relating to crime and punishment are regarded with suspicion since they are assumed to be closely associated with high levels of punitiveness, in public discourse and in sentencing practices (Loader 2011). But emotions are equally important in directing our perceptions *away* from punitive sentiments (Hermansson 2019).

Pratt (2007, 2011) has scrutinised the power as well as the limits of "penal populism", attributing its limits mainly to the institutions of the criminal justice system and (as a last saviour) the limits of economics. However, there are also limits and norms circumscribing the "emotional discourse" on crime and punishment. Emotions must be articulated and manifested within certain cultural boundaries and different emotions direct our perceptions in distinct ways (Barbalet 2001; Johnson 2022; Rosenwein 2010). It has been argued that the emotional culture in Sweden, as well as in other Western societies, advocates emotional restraint and regards intense emotional expressions as being deviant (Wettergren 2013). Thus, expressing emotions as a politician is a balancing act, even when it comes to emotionally and morally impregnated issues such as crime and punishment.

Emotions are, moreover, structurally and ideologically embedded (Barbalet 2001; Hochschild 1979) and different political parties, given their distinct histories and voter demographics, will be likely to adjust to these structures and express emotions in different ways (Johnson 2013, 2022). Building on this understanding, the aim of the present article is to analyse how two of the largest political parties in Sweden – the Moderate Party<sup>1</sup> and the Social Democratic Party – express and encourage emotions during the 2018 election campaigns. While the crucial role of emotions has been acknowledged in the research on social movements (Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta 2001) and populist movements (Cossarini & Vallespín 2019), the present article rather explores how "mainstream politics" makes use of emotions (see Johnson 2013, 2022 for a similar approach). This article contributes by empirically comparing how two Swedish mainstream political parties encourage the public to perceive and feel for political solutions, thereby illustrating an emotional political struggle over voters as it manifests in Sweden.<sup>2</sup> Even though the Moderate Party has historically been the political party pursuing criminal policy issues to greatest extent in Sweden, previous research has shown how the Social Democratic Party has moved closer to traditional conservative "law-and-order" politics (Tham 2001). Addressing emotional expressions in this context has the potential of illuminating political struggles and potential disagreements in the criminal policy field, even when the political propositions are strikingly similar. Although this study seeks to scrutinise emotional expressions as they appear in the election campaigns of two political parties, this scrutiny is not based

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1 The Moderate Party is a liberal conservative political party, previously named the Conservative Party.

2 How the public *actually* feels, and how people are influenced by political discourse, is beyond the scope of this article (for such analyses see Karstedt & Endricht 2022).

on a rational ideal that juxtaposes emotions with reason. Rather, it is assumed that emotions differ in terms of their potential political effects. Thus, the ways in which emotions are expressed direct us towards certain political solutions and render other solutions marginal.

In election campaigns, the politicians' need to engage the general public and appeal to them is accentuated. Through the use of emotions, politicians can strive to attain this kind of public involvement (Brader 2006; Edelman 1964; Johnson 2022; Manning & Holmes 2014). Similar to the most recent general election in Sweden (which took place in September, 2022), the 2018 general election was characterised by a significant preoccupation with law and order which was evident both in relation to the Social Democrats' and the Moderates' elections campaigns. Additionally, the radical right-wing party, the Sweden Democrats, had occupied the position of being the third largest party<sup>3</sup>, according to voting polls, which has also plausibly influenced the emotional tone of the other political parties. However, ideals associated with a "Nordic exceptionalism" (Pratt 2008), such as humane penal practices, still appear to influence the ways in which criminal policy is communicated in the Nordic countries (Barker 2017; Hermansson 2019; Smith & Ugelvik 2017). This study therefore also has the potential to illustrate how acuteness and alarmism regarding criminality is communicated in a country which simultaneously struggles to preserve a self-image of humanness and benevolence.

### On emotions – in elections and in criminal policy discourse

Researchers from a variety of scientific fields have emphasised the centrality of emotions in politics in general (Clarke, Hoggett & Thompson 2006; Manning & Holmes 2014) and more specifically in election campaigns (Brader 2006; Marion & Farmer 2003; Yates 2016). Specific elections as well as the electoral success of particular political parties have been analysed in terms of emotionality (Bronstein, Aharony & Bar-Ilan 2018; Sampietro & Ordaz 2015; Tucker 2018; Valentino, Wayne & Oceno 2018; Yates 2016). Edelman (1964) emphasises the emotional aspects of elections by exploring the practice of democratic elections as a secular ritual. However, the mediated election campaigns that we experience in Sweden (Strömbäck & Nord 2008) are probably not associated with the high levels of emotional energy that characterise a number of other rituals. Barbalet (2006) even argues that the institutional setting of the ballot, or the secret vote, is accompanied by emotions of loneliness and impotence. However, Edelman (1964) argues that *specifically because* many aspects of politics are remote and abstract to most citizens, the emotional appeal of political messages becomes crucial. Manning and Holmes (2014) additionally stress that citizens increasingly value affinity, i.e. an emotional connection to politicians and to electoral politics. These accounts indicate that emotions play a key role in the election campaigns of the political parties.

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3 In the 2022 general election, the Sweden Democrats became the second largest party in parliament, receiving 20,5% of the votes.

Criminological research has related a heightened level of emotionality to an increase in punitiveness (Carvalho & Chamberlen 2018; Garland 2006; Pratt 2007). Both fear (as well as insecurity and worry) and anger have been associated with the discourse on crime and punishment in modern Western societies. Research on fear of crime has shown how the general public is being addressed as fearful in the public debate on crime and punishment (inter alia Furedi 2005; Lee 2007). Describing people as being fearful, worried, and vulnerable has been interpreted as a way of encouraging compassion and sympathy (Christie 2001). Directing criminal policy initiatives towards the presumed emotions of the public, not only towards crime itself, has moreover broadened the scope of the criminal justice system (Bauman 2000; Garland 2006). Boutellier (2004) has discussed how a preoccupation with safety has resulted in an understanding in which the justice system is seen as an acute solution rather than as a last resort in handling societal problems like crime. Thus, emotions such as fear, worry and insecurity have all been associated with an intensified preoccupation with crime control.

Research has also illustrated how more aggressive emotions such as anger have come to occupy a prominent role in criminal policy discourse (Garland 2006; Pratt 2007) and that these kinds of emotions relate to punitive sentiments (Hartnagel & Templeton 2012; Johnson 2009). Carvalho and Chamberlen (2018) argue that the kind of solidarity produced by punishment (and potentially also the discourse on crime and punishment) rests upon hostility and the exclusion of certain groups. Thus, solidarity and sympathy appear to have the potential to encourage more hostile emotions and practices.

The emotionality of criminal policy discourse has been related to the retrenchment of the welfare state (Garland 2006; Bauman 2000). For instance, the affinity potentially produced by the articulation of emotions such as fear and worry has been associated with a transformation from a materialist, class-based understanding of society towards an understanding in which the avoidance of risks and disasters plays a crucial role (Beck 1986; Manning & Holmes 2014). However, research has also illustrated how emotions are being discursively linked to the welfare state. For example, Agustín (2019) has illustrated how left-wing parties in Denmark encourage emotional bonds to the welfare state and that the police are described as "welfare heroes", contributing to the "everyday social change" of which we are all a part (Agustín 2019:124). Similarly, Ljunggren (2015) has shown that the Social Democratic Party leaders have encouraged different kinds of emotions over the past decades, and how this "emotional navigation" of the workers formed part of the creation of the welfare state. Since previous research has illustrated that the welfare context influences how criminal policy is communicated in Sweden (Andersson 2010; Barker 2017; Hermansson 2019; Smith & Ugelvik 2017), it is reasonable to assume that the ways in which emotions are used in Swedish criminal policy discourse should be understood as being related to and influenced by the welfare context, rather than being interpreted as a move away from a "welfarist" understanding of crime.

Ljunggren (2015) explores how Swedish Social Democratic party leaders during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries changed from encouraging the working class to be angry to

rather making feelings of worry and insecurity accessible to this group. This analysis emphasises that anger and worry carry distinct connotations, potentially also influencing the ways in which politics can be carried out. Similarly, political psychology has distinguished between worry and anger, stressing that these two emotive states are associated with distinct effects (Steenbergen & Ellis 2006; Valentino, Wayne & Ocen 2018). While worry has been described as a likely response to an uncertain threat, anger is a response to a familiar object or situation (Steenbergen & Ellis 2006; Valentino, Wayne & Ocen 2018). The uncertainty accompanying worry has made some researchers describe this emotive state as reflexive, assuming that worry directs people to reconsider choices and information (Valentino, Wayne & Ocen 2018). Other researchers, however, have pointed to the longing for certainty that is engendered by the worried emotive state (Steenbergen & Ellis 2006). Although some researchers have distinguished between fear and worry, seeing fear as a more momentary emotion than worry (Ljunggren 2015), Barbalet's (2001) account of fear is fruitful to understand the political articulations of worry as well.

Trust, like worry, is a future-oriented emotion and, according to Barbalet (1996, 2008), the basis of human cooperation. Moreover, since trust is directed towards the future, it can never be based on complete knowledge, he argues. Thus, engaging in trust means accepting your dependence on others. Walklate (1998a) also interprets trust as being the result of regularity and reliability in social relations and she additionally suggests a link between worry/fear and trust by drawing on Giddens' concept of "ontological security" (Giddens 1991 in Walklate 1998a:412). In her study of two high-crime areas, she illustrates how practices of trust are nuanced, contextual and strategic, and structurally embedded (Walklate 1998b). Distrust and disenchantment have also been associated with penal populism – in this case being specifically directed towards the elites – and is additionally seen as fuelling anger (Pratt 2007).

Although emotions have been explored previously, in relation to both elections and criminal policy discourse, relatively little criminological research has been conducted that compares the political parties' criminal policy. Structural accounts of emotions have shown that emotions are deeply embedded in class structures (Barbalet 2001; Wettergren 2013). The Moderate and the Social Democratic parties have historically attracted voters from different classes of society. People from an economically-privileged position have historically supported the Moderates whereas the Social Democratic Party has its historical support in the working class. These differences could possibly influence how the two political parties encourage the public to engage emotionally in criminal policy discourse. Moreover, the Moderate Party has most insistently pursued "law-and-order" policies in Sweden, and even though the Social Democrats has come to adopt a similar approach to these issues, the Moderates is still considered to be the leading party on crime control according to the voters (now together with the Sweden Democrats). The political use of fear of crime has been interpreted as a conservative project, reinforcing racialized stereotypes and legitimising the pursuit of order (Fanghanel 2016; Hall, Critcher, Jefferson et al. 1978). However, the resembling concept of "safety" has also been explored in the UK in relation to New Labour (Brownlee 1998;

Denney 2008). It has been argued that "safety" has enabled social democratic parties (in the UK and in Sweden) to approach criminal policy matters by linking these issues to traditional welfare politics (Andersson 2010; Denney 2008). In relation to the Swedish context, I have previously argued that connotations and emotions associated with the welfare state are also prominent in the Swedish criminal policy discourse on safety (Hermansson 2019, 2022). This points towards the need to take the (national) context into account when exploring emotions in criminal policy discourse.

## Understanding emotions sociologically

The present study treats emotions as being socially situated and structurally embedded (Barbalet 2001; Hochschild 1979; Wettergren 2013). Emotions can also be used strategically, by both individuals (Clark 1987) and political actors (Johnson 2022), in order to influence emotions and the actions of others. This strategic use of emotions influences what Johnson (2022) among others calls "affective citizenship", how emotional subjects are constituted as well as how we are encouraged to perceive social relations and political solutions. The practice of communicating censure and sympathy, which is intimately linked to the discourse on crime and punishment, is partly an emotional practice; emotional expressions can be used in order to reinforce this ideological and moral communication (Hochschild 1979; Karstedt 2006; Mason 2014).

The ways in which political parties strategically use emotions is influenced by emotional norms in society and by the fact that emotions are structurally embedded and related to social hierarchies such as class (Barbalet 2006; Hochschild 1979; Turner & Stets 2005). Rosenwein's concept of "emotional community" (Rosenwein 2010) refers to a normative order of emotions, which includes social rules regarding how we should feel in different situations and how we should express emotions. These normative orders might also influence whom different emotions can be attributed to and whom different emotions can be legitimately directed towards (Wettergren 2013). Rosenwein (2010) further stresses that the work of certain representatives could be interpreted as an expression of a larger emotional community, including the audience being implied in these texts or speeches. In the present article, the political parties' emotional expressions are to some extent interpreted as a reflection and reproduction of society's shared normative order of emotions. The fact that the Moderate Party and the Social Democratic Party both target broad audiences further point towards an interpretation in which the political discourse is seen as reproducing rather than challenging a dominant emotional community.

However, variation between these two political parties is also highlighted in the present article in order to illuminate an emotional political struggle. The two political parties, as do parents according to Hochschild (1979), can be interpreted as reproducing the class structure in society through their different ways of encouraging emotions among of the voters. The concept of "emotional communities" emphasises variations and inconsistencies within a society and is therefore a well-suited framework to explore differences between the political parties' emotional normative orders (Rosenwein &

Cristiani 2018). Additionally, Von Scheve and Ismer's (2013) distinction between two different forms of collective emotions – "I-mode" and "we-mode" collective emotions – is used to illustrate some of this party-political variation. Similarly, Barbalet's (1996, 2001, 2008) distinction between the object and the causes of fear and his understanding of trust as a combination of two distinct types of confidences illuminates how the two political parties address worry and (dis)trust in different ways.

## Material selection and analysis

In order to explore emotional expressions in the election campaigns, a thematic text analysis was conducted. The analysed material comprises documents produced by the two political parties themselves (specified in table 1) and speeches, political debates and interviews with party representatives (party leaders or spokespersons on criminal policy matters), broadcast on TV, radio or online. The included "texts" were all posted or were linked to on the official Facebook page of the two political parties prior to the election (1 January to 9 September 2018) and were therefore assessed as being key to the parties' aim to reach out to voters. Most of the "texts" were originally broadcast on traditional media, but they were further highlighted by the political parties through Facebook. An overview of the selected material is presented in the table below.

*Table 1.* Selected material.

Number of each type of text included from the election campaigns of the Moderate Party and the Social Democratic Party in the 2018 Swedish general election. Facebook posts not included.

Type of material	The Moderate Party	The Social Democratic Party
Speeches	7	7
Debate articles	29	7
Interviews	6	4
Debates between party leaders or party representatives (both parties participating)	11	11
Documents produced by the parties (election manifestos, presentations of manifestos and campaigns, criminal policy manifestos, articles on official website)	16	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>47</b>

The material was analysed by coding paragraphs including explicit articulations and verbal manifestations of emotions. One example of such verbal manifestation is when the Social Democratic party leader describes people as "wondering about the future" in a context where this "wondering" resembles worry. The analysis is based on the assumption that one potential way of encouraging emotions among the general public is to articulate or describe such emotions. In his historical exploration of how Swedish Social Democratic party leaders encourage the working class to become emotionally involved in politics, Ljunggren (2015) uses the term "making accessible". Similarly, Barbalet (2006:37-38), as well as Rosenwein and Cristiano (2018:40), acknowledge that many socially and politically important emotions might be reinforced by being expressed. Moreover, when exploring the norms circumscribing emotions within a society, the use of language can be illustrative (Rosenwein & Cristiano 2018; Soriano 2015; Wettergren 2013).

The coded material was thematised based on the specific emotions that were being explicitly articulated and described. Emotions that were attributed to the general public or to the politicians themselves were of particular interest. In some cases, however, politicians attributed emotions to themselves without encouraging the public to share such emotions which will be discussed later. The question of which emotions are being encouraged is to some extent theoretical, and conclusions are also drawn based on previous research on specific emotions (i.e. Barbalet 1996, 2001, 2008) and on collective emotions and identification (Von Scheve & Ismer 2013).

Worry, fear and insecurity all appeared as key elements of the election campaigns. While the analytical procedure also involved focusing on the potential differences between the political use of these emotions, the explicit articulations of worry was pursued in more detail since the analysis revealed interesting differences between the political parties. Trust and lack of trust were also chosen due to their prevalence in the material and, similar to worry, an analysis of trust illustrates how emotional norms are, at least to some extent, party specific.

## Results

### On worry

Initially, it is worth noting that the emotions of fear, worry and insecurity appear to be used interchangeably by the political parties when it comes to attributing such emotions to the general public. All these emotions are said to be on the rise, particularly among a number of specific groups such as women and people living in structurally disadvantaged neighbourhoods. These are some of the most prominent emotions to be attributed to the general public in the discourse on crime and punishment, a pattern that has also been established in previous research (Boutellier 2004; Lee 2007). There are, however, situations in which they are not used interchangeably. Moreover, the two political parties make use of worry in different ways. The following section will focus on these differences given that they are less established in research.



*The Moderate Party – Worried, but not fearful*

For the Moderate Party, expressing worry appears to be a legitimate emotional articulation. The party leader attributes this emotion both to himself and to others and worry is rarely described as irrational or harmful in any sense. In the quotations below, worry appears to be associated with a reasonable evaluation of the current and future state of society.

The Moderates have been issuing warnings for some time now about the consequences of serious gang violence. As a result, we've been accused of slander, but we are sincerely worried about the current situation.

(The Moderate Party, debate article, Expressen, 2018-06-20)

Thus, expressing worry or concern appears to be a way of expressing responsibility and acknowledging problems. Worry is treated more unambiguously than insecurity as an emotion but, similar to insecurity, this emotion implies a rational observation (see Martin 2015). Therefore, the proper political response is not to attempt to quell this worry, but to change the actual conditions that give rise to this emotion. Since worry has been described as a future-oriented emotion, the expression of worry implies an evaluation of the future in (potentially) negative terms. Worry, however, also offers a personal note and an affinity with the public is established through the articulation of this assumedly shared worry.

The Moderate Party appears to make a distinction between worry on the one hand, and fear and insecurity on the other. To them, expressing worry does not appear to be associated with passivity in the same way that insecurity and fear are assumed to be. Consequently, attributing worry to oneself appears unproblematic, whereas fear and insecurity are emotions that are predominantly attributed to others. In a TV interview, the Moderate party leader states:

In my mind, it's bad enough that people living in areas where there are constant shootings, that they are afraid. That's bad enough. But when this squanders or erodes the actual trust in the social contract for many other people who want to trust that the government will play their part, then we are on thin ice [...] these criminal gangs, I'm worried that they are destroying something important in society.

(The Moderate Party, party leader interview, SVT, 2018-08-30)

Fear is attributed to both the general public and to political opponents. In both cases, fear is associated with passivity and hesitation. The Moderate Party attributes fear to women being too afraid to go out alone at certain times and in certain places; to Jewish men being afraid to wear religious symbols/clothing in public space because of fear of harassment; and to politicians being too afraid to take part in public debates. Thus, fear and insecurity are assumed to obstruct people in illegitimate ways.

However, when fear is attributed to a political opponent, the hesitation caused by

fear is rendered unjustified and problematic. Fear can thus be used to both reinforce and preclude sympathy. The Moderate Party comments on its opponents, describing them as lacking the courage to address "uncomfortable" political issues. In these cases, fear is contrasted with honesty, and is described as obscuring the truth. This emotive portrayal of the political opposition creates an imagery of courage and sincerity that you can attribute to your own political party. So, whereas fear, at least partially, is being contrasted with sincerity and lucidity, worry is being associated with these valued characteristics.

*The Social Democratic Party – Transforming existential insecurity*

Worry also holds a central position in the Social Democratic electoral campaign. Whereas the centrality of this emotion unites the two political parties, the Social Democratic Party makes use of this emotion in a different manner than the Moderates. In the Social Democrats' strategic plan, the party encourages its campaign workers to express worry in their campaigning when stating:

We are critics of society and we highlight the problems that worry us and the voters, and we solve them. By tackling social problems and increasing safety, we create a belief in the future and social cohesion.

(The Social Democratic Party, strategic plan for 2018 election)

Although the Social Democratic Party encourages party members to express worry or concern in regard to social problems, worry is predominantly attributed to the public. Whereas when the Moderate Party articulates an inclusive "we" through the rhetoric of worry, the "worried" instead appears to be mainly the object of the politics in the Social Democratic campaign (see Ljunggren 2015 for a similar interpretation of the Social Democratic use of worry). In the Social Democratic election campaign, worry (as well as insecurity) is coupled to abandonment and powerlessness. There are several examples in which the worries and concerns of the public are described but, for the most part, the Social Democratic party leader does not ally himself emotionally with this presumably worried public. Instead, people are encouraged to unite in a longing for community and solidarity. In his speech on International Workers' Day, the Social Democratic party leader states:

If people feel abandoned by society, this gives rise to increased worry. This creates the breeding grounds for extremism. It allows men with fancy words and cold hearts to gain power by pointing to scapegoats and spreading hate. But friends – there is another way forward. The vast majority of Swedish people want something different. They want a democratic community that takes responsibility. So, let us live up to that! [...] We shall never abandon our nation to insecurity, worry and extremism. We shall build what so many dream of what so many deserve: a stronger society, a safer Sweden.

(The Social Democratic Party, party leader speech, 2018-05-01)

While not articulating a shared worry, the Social Democratic party leader expresses that he *understands* that our society might create emotions of worry and powerlessness. The emotive state of worry is potentially a fragile state and, according to the Social Democratic understanding, worry also appears to relate to existential unease. In the quotations below, worry is acknowledged, and in this sense also legitimised, but we are at the same time encouraged to transform this worry into social engagement. It appears that the Social Democratic party leader is attempting to bring the general public to his own emotional state of mind.

I can understand how you may feel powerless when faced by the vast challenges for our society. No single individual can do anything about forests burning because of extreme weather and climate change – or cars burning because of criminality and social divides. No individual can single-handedly stop the despicable progress of Nazism or provide safety for their family in a world dominated by trade wars and the clash of weapons. But you do have power – because you are not alone. If you look up, you'll find you are surrounded by thousands and thousands more who share your worries and want to try and solve them in the way we Swedes have always faced major challenges: together.

(The Social Democratic Party, debate article, Aftonbladet, 2018-09-08)

The Social Democratic Party's articulation of fear differs slightly from its articulation of worry and insecurity. Like worry, fear is used to describe existential and future-oriented unease, although fear is predominantly conceptualised as a consequence of specific crimes or specific threatening situations (such as the presence of Nazis in the public sphere). One of the distinctive features of fear, as it appears in the Social Democratic election campaign, is to be found in the way the Social Democratic party leader responds to this emotion. Collins (2004) has described fear as a momentary emotion containing a high level of emotional energy. This high level of emotional energy is reinforced by the Social Democratic party leader when he articulates a strong resentment, and in some cases even anger, towards the causes of people's fear.

To summarise, both parties offer a sense of community and fellowship through worry, since it is emphasised that many people feel worries. However, in the Social Democratic election campaign, worry is depicted as problematic and undesirable and therefore as an emotion that should preferably be transformed. In contrast to the Moderate Party, worry is not presented as a way of being responsible and clear-sighted. Rather, worry is associated with powerlessness and exposure. Worry is, additionally, contrasted with a sense of security in a way that suggests that worry, as well as insecurity, is coupled to instability. For the Moderate Party, on the other hand, worry is not used to confirm existential unease. The Moderate party leader repeatedly states that he is worried, and the worries of the public are presented as evidence of a problematic societal state. Hence, worry is not predominantly conceptualised as an expression of vulnerability. Rather, the Moderates' ideal of rationality (Hermansson 2004) is reflected in this emotion. According to the Moderates' understanding of worry, it intersects

concern, thereby involving a realist and rational evaluation of the state of society (see Barbalet 2001 for a discussion on emotions resembling reason and cognition).

The distinction made by Barbalet (2001) between the causes and the objects of fear can be used to illustrate the different ways in which the two political parties address worry. Barbalet (2001) argues that "we feel threatened because we fear" and not, as is often assumed, the other way around (Barbalet 2001:154-155, see also Bauman 2006 and Beck 1986 for a similar account). This means that the threat, in this case crime, should be understood as an object towards which we direct our fear. However, according to Barbalet, the causes of this fear are to be found in social structures. Whereas the Social Democratic Party emphasises social and economic structures as being the causes of worry and insecurity, the Moderates emphasise what Barbalet calls the object of fear. In the Moderate campaign, worry is a result of a rational estimation of an object (crime), and it is therefore the object of fear and worry that ought to be changed. In the Social Democratic campaign, on the other hand, worry appears to be closely linked to vulnerability, uncertainty and lack of power, which could explain why the Social Democratic party leader rarely states that he himself is worried.

## On (dis)trust

### *The Moderate Party – celebrating trust while legitimising distrust*

Trust is presented as a central emotion in the Moderate Party's election campaign, although it is predominantly *distrust* that is manifested and made accessible to the public. The general public is described as being disappointed and as having been failed by the authorities, which has presumably made people doubt and distrust the state. Crime, it is assumed, not only causes fear and insecurity but it also reveals the inability of the state to protect its citizens from crime and provide security. Consequently, it is argued that crime diminishes trust, not only among people but also citizens' trust in the state.

It's true that Sweden is a relatively safe country, but the violence capital of these criminal gangs is a genuine threat to our safety and security. The more common shootings and killings become, the greater the risk of innocent people being affected. At the same time, gang violence undermines trust in the legal system's capacity to protect the citizens. This trust is easy to destroy, but difficult to rebuild.

(The Moderate Party, debate article, Expressen, 2018-06-20)

Furthermore, in the Moderate Party's election campaign, trust is described as a Swedish core value and celebrated as a national symbol. Since this emotion is described as being eroded by crime, the very foundation of our society (the social contract) is portrayed as being threatened. Maintaining a high level of trust in society appears to be a moral obligation, a way of showing respect to previous generations who have developed this trust. In a speech, the Moderate party leader proclaims:

(We must) seriously acknowledge and understand all the things that are really

really good in our country, understand that it needs protecting, defending and developing. The kinds of values that generations before us have built, and which we quite simply don't have the right to destroy or compromise. Values that have to be passed down in even better condition to our children and grandchildren. This is a question of trust between people who do not know each other, but also trust between citizens and the authorities. A uniquely strong asset for Sweden and for the Swedish people.

(The Moderate Party, party leader speech, 2018-05-11)

Nevertheless, distrust is confirmed and rendered a legitimate emotional state. If we understand trust as being a unifying national value, the fact that this value is portrayed as being threatened also reinforces the image of society as fragile, in need of care and deference. Since crime presumably violates this national symbol, expressing a type of anger that Collins refers to as "righteous anger" (2004:110) as a politician could be interpreted as becoming more legitimate. Anger might appear more "rational", in a sense, when articulated in these particular situations (Törnqvist 2017). This anger, in turn, reinforces the image of something valuable being threatened (Wettergren 2013). In a Facebook post, the Moderate party leader states:

Horrible scenes have been observed in Gothenburg this evening. Once again, cars are burning, and innocent people are affected. This actually makes me furious. The social contract is more fragile than some people believe. When trust and confidence are eroded, something is fundamentally destroyed. These are no "protests", it's sabotage.

(The Moderate Party, Facebook post, 2018-08-13)

In the Moderate Party's election campaign, trust is depicted as a common value which we are entitled to in Sweden because of our history and the work of previous generations in developing trust in our society. Trust is further assumed to benefit everyone and is therefore something we should cherish. However, for the most part, people are not encouraged to feel trust. Similar to the Moderate Party's use of worry, it appears as if the transformation of distrust into trust should be realised by changing actual social conditions. The cause of the presumed lack of trust in society is attributed to external factors such as high levels of crime in combination with an absent police force. However, although distrust is repeatedly linked to police deficiencies, we are encouraged to sympathise with the police and their working conditions rather than blame them for not managing to keep the public safe.

### *The Social Democratic Party – encouraging trust in a worried population*

The Social Democratic Party also portrays trust as being a fundamental value in Swedish society and, like the Moderate Party, the Social Democrats link this emotional value to a sense of safety. In the quotation below, safety appears to be a prerequisite for trust. Although the direction of the interrelatedness of safety and trust is not clear, the

way in which they are being associated with each other suggests that trust and safety are connected to social cohesion and to a close and predictable relationship with the justice system (Hermansson 2019). While the absence of the police is described as one of the causes of distrust, it is assumed that it is external factors (beyond the control of the police) that cause this absence. In the quotation below, the Social Democratic Party states that the police do not "arrive" or "get through". With this statement, the party implies that criminal youths who obstruct the police are the main reason for this police absence.<sup>4</sup>

The social contract is the cement holding Sweden together. We jointly finance our welfare via taxes, and people support this as they believe it is better to solve problems together than individually. But if people don't feel safe – whether on the labour market, in their old age or on the streets and in their own neighbourhood – this threatens the very foundations of our social contract. Because who has the ability to sustain trust if you don't feel safe? Who do you turn to if you can't guarantee the safety of your own children? It's not hard to understand that those people already doubting the capacity of society lose even more faith when the police do not arrive ("get through" in the Swedish original). When there are shootings and drug trades in the school yard or outside the food shop.  
(The Social Democratic Party, debate article, Expressen, 2018-07-12)

It is further assumed that both safety and trust prevent feelings of worry. A safe and trusting society appears as a societal state, reflected in the emotions of individuals. The Social Democratic Party acknowledges that certainty cannot be guaranteed and that trust therefore cannot be based on certainty. However, whatever happens, we can choose to take care of each other. Thus, trust is depicted as being the result of a social investment. In an interview, the Social Democratic party leader states:

We're taking giant leaps now [...] whatever happens in our lives, we shall take care of each other, invest in each other, as this is what builds trust in society, and this is what safety means. And I believe that, I'm convinced that, this is the solution for people who feel worried.  
(The Social Democratic Party, party leader interview, TV4, 2018-09-02)

Closely related to trust in the authorities are emotions that involve an evaluation of your own future and the future in more general terms. Alongside the concept of trust, hope and "belief in the future" are used to express these kinds of emotions. When these emotions, or lack thereof, are articulated it is mainly the emotions of the general public

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4 For a number of years preceding the 2018 election year, there has been a political discussion about youths throwing stones and in other ways obstructing the police and ambulance service from accessing locations and doing their work. How these services are constituted as victims of crime is, however, beyond the scope of this article.

that are being discussed. In the Social Democratic campaign, these are not emotions that the politicians explicitly attribute to themselves. However, the Social Democratic party leader manifests his trust in other ways. Barbalet (2001, 2008) interprets trust as an emotion that overcomes "the uncertainty of the future". By creating an image of certainty about the future and, furthermore, anticipating a favourable future, trust facilitates action, according to Barbalet. In the following quotations, the Social Democratic party leader manifests his trust in what appears to be an attempt to encourage this emotion in the general public.

I know that developments in the world around us may seem difficult to grasp and threatening [...] We don't have to fear the future, if we have the strength to shape it together [...] That's why I plan to make use of our economic strength, to create a stronger society, where you can feel safe, free, at home. Where you know that you're not walking alone. I want you to be able to have faith in the future. You'll never be able to predict exactly what the future will bring. But you should know in your heart, that we will face the future together.  
(The Social Democratic Party, party leader speech, SVT, 2018-05-31)

In conclusion, both parties portray trust as a core value in Swedish society. The Social Democratic Party describes distrust as an understandable emotion due to factors such as criminality and an absent police force, but the public is also encouraged to trust. The uncertainty about the future is acknowledged, but the Social Democratic Party portrays a society in which a positive change is already happening, and people are encouraged to have trust in the benevolence and the future cooperation of others (Barbalet 1996). Whereas both political parties reaffirm emotions like distrust, hopelessness, and disbelief – creating an image of a society characterised by these emotions – they themselves want to signal that they are meeting the future with hope and confidence. The Moderate party leader states that he is hopeful, and that Sweden should be characterised by hope. Yet, in the Moderate Party's election campaign, trust and hope do not appear to be encouraged.

According to Barbalet (2008, see also Wettergren 2013), trust can be understood as a combination of two types of confidence: confidence in yourself and confidence in others (and their loyalty). In Sweden, the concept of trust is also used to describe citizens' emotional relationship with public authorities. Barbalet's definition of trust is illustrative when interpreting the way in which subjects are constituted by the political parties. The Social Democratic party leader encourages trust by reassuring the public of its own ability to handle potential hardships. Similar to the party's use of worry, lack of trust is used in a way that implies a vulnerable and insecure subject in need of support. Furthermore, trust is described as something we can create together and as something we ought to feel. In contrast, the Moderate party leader attributes the lack of trust among the general public to the ambient circumstances. Trust is portrayed as fragile emotional bonds between people and between people and society. These emotional bonds are assumed to be broken when people are subject to crime. We are

not encouraged to feel trust, even though it is emphasised that high levels of trust in a society is both desirable and something to which we are entitled. In this portrayal, the public is not being constituted as lacking confidence in its own ability to overcome obstacles. Rather, the Moderates portray society as being in such a bad state that, at the moment, trust would be misapplied (Barbalet 2008).

## Concluding discussion

The aim of the present article has been to explore how the public is encouraged to engage emotionally in criminal policy matters. By comparing how two of the largest political parties in Sweden – the Moderate Party and the Social Democratic Party – express emotions during the 2018 election campaigns, the article has illustrated an emotional political struggle over voters. Even though worry and (dis)trust are prominently articulated emotions by both political parties, they address these emotions in different ways and the parties also differ regarding which emotions they encourage in the public. These differences are important since different emotions carry their distinct political effects and have the potential of legitimising very different criminal policies.

In the election campaigns of both parties, worry holds a central position. Describing crime victims as well as the general public as worried and fearful, has previously been interpreted as a way of constituting vulnerable, passive and non-threatening subjects, entitled to sympathy (Ljunggren 2015). Whereas the angry subject demands and maybe even acts on its own, the worried subject rather appears to need support and help (Ljunggren 2015). Describing the public as worried therefore creates a discursive space in which political solutions that aim to reduce these emotions can be presented. Worry also offers an empathetic note, a political ideal which has previously been related to the governing form of the welfare states (Ljunggren 2015; Smith & Ugelvik 2017). Smith and Ugelvik (2017) use the term "Big Mother welfare state", arguing that the Nordic welfare states are characterised by a self-image of being humane and caring. Thus, the expression of worry and concern resembles this ideal of the Nordic welfare states and it seems to form a part of a national emotional community.

Similar to the political use of the concept of safety, trust offers a way of constructing crime as a problem that affects and concerns us all (Hermansson 2022). Thus, focusing on social bonds such as trust could be seen as a way of enhancing a sense of community and affinity. As previously stressed, articulations of trust can also be understood as having the function of legitimising anger since crime is then described as affecting society at large (Collins 2004; Wettergren 2013). By describing a whole community as being threatened, punishment is also legitimised. Carvalho and Chamberlen (2018) argue that the image of community in criminal policy discourse is one in constant need of protection. Thus, the solidarity produced through the address of trust appears to be closely related to hostile emotions as well as to punishment.

According to Barbalet (2001), emotions should be analysed as potential social causes, not only as effects. Karstedt (2002) additionally stresses the importance of acknowledging that processes of punishment are linked to a wide range of emotions,



sometimes even contradictory ones. These notes raise the question of whether different emotions direct our preferences towards different forms of criminal policy. Political articulations of worry and distrust both appears to have the potential of directing our preferences towards a more punitive criminal policy, as well away from such preferences. In the Social Democratic perception, worry and distrust are understandable emotions. However, the Social Democratic Party makes use of the fact that these emotions can be seen as future-oriented emotions, their object being the future (Barbalet 1996, 2008). The Social Democratic party leader encourages the public to trust the future as well as fellow citizens. Trust and cooperation are, in turn, regarded as solutions to the threat of extremism. Similar to the Social Democratic historical use of safety (see Andersson 2002), trust is here constituted as a productive state. In contrast, the Moderate Party portrays worry and distrust as being the result of a correct evaluation of society's current and future state. For these emotions to change, social conditions must change. Although trust is celebrated, it is not seen as a solution in itself. Rather, it is portrayed as a consequence of a safe and predictable space. This safe space, in turn, is presumably achieved through a closeness to the judiciary and through the incapacitation of dangerous offenders (Bauman 2000; Boutellier 2004).

Both parties depict worry and (dis)trust as constituting one another. Also, both parties address these emotions as collective emotions, but they make use of different forms of collectivism, which by extension means that they encourage different forms of affective citizenships through their articulations of worry and (dis)trust. The Moderate Party encourages so called summative, I-mode collective emotions (von Scheve & Ismer 2013). Worry and distrust are described as collective emotions in the sense that they are shared by many people, being a consequence of similar appraisals of a problematic situation. Since the current situation is constituted as the object of people's worry, the solution is to change this situation which presumably will be achieved by a strong state. This, in turn, will engender a vertical type of trust, a trust in the state. The Social Democratic Party, on the other hand, encourages non-summative, we-mode collective emotions. Besides being shared by many others, worry and (dis)trust are described as collective in the sense that we are encouraged to identify with others with similar emotions as the ones we experience. These emotions are used to reinforce group identification and this group identification is constituted as the solution itself. The "togetherness" and the investment in others is presumed to transform worry into trust and it is thus a form of horizontal trust that is encouraged and depicted as norm.

Some of the patterns described above are probably influenced by party positions. Describing society in more negative terms and confirming more negative emotions when being in opposition is expected and is also a pattern previously established in research (Brader 2006). Similarly, the way in which the Social Democratic Party encourages trust could be a strategic move to make people feel content and therefore act on existing loyalties. However, the Social Democratic encouragement of trust could also be understood as a means of creating an emotional bond to the welfare state, portraying change as being achieved through cooperation (Agustín 2019; Barbalet 1996, 2008). This interpretation would rather suggest that the way in which the Social

Democratic Party encourages trust is influenced by emotional norms associated with the party and with the welfare state.

As acknowledged in the introduction, the Social Democratic Party has moved closer to a traditional conservative approach to criminal policy that involves an advancement of judiciary control. This development does not seem to be interrupted in any near future and the emphasis on differences between the political parties is not intended to suggest this, either. However, what this analysis shows is that even though the Social Democratic Party has pursued law-and-order-politics for decades, the party still encourages the public to understand its criminal policy initiatives through the lens of welfare values.

Finally, both political parties strive to establish an affinity with the public in their election campaigns. Whether or not this is the result of a less class-oriented focus, or whether it has become an increasingly prominent pattern, as suggested by Manning and Holmes (2014), is impossible to say based on the present analysis. What this analysis illustrates, however, is that both worry and (dis)trust can contribute to achieving this affinity. Despite this common trait, a close scrutiny of discrete emotions reveals that emotions can be used to encourage different forms of collective identification and to enable different kinds of criminal policy.

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## Author

Klara Hermansson is a post doc researcher at the Department of Criminology in Stockholm. In her research, Hermansson addresses symbolic aspects and emotional appeals of Swedish criminal policy.

## Contact

Klara Hermansson  
 Department of Criminology, Stockholm University  
 106 91 Stockholm, Sweden  
[klara.hermansson@criminology.su.se](mailto:klara.hermansson@criminology.su.se)