

“Left, right or something else, it doesn’t matter to me”

A study of master strategies, impression management, argumentative fallacies and substantiations in alt-right and alt-left discussions online

Abstract

This study treats argumentative behaviours, argumentative fallacies, impression management efforts, argument substantiations and master strategies in comments in the Facebook group *Det fria ordet*. The objective is to create a deeper understanding of how the discussions on the alt-left and -right in an online setting are carried out. This could facilitate meeting individuals' argumentative behaviours and strategies, further enabling constructive discussions. The method chosen is argumentation analysis and the theoretical framework consists of Simmel's (1971) social types, Goffman's (2004) theory on impression management, argumentative fallacies according to Björnsson et al. (2009) and Ås' (1980) master strategies. From these, ideal types, in accordance with Weber's (1962) analytical tool, are constructed. The ideal type the *Lonely know-it-all* is characterised by pragmatism, fact appreciation, the master strategy ridiculing and an outside position. The *Limitless Victor* and *Mastering Artist* aim is to win the discussions, create disputes for the disputes' sake and the use of the argumentum ad hominem fallacy. The *Limitless Victor* uses harsh language and the *Mastering Artist* refined language. The *Peaceful Historian* presents a peaceful self, substantiates argumentations with historical events and moves the responsibility for them arbitrary onto dissidents. The theories maintain relevant, however, Simmel's (1971) social types need to be widened and adapted to be applicable onto some of the particularities of the online context. The ideal types also reflect today's societal and social situation, e.g. "fake news" and the online context. The ideal types show a variety in impression management efforts, master strategies, argumentation strategies and substantiations. It indicates that to overcome the obstacles of the discussions, they need to be addressed according to their particularities. To practically meet commentators with these characteristics therefore requires further research.

Key words: alt-left, alt-right, ideal types, Simmel, Goffman, Ås, Weber, argumentation analysis, master strategies, fallacy, impression management, netnography

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1.0.0.0 Introduction

The political landscape in Sweden has gotten increasingly polarised and there has been a growth social media usage among politicians and the public. The political situation has been called “a right-left game of thrones” (Schierup et al. 2018, p. 1839) describing the now dividing political discourse. The election results from 2018 points to a tendency to vote for political parties in parliament located to the furthest left and, in particular, right (Valresultat 2018). Extremist and alternative parties on both sides and their right to occupy physical places, their ideologies and violent political actions are eagerly debated topics in Sweden today. The alt-right party *Nordiska Motståndsrörelsen* (henceforth NMR; author’s translation: The Nordic Movement of Resistance) and their presence during *Almedalsveckan* in 2018, an event where political parties make speeches to the public and advocate for their policies, awoke much resistance and agitated feelings (Aghamn 2018). Alongside, the importance of freedom of speech was emphasized (Sydsvenskan 2018). Moreover, the violent alt-left organisation *Antifascistisk Aktion* (henceforth AFA; author’s translation: Antifascist Action) has gotten considerable mentioning in media, as they have attacked politicians from the right wing and instigated riots (Holm 2015; Olsson & Baas 2017).

Internet has been described as set: “/.../ apart as a medium with the potential to transform the democratic landscape at large and expand the public sphere” (Stromer-Galley & Wichowski 2011, p. 169-170). Political discussions online are a powerful phenomenon and they influence politics in the offline environment (Ewald 2018-03-10). The #metoo-campaign demonstrates this as it impacted Swedish politics and resulted in government actions against sexual violence (Regeringen 2018-07-01). Individuals are also more apt to discuss politics online than offline (Stromer-Galley 2002, p. 36). This is partly because of the experience of web-based debates as more intimate and private nature (Eliasoph 1998). This experience means that people who perceive themselves to communicate in private are less moderate when expressing their opinions (Wyatt et al. 1996).

The tendency to use Internet in political debates is reflected in the Swedish public, e.g. Facebook groups opposing adhan or welcoming refugees into the country. Hence, many of the political social media groups are related to issues separating the left- and right. This is evident in Swedish society as immigration and integration were the most important topic for the voters prior to the election 2018 (Lundberg Andersson 2018) and NMR evoked the greatest interest on social media during Almedalsveckan 2018 (Olsson 2018).

Issues regarding freedom of speech, immigration, racism and the general political left-right battle is dividing, and it has forced also the public to take a stance on them. The social media usage when discussing politics has reshaped the political discussions between people, as they tend to be more up-front and sincere in their opinions online. The public's opinions online are very influential and are a force to be reckoned with. Hence, people's argumentation strategies (i.e. fallacies), argument substantiations and the interplay between discussants are important to study. To study this is especially vital in an online environment, as it will facilitate an understanding of these aspects in a new everyday used medium for many Swedes. So, how do the Swedes really discuss alt-right and alt-left issues online?

2.0.0.0 Purpose and research questions

2.1.0.0 The purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to analyse argument types, i.e. fallacies (definition below “Fallacies”), impression management efforts and master strategies in political discussions online. The empirical material consists of comments to posts on the topics the alternative and extremist political right and left (hereon, “alt-left” and “alt-right”). The comments are posted in a Swedish Facebook group called *Det fria ordet* (“The free word”; author’s own translation) and it has the expectation of open and free debate. The characteristics of the fallacies, the impression management efforts, the argumentative substantiations and master strategies are constructed into ideal types in accordance with Weber’s (1962) analytical tool. In order to construct these ideal types, the following theories are applied: Simmel’s (1971) theory on social types, Goffman’s (2004) dramaturgical theory and Ås’ (1980) theory on master strategies. The method used to conduct this study is argumentation analysis.

The main theory from which the ideal types are constructed is Simmel’s (1971) social types. The ideal types are primarily analysed from the outlook of the social types the *Stranger*, the *Miser* and the *Nobility*. The analysis of the arguments takes into account the arguments’ substantiations and conveyances, e.g. with facts or history. They are also viewed as an aspect of impression management according to Goffman (2004), as they often are utilized to favour a specific self-presentation of the commentator, e.g. peaceful or pragmatic. The argument fallacies used among the commentators, such as *argumentum ad hominem* and *straw manning*, are additional elements in the construction of the ideal types, since certain groups of comments often are characterized by specific argumentative pitfalls. Ås’ (1980) theory on master strategies adds another layer to the ideal types and elucidates the occurrence of e.g. *ridiculing* and *invisible making* (Ås 1980).

2.2.0.0 Research questions

This study treats the following research questions:

- What argumentative behaviours, argumentative fallacies, impression management efforts, argument substantiations and master strategies can be found in comments to posts related to the alt-left and alt-right in the Facebook group *Det fria ordet*?
- How can the concept of ideal types help explicate aspects of these behaviours and characteristics?

3.0.0.0 Delimitations

This study is not concerned with the arguments on the political alt-left and -right per se. Therefore, the individuals' opinions are not within this study's research spectrum. Additionally, argumentation analysis is the method chosen, i.e. it's the argument types and substantiations that are analysed. This means that rhetorical tools are not included in the analysis. The impact the online interactions might have on individuals' lives in the offline setting is not attended to either, as the material exclusively is from an online source.

4.0.0.0 Disposition

This study starts with a description of its relevance, followed by previous research on this study's topics. Ensuing is a section on the empirical material's characteristics, a presentation of argumentation analysis as a method and how it has been applied. Next is a description of netnography and how its approach to Internet research has inspired the study. The ethical considerations are thereafter presented followed by the study's theoretical framework. The findings are thereafter presented in the analysis and combined in the construction of the ideal types. Subsequently is the conclusion of this study's findings.

5.0.0.0 The relevance of the study

5.1.0.0 The lack of nuance in the online environment

In online fora, the environment when discussing the alt-left and -right is harsh and the debates often rigid and without nuance. The conversations often lack in attempts to understand each other and it's e.g. common to find epithets such as "racist", "communist" and "extremist" thrown around. A founding idea for this study is that political opinions among the public aren't that easily categorised. After reading many comments in *Det fria ordet*, it's evident to me that the group is a good example of how this preconception is right. This, since the comments suggest different political orientations, opinions and perspectives not always coinciding with the streamlined structured political parties or ideologies. The discrepancy between political discussions online and offline in Sweden is interesting, as the expressions and debate climate isn't the same. Swedish politics are known to be deliberative and pragmatic (Petridou 2017, p. 40) however, this image is contested by the hostile environment this study shows exists in *Det fria ordet*. This study's broad intention is to shed light on different types of argumentative strategies to contribute to a wider understanding of how alt-left and -right topics are discussed in Sweden online. This is a prerequisite to meet the arguments in discussions and facilitate a progression in the discussions.

5.2.0.0 Political discussions online and their influence

The political debates have to a great extent relocated to the Internet and the impact of them on society as a whole is pertinent. Stromer-Galley and Wichowski (2011, p. 169-170) states that: “The Internet, as a channeler-of-channels, offers a number of characteristics that invite the possibility for increased political participation generally, and political conversation specifically”. They claim that political conversations online help the individual clarify and process one’s attitudes and lays the foundation for the individual to affect policies and decisionmakers (ibid.). Many political initiatives started on social media sites; the Swedish #metoo-campaign was e.g. followed by similar initiatives such as #tystnadtagning in the theatre- and film industry. The campaigns created an uprising in Swedish society, which gives insights into how intertwined the online and offline worlds are and the significance of discussions on the Internet. Probing how comments in online fora are composed, the arguments substantiated and which master strategies that are used, could facilitate the refuting of these comments practically. It could also aid in designing legislative measures to approach these issues. The case of conflicts and confrontations online has come to the point of legislative alterations in Sweden, as it’s now easier for prosecutors to prosecute slander and threats online (Regeringen 2015-04-02). Thus, behaviours online are of weight to study, since they has great consequences both for individuals and on a societal level.

The Facebook group *Det fria ordet* and describes itself as “/.../ Sweden’s largest discussion forum /.../ where /.../ all opinions and party belongings are allowed as long as the discussions are substantial and without personal attacks”. The discussions touch upon diverse topics; anyone of the close to 74 000 members can write a post, advocate for an opinion and ask a question. Although, the topics are often political. When studying political debates online, a diversity of opinions of individuals who don’t normally discuss politics are attainable. Those who don’t engage in political conversations offline do so online to a greater extent (Stromer-Galley 2002). The online setting is experienced as more private than offline and

therefore, individuals are inclined to express sincere and direct opinions on the Internet (Eliasoph 1998; Wyatt et al 1996). Therefore, this study also has the objective to offer insights into how a variety of individuals act and express themselves in an environment where it's perceived to be possible to act more unrestricted and freely.

5.3.0.0 Sociological relevance

The alt-left, particularly AFA, and their violent demonstrations (Holm 2015; Rogberg 2017), draw much media attention and there has recently been agitation towards their declaration of people with affiliations to alt-right and Nazi parties' names (Allard 2017-08-15). This has created debates regarding the individual's right to privacy and freedom of speech and opinion. The public have also become engaged in the debates and the questions seem to agitate people extensively. The study is therefore anchored in an ongoing societal and political debate where the conveyance of arguments needs a deeper comprehension.

Online identities are a unique product provided by linguistic abilities and practices interplaying with the technological attributes offered by the Internet (Horn 1998, p. 117). Hence, the online environment offers particular premises which affect identity constructions. This, since there is limited physical indicators which can signal how identities are interpreted by the other party. Additionally, identities can be manipulated depending on the image the individual wants to convey. Horn (1998, quoted in Mann 2000, p. 117) states that online, we are "stripped of everything but our words", which emphasises the weightiness of words and phrasing online. Hence, probing self-presentations, words and phrasing offers different insights than studying physical encounters.

Additionally, the members of *Det fria ordet* has the, according to the group description, alleged opportunity to discuss controversial opinions in the group. However, their names are disclosed, and they might experience circumscriptions from the observing audience. Furthermore, there are probably norms regarding the

interactions in the group, despite the lack of rules in the description. This constitutes a complicated milieu for research, but it highlights the implications and new circumstances of a modern world with the technological advances accompanying it.

6.0.0.0 Previous research

The following section treats previous research and its significance for the study. It accounts for studies on interactions online and treats particularities with social media concerning an observing audience related to Goffman. Furthermore, typologies constructed from Islamophobia online and Simmel's the Stranger concept in relation to the insider-outsider binary relationship online is reviewed.

6.1.0.0 Persson and the inhibitions of communication online

Persson (2012) describes the interactions online as a "ping-pong model" (Persson 2012, p. 18), because of the one-sidedness when communicating online. This means that the inhibitions of the technical environment entail that one person can only express him/herself at once, which affects the possibilities to read the other person's reactions (Persson 2012, p. 25). Applied on *Det fria ordet*, the ping-pong model entails that the commentators can reflect on their contributions but also forces them to express themselves short and succinct. This, since the speed is high and there are few opportunities to correct errors; once a comment is out there, it's out there. These circumstances are indicated in *Det fria ordet*, as there're signs of both well thought-out comments and hasty ones.

6.2.0.0 Goffman and audience analysis

Much research has been conducted on privacy in relation to the audience based in Goffman's theory of the self as performative. On some social media sites, users can choose to constrain what information is visible to others and avoid the *context collapse* (boyd & Heer, 2006; definition below "The audience and the maintenance of an identity") that might occur when the content on their profile or page is consumed by different audiences. Some studies have shown that even though members on social media sites have chosen to limit information the discrepancy between different audiences still can create context collapses (ibid.). Audience

analysis has therefore relevance for this study as there is an inconsistency in the limited, however big, audience in the *Det fria ordet*.

6.2.0.0 Identity creation and Simmel

Feldman (2012) investigates the common juxtaposing of the notions the “insider” and “outsider” in an online context but nuances it with Simmel’s the Stranger. She claims that the “barrier of belonging” (Feldman 2012, p. 309) remains online, even though individuals share preferences on social media websites. This, since there is a universality and generality in these shared preferences and the bonds therefore still remain estranged (ibid.). This is important for this study, giving that *Det fria ordet* doesn’t have any demands or requirements regarding preferences or interests which might impact which individuals that become members. All the members share, according to the description to the group, is an interest in discussion and debate. This makes the occurrence of the Stranger in *Det fria ordet* interesting to study, as there is a very unprecise and general interest holding the group together, hence they are still very much estranged towards each other.

6.3.0.0 Research on the alt-right and -left

Research on radical political parties and organisations often tends to focus on the alt-right, nationalistic and racist ones (see Jakubowicz 2017; Cohen-Almagor 2018). They are often studied in the context of language and discourses; the focal point being on e.g. expressions of antagonism (see Heikkilä 2017) or legitimization of native supremacy (see Di Masso et al. 2014). This is interesting for this study since the posts to which the comments belong are related to extremist ideologies. Additionally, studies on extremist politically oriented social media platforms are often studied in a milieu where they are welcome and advocated for. This could be exemplified with Nagle’s (2017) study on 4chan, where the controversial opinions are shared by many members. Hence, these individuals are in a familiar environment and are not meeting much protest. It’s rarer to study discussions on the alt-left among people without a pronounced political orientation.

6.4.0.0 Islamophobia online

Typologies are used in different ways in research, e.g. studied from the perspective of Islamophobia (Ekman 2015). The discourses surrounding Muslims on xenophobic websites is Ekman's (2012) topic and the study shows similar patterns regarding these portrayals. This corresponds to the depictions of the alt-right and -left in this study. The creation of the enemy (in Ekman's case Muslims and in this study the opposing political orientation) as inherently violent (Ekman 2015, p. 1995) is e.g. an adequate finding, since this study indicates similar generalizations. Suspicion towards the opposing party (Ekman 2015, p. 1993) is also implied in this study. Additionally, discourses concerning the left-wing as "politically correct" and aiding the Islamisation of Western societies (Ekman 2015, p. 1995-1996) are corresponding. Although this study is not concerned with discourses, Ekman's (2015) findings have been helpful when conducting the argumentation analysis. They have aided the determination of the theses and arguments in the comments, since many of them resemble each other, hence, facilitated when conducting some steps in the argumentation analysis (more on this below "A structural step-by-step implementation").

6.5.0.0 This study's combination of different areas of research

In this study, arguments from both the left and right are analysed, and a variety of argumentative practices are included, e.g. master strategies and fallacies. In previous research, there are e.g. typologies constructed with the point of departure in Islamophobia. In this study, a typology is also constructed, but not restricted to only one political or ideological topic. Accordingly, the mixture in this study brings together areas that have not been combined before and thus, fills a space where much research hasn't been conducted.

Studying arguments and motivations of people in a supposedly open group without a certain political orientation is also lacking in research. Therefore, the open climate of *Det fria ordet* is important, because of the limitless and comprehensive aspects

to it. The group contains discussions, not only between one political orientation, but between many. Additionally, when studying certain political ideologies, the general public's expressions and argumentations are omitted from research. Hence, excluding the majority of people's opinions. Consequently, this study brings together areas of interest for many other researchers; identity performance, the social media setting, the Stranger concept online, interactions between actors, typologies regarding political ideologies; and fills the gap by merging them, which hopefully will contribute to new insights and further research on these topics.

7.0.0.0 Empirical material

This section describes the empirical material and the different features of *Det fria ordet*, e.g. the comments studied, the posts and the commentators' general characteristics. The implications of using this type of empirical material are described and the particularities of conducting a study online are also discussed, e.g. anonymity and privacy.

7.1.0.0 The characteristics of “Det fria ordet”

Det fria ordet is a Facebook group with the purpose of free and open discussion and it lacks a political orientation. The group consists of nearly 74 000 members (date: 2019-08-04), which is a big amount of people who all are able to read, post and discuss various topics. There are no restrictions regarding which topics that members can discuss, hence *Det fria ordet* offers its members the opportunity to discuss both conventional and controversial matters. One post address e.g. *Melodifestivalen* (a TV-show electing the contribution to *Eurovision Song Contest*) and others ask for music tips. After studying this Facebook group, the conclusion I have drawn is that most discussions tend to treat political topics and, although the posts treated something else initially, it's there most of the conversations end up. Discussions concerning the alt-right and -left are predominant and have been during a long period of time. Hence, this study has restricted its selection of comments to posts between December 2017 and December 2018. The posts have over 1000 comments, which constitutes the totality of the material in this study. *Det fria ordet* is a closed group, meaning that an aspiring member has to be approved by the administrators of the group in order to get access to it.

7.1.1.0 The posts and comments studied

The posts chosen are all related to the alt-left and -right. The majority of them concerning opinions on the extremist left are about AFA and similarly, posts related to the alt-right have a tendency to concern NMR. The posts are numbered to facilitate referencing in the analysis. They treat the following questions:

1. "I don't like the Nordic Movement of Resistance? What do you think?"
2. "Is there anyone in this group who belong to one of these garbage organisations?" (accompanying the post is a picture of an individual in the Ku Klux Klan white cloak and cowl, an ISIS warrior with a black veil hiding the face, two individuals in masks in front of an Antifa flag)
3. "What do you think about NMR? Something to go for? A good network."
4. "Since I study extremists such as NMR and communists, I wonder: how damn would their visions work in practice?"
5. "What do you think about AFA?"

These posts were chosen because they had a wider variety of comments from authors with different political opinions compared to others, hence they represent a broader spectrum of political convictions. This is important since the study aims to capture argument types and behaviours of individuals with a variety of opinions, instead of a unilateral view on these issues. The posts were also chosen because the appurtenant comments are informative and long as opposed to the ones consisting of a single word or an emoticon. As the comments and posts are often misspelled and with emoticons or other Internet related expressions it's reflected in the quotes. Misspellings are translated into similar misspellings in English and emoticons are described in words if occurring.

7.1.2.0 Stability, regularity and heterogeneity

To facilitate to pick up on different viewpoints and social groupings (Berg 2015, p. 79), there are certain aspects of the material that needs consideration. Firstly, the empirical material has to consist of a core group of actors who communicates on the forum studied to achieve *stability* (ibid.). *Det fria ordet* is a very large group and practically it's difficult to argue for it being a core group. However, there are 20-30 individuals actually commenting. Accordingly, they constitute a core group for the empirical material. Secondly, there has to be a *regularity* in the material (ibid.), a requirement met since people post and comment every day. Lastly, the 20-

30 commentators are a *heterogenous* group as both women and men of different ages' comments are studied. Consequently, there has been no selection of e.g. a specific gender or age group when analysing the comments. There's also a heterogeneity in political orientation since the posts chosen manifest comments with alt-right and -left convictions as well those located on the middle of the political scale. However, the majority of the commentators are positioned to the right and left (see below "Commentators with similar ideas").

7.1.2.0 Who is commenting?

7.1.2.1 Commentators with similar ideas

There is a homogeneity in discourses online and despite the opportunity to interact with diverse peoples, individuals choose to converse with people with similar opinions and interests (Stromer-Galley 2011, p. 171). Therefore, the lack of restrictions for political belonging in *Det fria ordet* facilitates the opportunity to partake in discussions where a diversity of opinions and aberrant ideas are available for inquiry. Groups with a specific political orientation tend to attract people with similar ideas (Neubaum & Krämer 2016, p. 157-158), thus *Det fria ordet* theoretically evades this. Through the study, it has been evident though that individuals leaning to the right- and left-wing politically are more inclined to partake in the discussions on the alt-right and -left. This could be interpreted as either the result of a connection to their political attitudes, or because the topics are deemed important to them.

People with different opinions are afraid of expressing them because of potential sanctions, such as *flaming* (Neubaum & Krämer 2016, p. 157-158), meaning: "verbal attacks or insults in online discourse" (Stromer-Galley & Wichowski 2011, p. 172). Having a minority opinion makes the individual eschew to engage in online discussions (*ibid.*), therefore, the risk of flaming might keep individuals from participating in *Det fria ordet*, consequently affecting the material in this study. Discussion groups with a stated political purpose tend to contain conversations without dissidents, as they entail a diminished risk of flaming. Therefore, groups

like *Det fria ordet*, where flaming theoretically would be less likely, invite diverse perspectives to a greater extent.

7.1.2.2 Lurkers and trolls

Despite that not all individuals are part of the discussions in *Det fria ordet*, there are many commentators contributing to the discussions, hence a rich material to study. In addition, the focal point of this study is the comments of individuals who *do* choose to participate. It should be noted that some commentators might just be keen to debate in general or are there to flame. The notion for these individuals is *trolls*, meaning the carrying out of: “/.../ spiteful provocations /.../ by people ‘emanating from the political fringes’” (Emma Green quoted in Heikkilä 2017, p. 1). Their presence is apparent also in *Det fria ordet*. This circumstance is challenging to circumscribe, since determining who is a troll and who is not is challenging. Deciding whether individuals posts comments to provoke or are from the political fringes is hard, but that doesn’t entail that their contributions are irrelevant. Even though their agenda is different, they constitute a part of the group commenting. Therefore, their comments influence the conversations and are of interest as this study is concerned with what actually is written and how.

The individuals who don’t comment and only observe the discussions are called *lurkers* (Stromer-Galley & Wichowski 2011 p. 175). The fact that not everyone chooses to engage in the discussions is a finding in itself though, since it indicates that a majority of the members are lurkers and either don’t deem the topics sufficiently important or interesting to discuss, or simply don’t like to participate in discussions online. This highlights the dedication and interest of the members actually partaking; they’re passionate about the topics and want to express their opinions. This is also substantiated by the many heated debates in the comment fields on *Det fria ordet*, which are charged with emotions and antagonism.

7.1.2.3 The audience and the maintenance of an identity

The online context is complicated as individuals are constantly monitored and observed by each other and it affects their behaviour (Baym 2011, p. 388). The activities of a Facebook user are visible to the person's Facebook friends; the individual doesn't act in a vacuum (Berg 2015, p. 82). Consequently, individuals might filter themselves in order to convey a desirable image and maintain a wanted identity. This is done to avoid *context collapse*, meaning that an individual's identities from different social settings collide and forms one, which isn't always aspired as identities are context bound and often kept separate (boyd & Heer, 2006). In the situation of *Det fria ordet*, the audience's features are difficult to determine, since there are almost 74 000 members. Hence, it's difficult to estimate how many read the comments. The imminent possibility of an observing audience, however, likely affect their behaviours and they have to consider how they present themselves. How this affect the commentators' behaviour exactly is outside this study's grasp, but it should be recognized as influencing the material.

7.1.2.4 The audience-privacy dilemma

There is a paradox between the openness and closedness of *Det fria ordet* affecting the experience of the group as free or restricted. Everyone on Facebook can apply for membership and the approval does not appear to be scrutinizing because of the group's size and the lack of engagement from the administrators. For instance, they seldom issue warnings for violations against rules. Consequently, the group could be argued to be an easily accessed and not a particularly private group. Nonetheless, the approval for membership is existent, meaning that not everyone on Facebook can partake in the activities in *Det fria ordet*. This entails that members evade the observing eyes of Facebook friends who are not in the group. Hence, there is a more private dimension to *Det fria ordet*. Nevertheless, members might have Facebook friends who also are members, which complicates the situation further.

This audience-privacy dilemma requires to be addressed since the experience of privacy affects how inclined people are to express sincere opinions (Wyatt et al. 1996). People are more motivated to express their opinions on politics in spaces

which they experience as private (ibid.). Accordingly, political debates online are more common because of the perception that they are more private and less filtered and censored (ibid.). Hence, the commentators' perceptions of the private or public nature of their discussions are affecting the conveyance of their opinions. This is a very individual matter but after partaking in the discussions in *Det fria ordet*, the opinions appear to be expressed straightforward and unfiltered because of a harsh rhetoric and controversial opinions. The perception of anonymity online also influences the inclination of expressing controversial sentiments and statements, as anonymous speech facilitates this (Stromer-Galley & Wichowski 2011, p. 172). *Det fria ordet* is not an anonymous group which could affect the willingness to argue for unpopular standpoints. Names are fully disclosed on Facebook (except if the member has chosen a fake name) causing a discrepancy between the openness in the group and the potential judgement of others. These implications and their impacts on the material are not delved deeper into, as this study focusses on what is actually written. Although, these dilemmas should be noted as important circumstances.

7.1.3.0 Definitions

In this study, the alt-right is defined as: “/.../ a right-wing, primarily online political movement whose members reject mainstream conservative politics and espouse extremist beliefs and policies typically centred on ideas of white nationalism” (Merriam Webster n.d.).

The alt-left is understood as a loosely organized fringe group to the political left, whose members reject conventional political ideologies (primarily liberalism). They are anti-fascist, anti-racist and anti-neoliberalist with a virtual presence and violent features (Gil 2017-09-01; McCaffree 2017, p. 36-37). The notion “alt-left” is problematic because it's not recognized or utilized by everyone, hence, to define the group is difficult. The notion is usually used by journalists (as in e.g. Gil 2017-09-01; Horton 2017-08-16; McCaffree 2017) or by the alt-right to describe their dissidents, which makes it contested (Horton 2017-08-16). Further complicating is

that the alleged alt-left don't describe themselves with the notion (Cummings 2017-08-17). This study's choice of using "alt-left" is motivated by the fanaticism that the prefix entail (Gil 2017-09-01). It's not considered necessary for a political group to use notions themselves for them to be valid as they can have a function to describe the grouping's attributes. That AFA belongs to the alt-left is e.g. rarely contested in the material, hence there is a concurrence in this case. It should also be noted that AFA occasionally is called *Antifa*, which is the equivalent in the USA.

8.0.0.0 Method

This section describes argumentation analysis and how it has been applied. This study is inspired by an interactional approach to the method and has a structural execution of it. The interactional approach is initially described and thereafter is a section on how argumentation analysis has been implemented through a structural proceeding. Following is a description of the implications of interpretation of arguments and the precautions taken to avoid any misinterpretations. Concluding is a section on the argument types, which begins with the conventional argument types explained through a graph, followed by an exposition of the duping argument type called *fallacies*. The less pertinent fallacies are described briefly and the salient ones, constituting parts of the ideal types, are presented in detail.

8.1.0.0 Argumentation analysis

8.1.1.0 The foundations of argumentation analysis

Argumentation analysis is a method which the purpose of exploring: “/.../the intricate relationships between argumentative practices and the linguistic, discursive and cognitive underpinnings of their verbal realisation” (Oswald et al. 2018, p. 1). Hence, the method has the ability to probe many aspects of argumentation, which guide studies in different directions. In this study, the focal point is the linguistic expressions of argumentative practices, i.e. words and phrasing. Hence, the fallacies, the impression management strategies and master strategies are studied with the backdrop in textual expressions, onto which argumentation analysis also is applicable (Oswald et al. 2018, p. 4). To interpret and assess people’s arguments aids when individuals misinterpret or talk past each other in discussions (Björnsson et al. 2009, p. 16). Hence, the method as a whole is in line with the objective for this study, being to facilitate the understanding between discussing individuals.

8.1.2.0 This study's implementation of argument analysis

8.1.2.1 *An interactional perspective on argumentation*

There's a lack of a clear notion for the approach chosen for this study. Therefore, to address the features of it, it's in this study called the *interactional approach*. It was chosen because it includes an interactional and dialogical perspective and is concerned with the positioning of oneself in an argumentation (Oswald et al. 2018, p. 6; Herman 2018, p. 28-29). This is important as the discussions in *Det fria ordet* are studied as dialogues and interactions.

Argumentations are not carried out in a vacuum (Herman 2018, p. 29) and attention is therefore also paid to the context and, therefore, a holistic perspective on the text and author is applied (Björnsson et al. 2009, p. 11, 127). This contextual sensitivity of the interactional approach is important (Oswald et al. 2018, p. 7), giving that the empirical material for this study is from an online group. There are differences between argumentations and interactions taking place in a physical milieu in comparison to one online, which is surrounded by many complexities (see more below "Nethnography"). Hence, there are particularities to consider and the contextual sensitivity of the interactional approach facilitates this.

Moreover, the interactional approach studies many dimensions of argumentations (Oswald et al. 2018, p. 6; Herman 2018, p. 28-29). One dimension important for this study is the analysis of the justifications of arguments (Herman 2018, p. 28-29). This, because the arguments in the material are substantiated differently. In the interactional approach, argumentation is viewed as something "beyond classical linguistic markers" (Oswald et al. 2018, p. 7), which could be contrasted with the theory *Argumentation-within-language* which views words as the primary entities for analysis (Oswald et al. 2018, p. 6). The interactional approach in comparison, is concerned with disagreements, standpoints and interactions. The elements of self-presentation, master strategies and fallacies in *Det fria ordet*, which often are complexly expressed, could go unnoticed if studying words exclusively (Herman 2018, p. 29). This could entail a risk of missing the broader dimensions of the

conversations, their subtle and hidden expressions and cause the findings to be superficial (Black 2006, p. 320). Studying words alone would therefore contradict this study's view on the discussions in *Det fria ordet* as flowing, interactional and dynamic. Thus, other elements in the comments such as phrasing and substantiations for arguments are analysed.

8.1.2.2 A structural step-by-step implementation

The implementation of argumentation analysis in this study has been inspired by the structural approach presented by Björnsson, Kihlbom and Ullholm (2009). The application of the method has been a step-by-step proceeding (Björnsson et al. 2009, p. 14) to clarify and determine how the comments are constructed. There are many steps to follow in this approach to argumentation analysis, e.g. finding the theses, neutralise emotive expressions and find argumentative chains (Björnsson et al. 2009, p. 14, 130-133). This study does not follow all steps completely, some have been abandoned since they are neither relevant, nor fit the purpose of this study. The step of neutralising emotive expressions has not been followed since the expressed emotions have significance for the ideal types. This, because stripping the arguments of them would exclude anger, agitation and emotional drives from the comments. Moreover, to delve deep into the details of the theses has not been of interest, since the study's purpose is not to analyse the arguments per se.

8.1.2.3 Identifying arguments and the five questions

The implementation of argumentation analysis in this study has begun with the identification of the arguments to create an overview of the comment itself. If there are explicit descriptions of the arguments, the proceeding is clear and straightforward. If not, there is the possibility of words indicating the arguments, e.g., "this substantiates the claim that..."; "the fact is that..."; "there are sound reasons to..." (Björnsson et al. 2009, p. 96). This process also includes the researcher's clarification of arguments, since they can be formulated in various ways. This facilitates the unravelling of repeated arguments (Björnsson et al. 2009, p. 132).

If the argument is normative, the *five questions* have been utilized to unravel them, in accordance with Björnsson, Kihlbom and Ullman's recommendations (2009, p. 133). The questions are: "who?"; "when?"; "where?"; "what?"; "how?" (Björnsson et al. 2009, p. 132, 134). In this study, this entail that each comment is addressed in terms of who has written it, when it is written, where it is posted, what the comment contains and how the content is conveyed. This gives an overview of the comment itself and answers questions such as: is the comment substantiated by facts? Is the individual presenting him/herself as well-educated? Are there signs of a drive to win the argumentation? Where is the comment positioned in the conversation, e.g. as a reply or as an opening statement? These aspects are indicated through key words and phrases (Björnsson et al. 2009, p. 96). They can e.g. reveal a straw man fallacy through the phrase: "You probably think [...] as well" (more below "Fallacies").

Concluding an argumentation analysis is the step of asking whether the author of the comment would accept the interpretation of the arguments. If this criterion can't be met, the interpretation isn't accurate (Björnsson et al. 2009, p. 135). This has been a difficult task, since it's not the arguments per se that are studied. It could be argued to be easier to assure that an individual agrees on the interpretation of his/her argument, since it's substantiating an upfront opinion. However, it is difficult to establish if commentators would accept the alleged usage of a master strategy, since they might not be aware of them. Moreover, the commentators are many, meaning that there has not been a possibility to ask them whether they accept the interpretations. To address these issues, quotes have been used to a great extent, as they manifest the author's own words more accurately and hence, substantiate the interpretations in the study. Furthermore, no commentators are affiliated with certain comments, they are completely delinked from what they have written, and their comments are treated as independent texts.

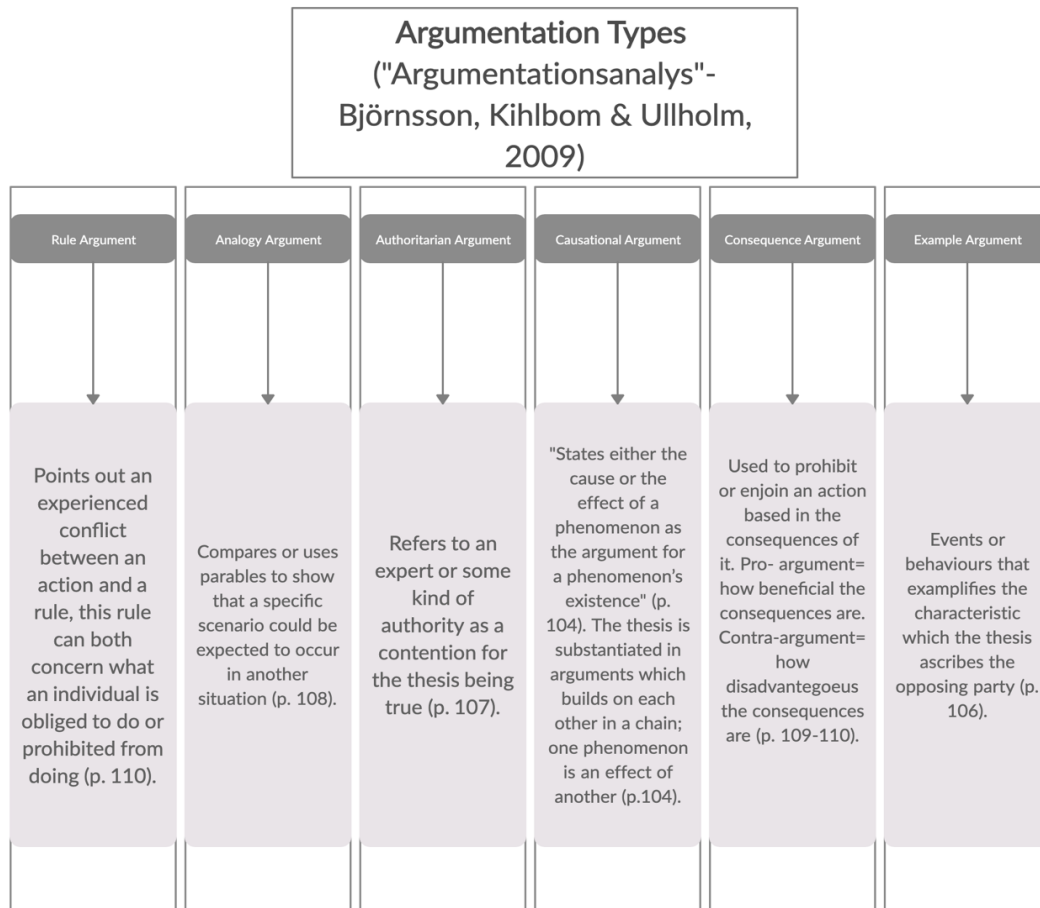
8.1.3.0 The adequacy of argumentation analysis and implications of interpretation

The main reason for the choice of this overall approach to argumentation analysis is its stepwise approach and structural proceeding in combination with the holistic view on the texts and the contextual sensitivity (Björnsson et al. 2009, p. 11, 127). The structural implementation of argumentation analysis covers the minor elements of the argumentations, which provides a closeness to the individual's reasonings (ibid.). This is adequate in this study as the notions and intricate expressions studied are complex and demands proximity to be captured. The interactional approach does not comprehend argumentations as isolated phenomena. This is important since the material concerns societal and political topics which continuously interplay with individuals' discussions online. By merging the structural implementation and the interactional approach, the arguments are scrutinized thoroughly concerning phrasing and word choices, but with the backdrop in viewing them as part of a wider context.

An extensive part of this study rests on my interpretations. It should therefore be emphasized that my ideas of what the commentators mean and want to convey is based on what I render important and infer from the comments. This is difficult to overcome since argumentations can be implicit, ambiguously formulated or incoherent (Björnsson et al. 2009, p. 127-128). Avoiding these pitfalls, there are certain criteria to consider. Firstly, it's important not to ascribe the individual opinions which can't be founded in his/her argumentation. Thus, inconsistencies or unpronounced arguments can't be viewed as incomplete and therefore offering space to fill with my, in retrospect, composed arguments (Björnsson et al. 2009, p. 128). Secondly, when many different interpretations seem likely, the researcher should presuppose that the individual is a sensible person who argues for an opinion which he/she considers important and accurate. To encounter opinions which clash with one's own entails further challenges, since it could result in ascribing the individual simple-minded opinions. In such cases, the argumentation should be interpreted and described as strongly and interesting as possible. Thus, the principle of benevolence is be applied (ibid.).

8.1.5.0 The different types of arguments

When analysing arguments, they can be divided into different types according to a scheme. Since some argumentation types only have served as tools when dissecting the structure of the comments, they are presented briefly in the scheme below. It presents the types which are described in accordance to Björnsson, Kihlbom and Ullholm's (2009) descriptions.



8.1.6.0 Fallacies

Fallacies entail deluding arguments, which might appear as well-articulated and substantial, but in fact are inaccurate and duping the other party. There are multiple kinds of this argumentative type, e.g. *guilt by association* meaning when the individual: “associates an action or an opinion with, one for the audience, hated or reviled person or group” (Björnsson et al. 2009, p. 148). Another one is the *majority fallacy* which entails when an argument is founded in the opinions of the mass. It's

also called *common sense* or the *silent majority* (Björnsson et al. 2009, p. 144). *Relocation of burden-of-proof* means that the obligation to prove one's argument is moved from the accurate party to the other individual, i.e. the other party has to confute the first party's argument and the obligation is misplaced (Björnsson et al. 2009, p. 152). The fallacy *level aslope* is utilized as a technique to demonstrate an inevitable and deplorable development as a result of a suggestion (Björnsson et al. 2009, p. 148).

8.1.6.1 Argumentum ad hominem

The fallacy *argumentum ad hominem*'s objective is to relocate the focal point from the factual issue of the discussion to the opponent (Björnsson et al. 2009, p. 145). In such argumentations, the other individual in the discussion is questioned in regard to character and his/her actions. Personal attacks are an example of this and in them, it's often suggested that the opponent operate with the basis in some special interest and that his/her arguments therefore should be disregarded (Björnsson et al. 2009, p. 146). For a smoking daughter to argue with her mother and claim that: "you have no say in this, you smoke yourself!" (Björnsson et al. 2009, p. 145) illustrates this.

8.1.6.2 Straw manning

Straw manning has its deceptiveness in one party's ascription of an opinion onto the other (Björnsson et al. 2009, p. 147). This means that an exaggerated, non-supported view is imposed which redirects the focal point from the accurate opinion to the imposed one. The purpose of straw manning is to show that the other party's opinion is unfounded (ibid.). The fallacy should not be confused with pointing out consequences of the other party's arguments by using legitimate arguments to prove the absurdity or ambiguity in them. Straw manning could be exemplified with this argument sequence: "the abortion policies are too indulgent", followed by the counterargument: "so you don't realise the immoral in paedophilia victims giving birth despite them being children themselves?" (Björnsson et al. 2009, p. 147).

8.1.5.0 Netnographical approaches

8.1.5.1 *The interconnectedness of the societal, political and the Internet*

This study is inspired by a netnographical approach to the study of Internet interactions. Accordingly, it's important to clearly state how the Internet is comprehended and conceptualised (Berg 2015 p. 24; Jones et al. 2015, p. 3). This study views Internet as a medium which interacts with and is nestled into society (Berg 2015, p. 13; Jones et al. 2015, p. 3). The relationship is reciprocal; Internet and the practices there are altered depending on changes in external circumstances and systems, and the material (offline) world transforms and adapts in accordance with technological and digital advancements (Jones et al. 2015, p. 3). To address this, I have monitored *Det fria ordet* and come to the conclusion that frequently discussed topics in the political area are migration/integration, freedom of speech and the alt-right. That the topics are engaging is reflected in the topics discussed on social media in general in Sweden. On Facebook half of the posts 2018 treated migration (Lindström & Furtenbach 2018-07-30) and the nationalist party the Sweden Democrats were the most searched party on Google (ibid.). *Det fria ordet* is therefore, “made” into a platform for mainly political discussion by the members in which the political culture and current topics of debate in Swedish society are reflected. This signifies the intertwining between politics, society and the discussions on *Det fria ordet*. The changes in political party politics and events in Sweden have therefore been observed and contemplated because of their potential effects on the online discussions.

8.1.5.2 *The digital and material worlds intertwined*

The digital world pervades many life spheres and everyday practices of the individual; therefore, netnographical studies often argue that the online and offline worlds shouldn't be kept separate when analysed (Berg 2015, p. 26; Jones et al. 2015, p. 9). Discussions in the digital sphere are, in this study, comprehended as equally “real” as the ones taking place in the material world (Berg 2015, p. 24-25; Jones et al. 2015, p. 9). Baym (in Berg 2015, p. 70) advocates for this perspective by elucidating that discussions, although taking place online, are interactions

between people and therefore never completely different from what we meet offline. Hence, the comments in this study are comprehended as being arguments equivalently substantial and purposeful as in a physical encounter. This approach to digital practices poses that the comments are perceived as a part of the political discussion in Sweden and as equally important and influential as the discussions held in the material world.

8.1.5.3 Internet as a part of everyday life and digital practices

In netnography, Internet is viewed as a part of everyday life. Consequently, it's comprehended as interconnected with various other practices and relationships in people's lives, e.g. the individual's personal relations offline (Bakardijeva 2011, p. 59). Hence, the Internet user isn't perceived as passive and exclusively as an online character, instead the individual is viewed as a physical, reflexive actor with agency and agendas (Bakardijeva 2011, p. 59; 69). An advantage in conceptualising the Internet in this way is that established frameworks, methodologies and theories are adequate when applied on online phenomena (Bakardijeva 2011, p. 59-60). Consequently, this opens up for this study's application of Goffman's (2004), Weber's (1962), Ås' (1980) and Simmel's (1971) theories.

Bakardijeva (2011, p. 61) writes that everydayness can be defined as something that “/.../ always [has] the potential for growth and change”. Additionally, one of the main objectives for partaking in political discussions online is to expose oneself to new perspectives and develop one's political opinions and attitudes (Stromer-Galley 2002). In this study, the argumentations in *Det fria ordet* are therefore regarded as exposing the individual to other people's ideas and viewpoints through an everyday activity, which enables change and growth of the individual's own opinions. This is facilitated by constructive argumentation and an understanding for each other, which therefore makes these approaches to the everyday and Internet coincide with the purpose of this study.

8.2.0.0 Epistemological and ontological approaches

In line with this netnographical approach, this study has the view on reality as socially constructed and the epistemological outlook interpretivism. Consequently, meaning and truth for the individuals is interpreted as constructed through social interactions and the understanding of the world as subjectively construed (Gray 2014, p. 20). Interpretivism searches for “culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world’ (Crotty, 1998: 67, cited in Gray 2014, p. 23). Through the interpretivism lens, interactions are also viewed as situated on many levels such as the individuals’ interactions with themselves, society and culture (Black 2006, p. 320). The social, historical and societal circumstances are therefore important because of their effect on the individual’s interpretations of the world and, also, themselves (ibid.). The interpretative angle towards Internet research also poses questions regarding agency and negotiation (Bakardijeva 2011, p. 60-61). This opens up for the study of decisions, choices and contexts of individuals’ lives (ibid.) which is in line with the purpose of this study. Accordingly, it’s possible to probe fallacies, substantiations for arguments and understand them through the individual’s cultural and social reality. An argument analysed is therefore viewed as an expression of the individual’s interpretation of reality and as the way this particular person makes sense of the world. The choice of social constructivism and interpretivism is therefore made since it corresponds to the netnographical idea of Internet as incorporated into individuals’ everyday lives and emphasises the impacts of social and societal circumstances on individuals’ behaviours.

8.3.0.0 Preconceptions and biases

As a politically interested Swedish woman, I have preconceptions of Swedish politics and which topics that are controversial and conventional. Opinions which I think are unacceptable or find upsetting could evoke emotional responses, which could result in a biased interpretation corresponding to my own political convictions. Regarding the online research field, it should be emphasized that I use Facebook and other social media, hence have ideas of what they entail and how

they should be used. To address these preconceptions, I have attempted to prevent them from colouring the study by avoiding framing the arguments according to any party belonging, refrain from judging the individuals' fallacies and tried to embrace the alternative ways of using the Internet. Concurrently, the comments have been viewed as analysis units alone.

However, presumptions are unavoidable and could also serve as a source for insights. The characteristics presented are obviously repeatedly prevailing, but they also reflect what I find startling, intriguing and distinguishing. Therefore, implicitly, the analysis offers insights into what an individual with my attributes finds important in the material.

9.0.0.0 Ethical Considerations

The online setting of this study demands certain ethical considerations. It's important to consider anonymity in online research (AoIR 2012, i.e. Association of Internet Researchers; Berg 2016, p. 130), as commentators' own perceptions of the purpose of the texts, Facebook and the audience differ (ibid.). This has been tackled by returning to the purpose of *Det fria ordet* as a group and its circumstances. That 74 000 other individuals can read the contributions in *Det fria ordet* is not something hidden and therefore, it could be argued that it's a rare perception that the comments are completely private. The commentators use real names (if they are not fake), which could be interpreted as if their anonymity isn't crucial. Therefore, this study has taken the stance that the comments are viewed as products which are not intended to be exclusively private. With this follows a less strict obligations regarding privacy and autonomy (Rambukkana 2019, p. 315).

Asking for consent could have resulted in the administrators excluding me from *Det fria ordet*, therefore, there have been extensive precautions taken to maintain anonymity, privacy and confidentiality. Publishing comments in a relatively easily accessed group does not entail that the commentators willingly concur with their comments being studied. Therefore, names, gender and other social indicators have been stripped. There has been no attention paid to these characteristics and the only function of names is as facilitating to follow the discussions proceedings. The comments are also translated from Swedish. By doing this, although the translations are attempted to be precise, it creates a barrier to the real comments. Additionally, all data will be deleted when the study is finished.

The researcher should also address the potential risks and harm the study could result in (AoIR 2012). One potential risk in this study is that publishing political opinions might give repercussions for the commentators if become known to the public. However, the benefits of the study are here argued to overshadow this, as the possible outcomes are positive for the commentators. An increased

understanding and constructive discussion entail that the activity in *Det fria ordet* could become more benign and auspicious. If this is the case, the AoIR consider potential harm less essential (2012).

10.0.0.0 Theoretical framework

The theory section starts out with a description of Weber's (1962) theory on ideal types, thereafter, Simmel's (1971) social types are described, being the *Miser*, the *Nobility* and the *Stranger*. Subsequently, Goffman's (2004) perspective on identity as performative is treated and how it can be applied in an online setting. A section on Ås' (1980) master strategies follows, where the rarer ones are presented briefly, while the two main strategies are explained thoroughly.

10.1.0.0 Weber's ideal types

Weber's (1962) ideal types can be viewed as either a methodological or a theoretical concept. In this study it's used as an analytical tool or a "methodological device" (Weber 1962, p. 32). The types are developed as exaggerations of specific characteristics e.g. of organisations or social behaviours (ibid.) and are not argued to encompass the empirical reality in a definite sense (Rosenberg 2016, p. 85-86). The attributes, practices and behaviours are constructed from the empirical material and together represent a specific type and "hypothetical actor" (Weber 1962, p. 29). Ideal types cannot be claimed to be objectively valid or representing the entire population from which it is developed; they are constructions from cohesive characteristics of individuals. Hence, they are versatile and dynamic, and an individual can't be considered to be derived entirely from the type. The types are instead a method of ordering reality in a comprehensible manner (Rosenberg 2016, p. 87). This analytical tool accentuates one or a number of characteristics within a group, sees patterns of how they relate to each other and differ from one another. Subsequently, the characteristics are combined and grouped into an "consistent mental image [which] cannot be found anywhere in reality" (Rosenberg 2016, p. 88) which represents a pure conceptual ideal type. Such a typology aids when consolidating how different fallacies, substantiations, impression management efforts and master strategies are connected. It also elucidates deviations between the different types which facilitates the comparison between them (Weber 1962, p. 32).

10.2.0.0 Simmel's social types

Simmel's (1971) social types are archetypes of people with specific social characteristics. These types rests on prescribed attributes according to the free will and the choices of individuals and are combined with pre-existing attributes such as e.g. social class or race (Simmel 1971, p. 212). Thus, both the personal and capricious characteristics together with the predetermined aspects of an individual constitute a social type. Simmel (1971, p. 212) writes that an individual's belonging to a social type can change and that none of the people in the social types are consistent in their behaviour, he claims: “/.../ these pure patterns to be constantly affected by obscuring, diverting, and particularizing forces” (Simmel 1971, p. 212). The social types are therefore not fixed, and individuals can be different ones depending on situation (ibid.).

The foundation of Simmel's (1971) social types is that they are being cast by interactions. The individual reacts according to the expectations of others, which therefore elucidates the social types as an expression of the social structures in society. The social types are described in an exaggerated way, hence constructed alike Weber's (1962) ideal types. Despite them being boiled down to archetypes and hence not capturing the variances of individuals' behaviours, they are useful in this study because of their ability to spot the unique characteristics of individuals and the nexus of them. They also fit the framework of Goffman's (2004) work, in so viewing the individuals and their specific characteristics as constructed in interplay with other individuals.

10.2.1.0 The Stranger

The Stranger emanates to a great extent from his/her spatial placement. He/she does not belong to the group initially and has come to the group from the outside, without any place in it at first (Simmel 1971, p. 144). He/she is described as an “intruder” (Simmel 1971, p. 144) to a group where all positions already are occupied. Since the Stranger doesn't have a set place in the group, he/she is mobile and moves between nearness and remoteness, resulting in an objective and formal position in

relation to the group (Simmel 1971, p. 145). Objectivity is often claimed to be a characteristic related to someone free of prejudice and who has the ability to assess data and impressions impartially. However, this self-image is a misconception according to Simmel (1971, p. 146); the Stranger doesn't possess these attributes. The idea and strive to be objective have been reoccurring during history and individuals have claimed this ability and used it as an excuse to return an attack (ibid.). The objectivity claim results in the individual's conclusion that the people attacking him/her are from the outside and in the wrong (ibid.).

The Stranger's remoteness and nearness isn't only based in a spatial mobility, but also in general similarities. They can e.g. be nationality, social position, occupation or the general human nature (Simmel 1971, p. 147), hence, attributes that are wide-ranging and connect many people. This creates a paradox since the Stranger has a common ground with the group, however the shared characteristics include so many potential individuals that they don't create a nearness anyway (ibid.). This leads to a discrepancy and, foremost a tension between the group members and the Stranger, since it also elucidates what they don't have in common (Simmel 1971, p. 148).

10.2.2.0 The Miser

The Miser finds pleasure in the possession of money itself; he/she doesn't have to spend it on material objects (Simmel 1971, p. 179). Simmel (1971, p. 179, 184) claims that money can provide a feeling of power for the individual and describes the Miser as an individual with a greediness which increases when gaining more money. These characteristics can also be applied on social situations, e.g. on a man learning languages but who doesn't use them. Hence, it's the possession of the ability and capability to speak them that is of interest (Simmel 1971, p. 180). It's the mastering of the pure form of objects or other abilities that is the purpose and built into this is a sense of anticipation and potentiality (ibid.). The pleasure in possessing money is described as being an almost aesthetic fascination (Simmel 1971, p. 180). The fascination is also manifested in the strive to master things and the potentiality in doing so. Another prominent characteristic of the Miser is the

immoderation in the greediness of gaining and possessing more. This, since the “demonic formula” (Simmel 1971, p. 185) of owning money, which gives pleasure, creates an insatiable strive to attain more money and hence, satisfaction. This is a process which colour the Miser’s life, but which is without end and founded in an aim that never can be fulfilled (ibid.).

10.2.3.0 The Nobility

The Nobility is primarily constituted by its self-assurance and autonomy (Simmel 1971, p. 199). The nobles arose from those who were considered to have better personalities and when they emerged, their personalities were regarded as better because of the fact that they were part of the nobility (Simmel 1971, p. 201). With a noble status there are privileges but, since they are regarded as equipped with better personalities, they are also punished more severely in some instances. Simmel (1971, p. 202) exemplifies this with knights who stole, whose crimes were viewed as a robbery instead of theft. The founding thought was that if a knight steals, the item was taken by force which gives that the theft was considered as graver (ibid.). Simmel (1971, p. 203) states that: “The nobility is permitted what others are not, and the nobility is forbidden what others are allowed”.

The Nobility enjoys the privilege of being favoured by the other people because of their legacy and glory from previous times. This is a prejudice and idealised perception of the nobility shared by both the public and the noblemen themselves and it entail certain benefits (Simmel 1971, p. 206, 207). The legacy and ancestry elements of the nobility heritage are also something that substantiates the group’s existence (Simmel 1971, p. 209). The intertwinement of the past, the present and the future through the existence of the individual exposes an image of that existence as being a fusion of ancestral higher values. This creates a feeling of self-assurance within the Nobility’s view on their existence (ibid.).

10.3.0.0 Goffman and the dramaturgical model

10.3.1.0 Frontstage, backstage and off-stage

Goffman's (2004) dramaturgical theory demonstrates a dynamic perspective on social interaction in a face-to-face setting and portrays it as similar to performing on a theatre. This means that individuals are considered to play a variety of roles in front of an audience of other individual(s), i.e. identities are performative (Baym 2011, p. 388). The audience in turn reacts and influences the performance by responding to the impression given by the individual. The audience's expectations of the individual's role-playing steer the way the individual acts and direct his/her behaviour to fit conventions and the, for them, desired performance (Goffman 2004, p. 98-99). The expectations often follow conventional norms and stereotypical ideas of how an individual with present attributes ought to behave. Sometimes the motivations are combined and simultaneous, but there is always an agenda (Goffman 2004, p. 1, 14, 22). Thus, impression management proceeds from the aim of receiving acceptance, validation and approval and is more complex when performed in social media settings (Cadirci & Güngör 2019, p. 271). For instance, the individual can develop a new identity online, without any accordance with the self that is performed in an offline environment (Cadirci & Güngör 2019, p. 278).

It's important to emphasize that an individual does not necessarily have to be aware of his/her performance, but it's still executed. This performance takes place on something Goffman (2004, p. 14) calls *frontstage*. There is also a *backstage* region in which the individual can collect himself/herself and prepare for the next performance. In this place, the individual can act according to his/her true identity, which might be different to the identity performed frontstage (Goffman 2004, p. 98-102). The *off-stage* region entails the place where the individuals' meet members of the audience outside the frontstage situation. There are limited possibilities to say something about the backstage and off-stage performance of the individuals in *Det fria ordet* in this study. This, as the backdrop of the study is in the direct conversations taking place frontstage and not the individuals' recovery and interactions in the background regions.

10.4.0.0 Ås and the master strategies

Ås' (1980) describes the concept of master strategies by boiling them down to five distinct techniques for dominating the other party in conversations. Ås' (1980) applies the strategies to situations where women are the objects for the techniques. Though having a women-centred focus, the strategies are utilized in a broader sense in this study and are considered to be utilized in conversations between all sexes.

10.4.1.0 Withholding information, doubled punishment and levying of guilt and shame

Withholding information is a master strategy which results in a less influential and powerful position for the individual subject to it. This is exemplified by Ås (1980) with a man addressing other men in a workplace and asking if they would like to have a beer. The woman knows that important information is exchanged and joins them. The information exchange is therefore on the terms of the men, resulting in the neglect of a particular individual involvement in the conversation (Ås 1980). Punishing an individual twice by pointing out the wrong in what the individual does and what the individual does not do is a master strategy called *doubled punishment*. It's described as: "Damn if you do, damn if you don't" (Ås 1980). Hence, it doesn't matter what the individual does, his/her behaviour is always defected. *Levying of guilt and shame* is master strategy which combines ridiculing and doubled punishment (Ås 1980). The merging of the two means that the individual is informed that he/she is not good enough because of his/her behaviour. This is the result of the individual thinking or acting in a new way and a lack of information that the others already have access to. The following example elucidates this: during a meeting, a woman suggests that the next meeting could be held in a different manner by dropping the agenda and have cake. A male co-worker gets agitated and answers that the meetings are a serious matter, to which the woman says that a change might invite more people to participate in the discussions. The man argues that it's people's own responsibility to speak. The woman feels stupid and questions her suggestion and the others perception of her (Ås 1980).

10.4.2.0 Invisible making

Invisible making is practised when a person is forgotten or run over in conversations and activities; they are left out of the company and e.g. the planning of activities. It gives the result of a reminder for the person that they are less worth and insignificant for other people, which strips them of their identity and their sense of self-worth. The example provided in Ås' (1980) text is a woman contributing to a discussion during a board meeting where the other participants disregard and ignore what she says. The result is that the woman questions her inlay, asking herself if she said something stupid and wishing that she had kept quiet (Ås 1980).

10.4.3.0 Ridiculing

Ridiculing entails that the individual is laughed at, derided or likened to animals. This is exemplified by Ås (1980) with the comparison of women to hens or when they are ascribed attributes such as sensitive or cynical and cold. Women could also be described as sexual creatures as a way of ridiculing. These characteristics are rarely attributed to men and their reactions and they diminish the woman into something stereotypical. To elucidate this, Ås (1980) describes a situation in which a woman wants to tell her co-workers about her experiences from a conference in which many women participated. The response she gets is: "What a chicken yard!" and her co-workers start to cackle. She reacts and the men's excuse is that it's a joke. She answers that they never listen to her and that they always think these conferences are equality drivel (Ås 1980).

11.0.0.0 Analysis

The analysis is divided into sections on different argumentative behaviours, self-presentations strategies, substantiations for arguments, conflict behaviours and efforts to attain superiority among the comments. Merged into the different sections are the master strategies found in the comments. Subsequently, the findings in the comments which relate to each other are grouped together in the construction of the ideal types. They are the *Lonely know-it-all*, the *Limitless Victor*, the *Mastering Artist* and the *Peaceful Historian*. The quotes in the analysis are ended with numbers in square brackets.

11.1.0.0 The comments

11.1.1.0 Argumentative behaviours: mobile and outside or persistent and winning?

11.1.1.1 *An outside perspective*

The online setting of *Det fria ordet* entails that the commentators can be on different locations and can choose to leave a conversation when they please, i.e. a spatial mobility. Establishing who is near and remote could be regarded as expressed through participating or not in a discussion, which results in the remoteness and nearness to become difficult and undecided. Some commentators in particular enters and leaves discussions arbitrary. They often leave when they meet opposition from other commentators, or when they claim the discussion futile. This group's mobility is elucidated with the quotes below. The discussion concerns post number 2 (see below "The posts and comments studied") in which an individual (henceforth individual A) decides to suddenly enter. He/she defends another commentator against personal attacks and questions the harsh tone. Individual A claims that the conversations have gotten "out of hand" and that personal attacks are "a very bad way to discuss". Individual A writes:

"I don't have anything against anyone or so. Just think it's sad that people can't discuss in a grown-up way without turning away and suppress something no one can help and it doesn't belong in the discussion really."

[1]

The conversation continues with one of the previous discussants explaining that personal attacks is a part of discussions in *Det fria ordet* and calls individual A “unnecessarily aggrieved”. Individual A responds:

“I just don’t understand why you just can’t keep to the facts and the pros and cons with an organisation” /.../ “Left, right or something else doesn’t matter to me. Have friends in different parties and I can still think they’re good people although they don’t stand for the same things as I do.” [2]

After this exchange of opinions, individual A leaves the argumentation and the remaining commentators continue by discussing his/her behaviour and the alleged exaggerated aggravation. The comments remark on individual A’s unexpected initiative to participate and discuss his/her ignorance and unawareness of how discussions are carried out in *Det fria ordet*. This discussion could be interpreted as if individual A is coming from the outside into an already established group by participating in the discussion late. He/she is perceived to encroach on the group’s space by questioning their manners, through the dissimilarity in the view on argumentation behaviours (more below “The Lonely Know-it-all”).

11.1.1.2 The aim to win the discussion

Some comments indicate a strong urge to win discussions. There is an ambition to dominate the argumentation and coerce dissidents to yield, hence, these individuals can’t leave in the midst of a discussion. There is also a persistence which is manifested in a sequence related to a post 5 (see below “The posts and comments studied”). The first comment is: “Sweden’s last hope”, which triggered a long series of images with hostile messages both pro alt-right and pro alt-left. The aim is arguably to provoke and evoke anger and fear in the dissidents, as some of the pictures are outright threatening. There are horrific examples from both sides, e.g. one image depicting five men (probably dead) hanging with their feet tied onto a scaffold with the text: “Better dead than red- we can arrange that”. Another image

is of a dead Fidel Castro accompanied by the text: “When you finally become a good communist”. There are 25 pictures posted in a row with a few text insertions and the pictures are posted in a continuous flow of attacks and counterattacks. The group posting pictures consists of a few individuals and it resembles a written or spoken conversation. An interesting aspect is that, despite a small amount of written comments, it’s evident that the commentators’ aim is to win. The continuous posting of pictures (there is not one that is unanswered) shows a passionate ambition to leave the conversation as a winner. There are no restraints regarding bluntness, tactlessness or the causing of pain for this group of individuals. However upsetting or frightening the imagery comments may be, the aspiration to be the last man standing in the argumentation prevails.

11.1.2.0 Managing an impression: pragmatic, the victor or peaceful?

11.1.2.1 *Presenting oneself as pragmatic*

Individual A behind quote 1 (p. 37-38) also comes across as aiming to be perceived as pragmatic. He/she wants to clarify that certain behaviours are not acceptable and highlights his/her open-mindedness by describing his/her tolerance towards friends with other political opinions. The quote: “Left, right or something else doesn’t matter to me” indicates an attempt to present oneself as someone who isn’t insular, i.e. positioning oneself in the discussion as a pragmatic character. This is a common trait among a group of commentators. The impression given is that they value constructive discussions without personal attacks and other fallacies. Another example of this is the following comment accompanied with a smiling emoticon: “I just like to read discussions which for once abiding by the topic on a grown-up level /.../ just want to point out that you get further with the right argumentation” [3]. This quote also suggests an individual who wants to give the impression of someone who appreciates constructive discussions. The added emoticon also conveys an accommodating and understanding impression.

11.1.2.2 *Presenting oneself as the victor*

One group of comments indicate a wish to be perceived as victors of the argumentations. It’s sometimes so strong that it’s explicitly written. This is

manifested in comment 4 cited below, where a heated discussion takes place. It's related to post 5 (see below "The posts and comments studied") and had proceeded for a long time between individual B and C. Individual C left the conversation, which had focussed on facts and the universality of them. Individual B argued that his/her facts are correct and writes: "I quote. You can't have an opinion on facts, you can only accept them. Is that why you're so quiet now!?" [4]. The comment suggests that individual B perceives him-/herself as a winner since the dissident left the conversation. There's a strong indication of triumph in the comment in the sense that individual B points out that he/she managed to silence the dissident. In combination, he/she perceives it as if he/she got the last word in the discussion which also appears to grant him/her satisfaction.

11.1.2.3 Presenting oneself as peaceful

A group of comments ties their self-presentation to peacefulness and non-extremism and often have their point of departure in comparisons. The comparisons portray the dissident as worse than oneself, attempting to undermine his/her arguments. Furthermore, it appears to be a strategy to assert one's own position as a better person. As the discussions in this study is about the alt-right and -left, the comparisons are made between them. They particularly treat peacefulness of the own political belonging and the opposite's murderous behaviour. Comments such as: "NMR murders people, no one in the left does that" [5] or "/.../ in the rest of the world, the left is in the lead of number of murders" [6] elucidate this clearly. As does a discussion between two commentators in relation to post 4 (see below "The posts and comments studied"). Two commentators discuss the extremist tendencies in different political parties and individual D writes: "So maybe you should be worried that there's always people quitting SD [the Sweden Democrats; author's addition] because of Nazism" [7]. Individual E replies:

"Always? If there're extremists in a party, then it's good if they're purged? Miljöpartiet (i.e. the Greens: author's addition) and vpk (Vänsterpartiet Kommunisterna, i.e. old name for the Swedish leftist party: author's

addition) would be empty if they cleaned them out. The Social Democrats and the remaining would become very small too.” [8]

The comparison between the Sweden Democrats and the parties located to the left of them are made with the aim to emphasise violent and extremist tendencies of the dissident’s party. These characteristics is particularly reoccurring among these comments; hence, it appears to be the least favourable traits a political party can possess according to them. They’re often followed by a flurry of examples from newspaper and blogs concerning the opposing political orientation’s representatives’ crime records or offensive statements.

The use of the straw man fallacy is also reoccurring in this group of comments, e.g., one from post 2 (see below “The posts and comments studied”) in which the meaning of “the left” is discussed. One commentator states: “[the left]= uses violent for people to conform to their opinions. Speak well of stalin when you’re at it” [9]. This suggests that the opponent in the discussion would agree with Stalin, since he/she is located to the political left. By straw manning, the commentator exaggerates the dissident’s opinion, which turns the ascribed opinion into the spotlight and therefore, it is questioned instead. This is also the proceeding after the comment, as the dissident has to defend that he/she doesn’t support Stalin. The impression given of this group of commentators’ political orientation and extensively themselves, is as more peaceful than the opposing party. The straw manning fallacy makes it possible to evade the criticism from others, as the focal point is relocated to something else.

11.1.3.0 Substantiations for arguments

11.1.3.1 *Facts as substantiation*

Among a group of comments, it’s common to substantiate arguments with facts. Factual phenomena are repeatedly used to emphasise the point of the argument and as a technique to persuade the dissident. In the following example, one individual argues that Antifa are Nazis below post 2 (see below “The posts and comments

studied”) and is asked to define a Nazi. To substantiate his/her argument, he/she describes his/her opinion backed up by claimed facts:

Nazism= an ideology that in the foundation has the idea that the people- the nation- has a higher value in relation to the individual /.../ the primary expression for the people is its leader. It’s not a question of definitions. That’s what the word means. [10]

The quote clearly manifests the important part facts play for individual F. He/she explain the notion of Nazism according to his/her perception, but he/she considers them to be true and undisputed facts.

Another comment exemplifying the idea of facts as definite is related to post number 5 (see below “The posts and comments studied”). The discussion deals with the example of Cuba.

“/.../ remember that you actually CAN’T have an opinion on whether they’re among the richest in South America. It’s a fact. You can’t have an opinion on facts, you can only accept them” [11].

The comment describes a perceived impossibility to question facts, they should be acknowledged as reality. When facts are brought into the discussions, this group of commentators appear to experience them as conclusive and settling the argumentation.

The reliability of the facts and sources is also important to this group of commentators. They must be valid, legitimate and derivable from a source without biases. In the following quote, the debate treats the Swedish legislation and the government’s alleged restriction of freedom of speech. One commentator described the amendment in his/her own words and received this reply:

“Do you have a source for that? I mean what does the bill handed into the parliament look like /.../ and how is it formulated? What’s the number of the bill?” [12].

Here, it’s evident that a description or second-hand information isn’t enough to fulfil the high requirements for sources and information. The importance of facts is reciprocal, which shines through the willingness to share them and disclose their origin. If there’s a source which isn’t considered reliable, it’s explicitly pointed out by these commentators. There are multiple examples of this when someone has referred to a Wikipedia-page or a news site with an obvious political purpose.

11.1.3.2 History as substantiation

One group of commentators often substantiate arguments with historical events and political beliefs from the past. The majority of these comments against the left are in general related to the bloody deeds of the communist China and Russia, e.g.: “/.../ Through history, addedtogether, Nazism killed 14 millions of people while Stalin (USSR) killed 20 millions and Mao (China) killed around 65 millions” [13]; “Want to point out that the left is in the lead of number of murders /.../ the left has killed most people in the world with 120millions+ under Stalin and Mao’s rule” [14]. The comments against the right are in general about the alleged Nazi and racist roots of the Sweden Democrats and the NMR. The comment below refers to the past of the Sweden Democrats and their origin and is an answer to a comment regarding the Social Democratic rule during the 1930’s and their commitment to racial biology:

“/.../ this was before many of the ones voting for the Social Democrats even were born. SD [the *Sweden Democrats*] was emerged from the openly racist BSS (*Bevara Sverige Svenskt*, i.e. *Maintain Sweden Swedish*; author’s translation), the *Swedes Party* and *Framstegspartiet* (The Progress Party; author’s translation) in 1988, many of the people who vote for them were born and some of them even adults.” [15]

11.1.4.0 Conflicts in the comment field

11.1.4.1 *Facts as a source of conflict*

A lack of acknowledgement of the truthfulness of facts causes agitation in some commentators. The contesting of them appears to be interpreted as if the dissident questions reality. An example of this is related to post 2 (see below “The posts and comments studied”), where individual G delivers a long comment on the devastating consequences of the communist rule in China and the Soviet Union. Individual H responds and bluntly deny totalitarianism in the regimes and the existence of gulags. Individual G becomes upset and calls the dissident “extremely bigoted” and “living in denial” and emphasizes the truthfulness of the facts. Individual H replies with a simple: “No, you’re wrong there /.../ name one person who died in a Soviet gulag”, [16] which triggers individual G to continue the discussion by saying: “it’s history, you should study some” [17], followed by laughing emoticons indicating a passive aggressiveness. The factual disagreements are therefore the source for the conflict.

Related to post 1, a heated debate begins with an extensive explication of facts, on which the parties disagree. Two of the most frequently commenting individuals emphasises the importance of facts and knowledge throughout the discussion. However, they’ve different perceptions of reality and question each other’s facts, which lead to a discharge of personal attacks. The two discussants pursue the harsh tone with smearing and personal attacks, using epithets such as: “pathetic”, “coward”, “a sweaty, spotty, neo-liberal internet warrior” and “massive loser”. Hence, argumentum ad hominem is extensively used as the discussion is relocated from the topic to the dissident’s personal traits and appearance. The smearing: “/.../ neo-liberal internet warrior”, suggests that the dissident might have a special interest in the matter discussed. The notion “internet warrior” refers to an individual who harasses and threatens other people online (The Guardian 2017-03-10). Hence, someone with a special interest in the discussion and someone who participates for the conflict’s sake. This could be interpreted as an effort to undermine the dissident’s arguments also according to the fallacy argumentum ad hominem.

11.1.4.2 Creating disputes for the disputes' sake

One group of comments create disputes in order to participate in them; it seems to be a motivation to partake in discussions. The following conversation, which is related to post 1 (see below “The posts and comments studied), elucidates many aspects to this. The discussion started out with individual I correcting the post’s spelling of the NMR’s name but spelled it incorrectly too. This is followed individual J stating: “Haha, you were supposed to correct someone else when you can’t spell yourself” [18], to which the individual I comments: “And where did you get air from, you idiot?” [19] (Swedish saying roughly meaning: “how did you get so cocky?”). Individual I continues: “Here’s a picture so you’ll understand where I got my air from.. You seem a bit retarded actually” [20] and posts a picture of factual information on which gases air consists of and its omnipresence in Earth’s atmosphere. Individual J answers: “Do you have a problem with people with reading and writing impairments?? I think you’re the one who’s re tarded” [21] (“Retarded” misspelled). Individual K enters and corrects the misspelling, to which individual I answers: “So you’re allso going to keep doing this?” [22] (“Also” misspelled). The discussion proceeds with some calmer comments and the issue appears to be solved, but once again individual J corrects the spelling by tagging the other individual and writing: “also*” [23]. This discussion indicates an active search for conflict, as it’s based on something trivial as misspellings. Hence, there isn’t any dissension or antagonism between the two commentators regarding the topic, but the conflict is created for individual J to dominate it. It’s also evident that there’s a need to have the last word.

11.1.5.0 Attaining dominance

11.1.5.1 Superiority through facts

There’s one group of comments which attains dominance through factual knowledge and a complicated language. Many of these comments are written in an almost academic language with references to theorists, politicians and United Nation publications, and suggest other commentators to read Benito Mussolini’s *Doctrine of Fascism*”, James Mason’s “*SIEGE*” and post links to convictions of

criminals. It's also manifested in the usage of certain words with the purpose of being condescending: "uneducated", "fact-resistant" and quotes encouraging the opposing party to:"/.../ learn some ideology, history and general education /.../" [24] are frequently found in this group of comments. Prompting these insults doesn't only belittle and incite the dissident, the commentator also asserts his/her own superior position. This, since by demeaning the dissident, the commentator emphasises his/her own superiority intelligence- and education- wise; it becomes a kind of comparison. Individual N exemplifies this with his/her sudden entrance into a discussion between individuals L and M in connection to post 2 (see below "The posts and comments studied"). The tone of the discussion turns hostile when individual L, who's against the alt-left, became agitated over his/her experience of individual M's tendency to avoid the topic. Individual N jumps into the discussion with this comment:

"The reason why you can't discuss this with [him/her] is because [he/she] is so convinced by her ideology, opinion and way of conveying it that all you say to [him/her] is alien. [He/she] probably only hang out with like-minded people /.../ This is the ideal way of achieving indoctrination of people, make them only see their side of the coin and totally demonise the other side. No, [name], you don't use self-defence, you're indoctrinated into a cult where you even would turn from your parents if needed. You're in a fascist action who suppress other people's opinions. You are what you hate." [25]

Even though direct insults are absent in this quote, it indicates a feeling of superiority. Individual N diminishes the free will of individual M as the comment describes him/her as indoctrinated and a sheep following an ideology blindly. The comment describes individual M as asinine, not understanding the complexities of the world and inferior in terms of deliberative ability. Individual N also addresses individual L; the third party in the discussion; by saying: "you can't discuss this with him/her". By talking over individual M's head in this way, it's made clear that he/she doesn't understand the situation. The superiority self-presentation shines through the usage of the individual M's name in the end of the comment. This

demonstrates an idea of knowing better and explaining something to someone, since that section of the comment is directed explicitly to the other party. Addressing someone by name indicate a familiarity with the person and when doing it in this situation, it could be interpreted as overstepping a boundary and showing someone his/her place.

11.1.5.2 Superiority through harsh language

A strategy to attain dominance and oppress the opposing party among a group of comments is to use harsh language, insults and personal attacks. Regularly occurring insults are e.g.: “bum”, “paedophile”, “bitch” and “horny for violence”, giving the impression of a hostile attitude towards. The personal attacks and insults are disproportionately aggressive, and this group of comments shows an ignorance of consequences of actions. The aftermath of the offensive language and the potential risk of hurting another individual’s emotions doesn’t come across as a problem. To exemplify this is the following answer to individual O who engaged in a discussion to post 2 (see below “The posts and comments studied”) 7 weeks later it first started. Individual P writes: “You’re too late, honey. You would’ve been cool 7 weeks ago” [26], followed by an emoticon blowing a kiss. The counter comment from individual O is: “You, who never will be cool or anything else should be quiet” [27]. Individual O continues:

“Never tried to be cool, that’s the difference. I’m very much actually. Among other things IT-technician, brother, son, friend, cousin, welder, fire fighter, CNC- operator and so on. And [I’m] very quiet ATM [i.e. “at the moment”], I’m not talking, I’m writing. Sit down, boy.” [28]

The last sentence is accompanied with an emoticon blowing a kiss, which gives a condescending impression as it indicates false compassion. It signifies that individual O is superior to individual P, i.e. has the power to show benevolence and compassion for someone who doesn’t understand as much as he/she does. Adding to this, individual P continued by writing: “Think you should keep this one as

profile picture” [29] and posted a picture of an anonymous face lacking face features with the text: “Too ugly for profile picture” on top of it. The negative emotions this attack on individual O’s appearance might have evoked didn’t bother individual P, neither did the condescending choice of telling him/her to “sit down, boy”, nor the contemptuous emoticons. The insults in this group of comments are often related to the dissident’s looks, e.g. this comment exchange related to the post 3 (see below “Posts and comments studied”): ”Yes, Nazism is the answer to everything. Just a bunch of insecure boys with small penises” [30], to which the reply was: “/.../ You seem to be fixated with small dicks, maybe not that strange, giving the profile picture” [31]. Quotes 26-31 are examples of argumentum ad hominem combined with the master strategy ridiculing. This, since they attack and make fun of the opposing party’s appearance and mock the other person with emoticons which are condescending in the context. It therefore appears as if the aim is to manifest superiority, although it entails the fallacy argumentum ad hominem, insults and taunting. This group of comments often cause the discussions to escalate into a flurry of insults and crass language, which could be interpreted as if the individuals behind them aren’t fully content or deliberate the moderation in their insults.

11.1.5.3 Superiority through refined language

A pattern among a group of comments is that their insults are heuristic, inventive and put in a refined language. This could be exemplified by the following comments: “Do you start every day with a big bowl of pathetic?” [32] and “You’re a paedophile. I bet you like green peas and mayonnaise on your pizza too” [33]. These comments indicate an enjoyment in inventing creative insults through refined language. They’re almost artistic, as it’s noticeable how the words have been weighed before being posted. There are e.g. seldom misspellings, and the phrasing and grammar are correct, which isn’t very common among the comments otherwise. This group of comments also suggests that they have prompted reflection and toil. An example of this is the following comment from a discussion to post 3 (see below “The posts and comments studied”):

/.../ That's typical 'rödgardister' (people belonging to the socialist, militant organisation *the Red Guards*). If there's someone who's ignorant, it's you; swallowing the rubbish media's propaganda with rod, line and sinker, doesn't stop for one minute and think for yourself /.../ You keep being a good goy (Hebrew word for non-Jewish people), it's going to be a brutal awakening for you sooner or later. [34]

The comment has a bombastic and almost poetic tone to it, as it is constructed with alternately short and long sentences and an idiomatic expression ("rod, line and sinker"). This wordplay and phrasing show a familiarity with the Swedish language, socialist movements and Jewish words. There's also an awareness of how to construct a text rhetorically satisfactory in order to convey one's message well.

Another example of wordplay is a comment in relation to post 2 (see below "The posts and comments studied"): "AFA is only a glass house filled with stone throwing anarcofascists" [35]. The Swedish idiom means to abstain from criticising someone else for an action if it's something the individual is guilty of doing him-/herself. The use of wordplay could here be interpreted as elucidating a knowledge of the Swedish language and its proverbs. Using puns, a refined language and phrasing in a complicated way also makes comments which aren't finely put appear inferior. Hence, the individual behind the comments with the refined language seems superior.

11.2.0.0 The ideal types

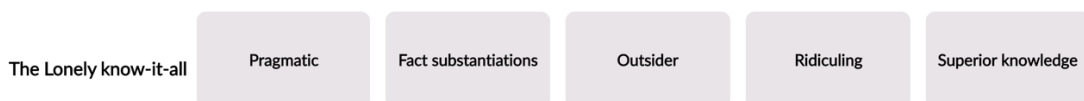
Below is a scheme of keywords presenting the ideal types. They're further presented and analysed in their own sections, which are divided according to their argumentative behaviours, impression management efforts, fallacies and master

strategies.

The Lonely know-it-all The Limitless Victor The Mastering Artist The Peaceful Historian

Pragmatic	Victor	Victor	Peaceful
Fact substantiations	Aim to master debates	Aim to master debates	History Substantiations
Outsider	Greedy for victory	Greedy for victory	Arbitrary responsibility
Superior knowledge	Harsh language	Refined language	Past, present, future intertwined
Ridiculing	Argumentum ad hominem/ridiculing	Innovative insults	

11.2.1.0 The “Lonely know-it-all”



The characteristics of the Lonely know-it-all are exemplified below: ”An outside perspective“, ”Presenting oneself as pragmatic“, ”Facts as substantiation“, ”Facts as a source of conflict” and ”Superiority through facts”. The Lonely know-it-all has both similarities and dissimilarities to Simmel’s (1971) the Stranger. The similarities are based in the characteristics of spatial and interactional mobility and an outside position. The strive to be objective and impartial and the tendency to create conflicts when the objectivity is questioned are other similarities. Adding to these are the claiming to be well-educated and gladly display it, using facts as the foundation for this knowledge and coming across as pragmatic.

11.2.1.1 *Dividing general characteristics with the group*

The interactional and spatial mobility of the Lonely know-it-all is here manifested through individual A and quotes 1-3 (p. 37-39) and below “An outside perspective”. The spatial nearness-remoteness created through the moving in and out of discussions is a prominent characteristic and it creates a distance towards the group interactionally. Not agreeing with the group on the appropriateness of their behaviour in the discussion, makes individual A an “intruder”, in Simmel’s (1971, p. 144) words, and apart from the group. This could be furthered through Simmel’s (1971) idea regarding remoteness-nearness as dependent on the sharing of certain general characteristics. They’re e.g. general human nature and nationality (Simmel 1971, p. 147), which are comprehensive attributes. If widening the general characteristics notion into including more situation specific characteristics, the membership of *Det fria ordet* could be one. Also, if participating in the political discussions, the members share a political interest. If having different political orientations, it could’ve been a diverging characteristic between individuals. However, alike many other situations with the Lonely know-it-all, it’s not the political orientation that is the diverging attribute for individual A, he/she solely opposes the behaviour in the comment field. Alleged aggravation regarding behaviour is a commonly used argument for the in-group to elucidate diverging characteristics. Hence, if widening Simmel’s (1971) general characteristics to situation-bound attributes like membership and interests, they still work similarly. This, since the shared common ground isn’t unifying enough for the Lonely know-it-all to transcend the boundary into the in-group.

The exclusion of the Lonely-know-it-all could be viewed as a strategy to keep the group intact and evade encroachments on their shared idea of appropriate behaviour. Calling individual A aggrieved could also be interpreted as a reaction to protect the group’s self-image and existence. Personal attacks are prohibited in *Det fria ordet*, hence the group is breaking the rules, which could result in barring. Also, it could be argued that personal attacks aren’t considered an attractive

argumentation technique amongst the majority, therefore, the accusation could cause shame. The exclusion could thus also be a reaction against that emotion.

11.2.1.2 A pragmatic impression

Another characteristic of the Lonely know-it-all is that he/she manages his/her impression to present him/herself as pragmatic (see individual A's quotes 1-3, p. 37-39). The pragmatism expressed, is here argued to resemble Simmel's (1971) the Stranger's traits of objectivity. The objectivity of the Stranger is related to non-prejudice, which can be compared to this pragmatic and openminded approach. The Lonely know-it-all conveys an impression of him/herself as without prejudices and above things such as personal attacks (quote 1 and 3, p. 37-39). The audience's response to this, which according to Goffman (2004, p. 98-99) influences the individual's performance, isn't rewarding and that might be why individual A leaves the discussion. This could be because the norms and behaviour in the group are explicitly questioned by individual A, i.e. individual A neither oblige to the conventional norms of the group, nor performs in a desired manner. It could be interpreted as if the pragmatic and non-judging impression individual A wanted to give, wasn't appreciated and this resulted in him/her leaving the discussion.

11.2.1.3 The importance of facts for the Lonely know-it-all

The Stranger's trait of objectivity concerning impartial assessment of data (Simmel 1971) could be compared to the Lonely know-it-all's appreciation for facts (see quotes 10-12, p. 42-43). They give the impression of attempts to clarify and set things straight in the discussion in an impartial way. Moreover, the value facts have as substantiation for arguments for the Lonely know-it-all is so high that this ideal type doesn't conceal them or the sources from which they're retrieved. Therefore, the impression given is someone who wants to be perceived as open and with full disclosure. This also goes in line with the impartial assessment of data in Simmel's (1971) the Stranger. The Lonely know-it-all cherishes facts to the great extent that it could be interpreted as if he/she perceives it to be such a powerful argument that they shouldn't be questioned. Hence, when they aren't acknowledged it can result

in conflicts. Quotes 16-17 (p. 44) show that other commentators' questioning of the facts delivered by the Lonely know-it-all meet strong resistance. This could be interpreted as if the Lonely know-it-all perceives these situations as an attack on his/her impartiality and objectivity and as provocations. This is used as an excuse for a counter-attack, hence alike the Stranger.

The Lonely know-it-all's fact appreciation could be related to inconsistencies and opposing ideas of what's true. "Fake news" accusations are frequently directed towards research and what was previously argued to be well-established facts, which complicates the notions. Therefore, the arbitrariness of them might cause Lonely know-it-all to be cautious regarding what to believe to be true. Consequently, when the Lonely know-it-all believes the truthfulness of facts to be proven, they're considered a significant argument and a part of reality.

11.2.1.4 Lonely know-it-all's master strategies, fallacies and superiority efforts

The Lonely know-it-all sometimes turns to master strategies in conflict situations (see individual G in quote 17, p. 44). Ridiculing is utilized as a tool to oppress the other individual as shown in quote 18's (p. 45) suggestion that the dissident should learn history. The quote also demonstrates that the ridiculing is related to education and knowledge, as the Lonely know-it-all tries to diminish the dissident by using sarcasm, the condescending emoticon (quote 18, p. 45) and is mocking his/her alleged inferior knowledge. The quote portrays the dissident as uneducated and stupid, corresponding to Ås' (1980) ridiculing notion. However, the emphasis on stupidity is different from Ås' (1980) description of likening the opposing party to e.g. animals. It could be interpreted as if being uneducated and ignorant are the worse traits possible to the Lonely know-it-all, which corresponds to his/her appreciation of facts.

Argumentum ad hominem is reoccurring in this ideal type, as described in the usage of "neo-liberal internet warrior". By directing allegations that the dissident is participating for other reasons than the discussions, it gives the impression of an

individual without a genuine interest in the topics but who's there to create disputes. The usage of argumentum ad hominem here appears to aim to be a more sophisticated personal attack, as it manifests an acquaintance with Internet slang and political orientations. This also corresponds to the Lonely know-it-all's need to claim his/her knowledge in various areas.

The Lonely know-it-all attempts to attain dominance through a complicated language, the manifestation of knowledge and the usage of condescending phrasing (see individual N's quotes 24-25, p. 46-47). He/she belittles the dissident with efforts related to the proving of educatedness and knowledge in him/herself and demonstrating the image of the dissident as inferior in these areas. The usage of invisible making is e.g. evident in quote 25 (p. 46-47). This, since it's directed towards individual L initially and hence, ignoring individual M's participation in the discussion. It strips the identity of individual M and neglects his/her presence and importance in the discussion. Likening someone to animals (as in Ås' ridiculing notion) or using argumentum ad hominem through cursing (see the Limitless Victor for comparison) doesn't appear to interest the Lonely know-it-all. Arguably since it isn't considered to correspond with this self-image of being superior and significant knowledge- and education-wise.

11.2.2.0 The Limitless Victor and the Mastering Artist

The Limitless Victor	Victor	Aim to master debates	Greedy for victory	Harsh language	Argumentum ad hominem/ridiculing
The Mastering Artist	Victor	Aim to master debates	Greedy for victory	Refined language	Innovative insults

11.2.2.1 *Different insulting techniques as a dividing characteristic*

The Limitless victor and the Mastering Artist are two ideal types exemplified below the sections "The aim to win the discussion", "Presenting oneself as the victor",

“Creating disputes for disputes’ sake”, “Superiority through refined language” and “Superiority through harsh language”. This group of comments resemble each other, however, there’s a difference regarding the usage of language when attempting to attain dominance. The Limitless Victor uses harsh language and the Mastering Artist refined phrasing as a strategy to insult the dissidents. Consequently, they have a common ground and goal but different approaches to reach it. Unifying these ideal types though, is the aim to win a discussion at any cost, which interplays with a greediness to continue winning. Immoderation in insults and a self-presentation as a victor, as well as the strive to master the practice of debating are other features constituting these ideal types. Therefore, this section starts off with a description of the shared features and subsequently, is divided into two according to the divergent superiority strategies.

11.2.2.3 Aiming for victory

The Limitless Victor and the Mastering Artist has both resemblances and dissimilarities with Simmel’s (1971) the Miser concept. This comparison is made possible since the objective of gaining money is translated into the aim of winning a discussion. To win discussions is for the Limitless Victor and the Mastering Artist the main goal and this pervades their diligent behaviour (see “The aim to win the discussion”). They can’t leave in the midst of a discussion but have to finish it and realize the win, which is diverging from the Miser. Hence, there’s a discrepancy between Simmel’s (1971) the Miser and the Limitless Victor respectively the Mastering Artist, since the potentiality and imagination of winning isn’t enough for the Limitless Victor and the Mastering Artist. This is evident in the quotes where these ideal types are persistently continuing discussions by posting numerous images (see description below “The aim to win the discussion”, p. 38) and presenting an image of themselves as the victor in the argumentation. The big number of pictures posted, the disinclination to leave the discussion and the explicitly pointing out a victory (see individual B’s quote 4, p. 40), both indicate the cherishing of a win.

The aim to win can also be tied to the urge to want to master things. The mastering characteristic is corresponding to the Miser, although not concerning speaking languages, but debating. It entails that the aim to master a certain practice in its pure and ideal form could be transferred onto the ambition to dominate every argumentation. The Limitless Victor's and the Mastering Artist's idea of mastering debating appears to be to have the other commentators yielding at any cost; insults, personal attacks and smearing (however conveyed) doesn't seem to stop these ideal types in the strive to master the practice (more below "The harsh language of the 'Limitless Victor'" and "The 'Mastering Artist's' refined language").

11.2.2.4 Limitless Victor's and the Mastering Artist's greed

In the exchange of pictures in the discussion between a group of commentators (p. 38) there are similarities to the Miser, giving the greediness manifested to win. It's apparent that the Limitless Victor and the Mastering Artist don't stop at anything, as in the example of posting threatening and horrific pictures. Consequently, the hunger for winning the argumentation is so strong that the Limitless Victor and the Mastering Artist becomes avaricious. The more they can taste the victory, the harder they push for it, i.e. more insults. This could be compared to what Simmel (1971, p. 185) called "the demonic formula", meaning a hunger awoken which further creates an insatiable craving for more. The urge to win an argumentation is also appearing in the conversation about misspelling (quotes 18-23, p.45) since the Limitless Victor and the Mastering Artist intentionally create a conflict. This, since the correction of the spelling could be interpreted as an incitement to create a dispute in order to win it. This is also similar to Simmel's (1971) the Miser as the Miser and the Limitless Victor and the Mastering Artist share a forever present avarice to possess respectively win more.

11.2.2.5 The harsh language of the Limitless Victor

The strategy of the Limitless Victor to attain dominance in argumentations is to use foul language and insults (see quotes 26-31, p. 47-48). This characteristic is corresponding to Simmel's (1971) the Miser because of the immoderation and lack of deliberateness when posting them (see quotes 26-31, p. 47-48 and the section on

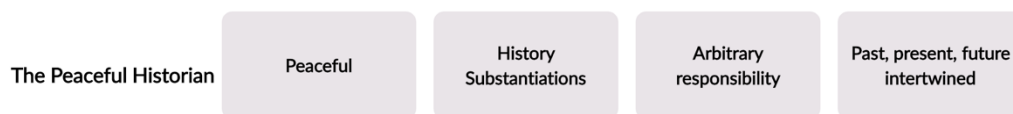
p. 38). Argumentum ad hominem and ridiculing are utilized (see quotes 26-31, p. 47-48) and there's an absence of consideration for other individuals' emotions. This can also be tied to the aim of giving the impression of being a victor, because of the long way the Limitless Victor will go to be perceived as it (see quote 4, p. 40). Thus, the group's perception of the Limitless Victor's role as the victor in the argumentation is more important than immoderation. When the Limitless Victor manages his/her impression, the aim appears to be that the audience's perception of him/her is someone ruthless, decisive and an individual it's perilous to join in a discussion. As argumentations where the Limitless Victors is present often escalate into conflicts, it doesn't appear as if the audience's response to the Limitless Victor is the preferred one. If it would've been, the discussion would end with the Limitless Victor having the last word, being the victor and the audience's opposition would subside. Without physical cues and reactions, this ruthlessness and hostility isn't censored. Hence, the Limitless Victor's behaviour demonstrates how the computer screen's filtering effect causes deficiencies in deliberativeness and neglect for other's emotions.

11.2.2.6 The refined language of the Mastering Artist

The difference between the Limitless Victor and the Mastering Artist is the creativity when insulting to attain superiority. Attempting to win an argumentation and attain dominance is, instead of using harsh language, done with a refinement. The quotes 32-35 (p. 49-50) indicate an enjoyment in inventing creative insults. The expressions, the puns and the phrasing point to comments who are thoroughly thought through both content- and structure-wise. This implies efforts to manage the impression given as to be inventive and artistic and as well-acquainted with languages and idioms. Harsh language doesn't appear to interest the Mastering Artist, which could be interpreted as if it's experienced as less sophisticated and therefore, disdained. This example of attempting to attain dominance could therefore be viewed as portraying oneself as above tactless and simple comments; winning is done with other means.

Additionally, the refined language and artistic image the Mastering Artist conveys could be seen as efforts to attain attention. The creativity in the insults enable them to catch the eye of other commentators, as they stand out from personal attacks and smearing. Hence, the objectives when managing the impression is to be acknowledged and noticed by the audience and display superiority through sophistication.

11.2.3.0 The Peaceful Historian



The Peaceful Historian is exemplified below the sections “More peaceful than you” and “History as substantiation” in the analysis. This ideal type has both similarities and dissimilarities with Simmel’s (1971) social type the Nobility. Similar is the characteristic of being someone with a better personality (Simmel 1971, p. 201). However, it’s an intentional portrayal though, meaning that it’s part of an impression management effort. Hence, it doesn’t necessarily entail that the public (audience in this case) concur. According to Simmel (1971, p. 206), the superior personality of the Nobility is agreed upon by the public and therefore, this circumstance isn’t corresponding to the Peaceful Historian.

The Peaceful Historian also demonstrates how the burden of responsibility between different actors is mobile. The responsibility can be moved as pleased, from oneself to the opposing parties. Additionally, the substantiation of arguments is based in history, hence, the past and the legacy of the own political orientation and the opposing one have great significance for the Peaceful Historian. This is an attribute corresponding to Simmel’s (1971, p. 206-207) the Nobility.

11.2.3.1 The Peaceful Historian's peacefulness

The Peaceful Historian presents him/herself as peaceful in comparison to others (see quotes 5, 8 p. 40-41). This could be interpreted as a way of steering the impression given into be perceived as a better individual than the dissidents. The aspect of comparisons is especially important, since the impression of someone being better is emphasised by the comparison to another individual. To highlight the dissident's negative traits further, the straw manning fallacy is reoccurring in the Peaceful Historian. By exaggerating the dissident's opinion, his/her persona is further negatively portrayed and, as the Peaceful Historian compares the dissident to his/herself, the Peaceful Historian's personality is elevated. The usage of comparisons and the straw manning fallacy (quote 9, p. 41), therefore, works as a tool for the Peaceful Historian to create adherence in the audience. This, because of the aim to awake sympathy and empathy in other commentators through the peaceful impression. The comparisons also demonstrate the usage of "whataboutism". This means to refute an argument by saying: "what about you?", and is therefore a strategy to relocate focus from oneself to the dissident. The straw manning gives the same result, which gives the Peaceful Historian more space to negatively depict the opposing party.

Peacefulness is an important characteristic to the Peaceful Historian and the comparisons are therefore often made with the point of departure in violence and extremism. Quotes 7 and 8 (p. 40-41) elucidate that murders and extremist tendencies are ascribed to dissidents and they are pointed out to be responsible for the past of their political belonging. If having the point of departure in Simmel's (1971) the Nobility, this is a parting feature. This, since the better personality of Simmel's (1971) the Nobility doesn't only come with privileges but also with a heavier responsibility. According to Simmel's (1971, p. 202-203) concept, the social type should be punished more severely because of their better personalities; their crimes are worse giving their superior characteristics. In the eyes of the Peaceful Historian, he/she possess the better personality but that doesn't entail that it's accompanied with a responsibility. Instead, when violent acts are mentioned,

the topic and responsibility are redirected to the dissident's political conviction's murderous and extremist doings (more on this below "A mobile responsibility").

The emphasis on peacefulness in the Peaceful Historian could be interpreted as an effect of the experience of threat. The opposing political orientation past actions, could be seen as evoking fear in the Peaceful Historian. Hence, the strong connection made between them. Depending on the own orientation, the alt-right or -left are considered a threat to society and by emphasising one's own orientation's peacefulness, the other's hostility is more prevailing.

11.2.3.2 A mobile responsibility

The responsibility of certain acts is, to the Peaceful Historian, mobile. The idealised picture of oneself as an individual with a better personality, isn't followed by a responsibility alike the Nobility's. To the Peaceful Historian, it's the dissidents who are to blame for their political conviction's history; it's not a reciprocal relationship which is applicable to everyone. The violent acts and extremism of communism and Nazism are commonly referred to among the comments (quotes 5-8, p. 40-41) from the Peaceful Historian but it's the accountability is mobile. This, given the credit taken when the Peaceful Historian's own political conviction has accomplished something good.

The relationship between the past, the future and the present when moving the responsibility is relatable to the Nobility. The responsibility for history as a part of a present accountability is related to future actions of the dissident's political orientation (quotes 5-8, p. 40-41). This is corresponding to Simmel's (1971, p. 207) idea of the Nobility's legacy and ancestry focus. However, the relation between this temporal argument isn't applicable to the Peaceful Historian him/herself, but only to the dissident. It's the dissidents that should be punished more severely, not the Peaceful Historian. It could be interpreted as a strategy to frame the opposing party unfavourably through the relocation of responsibility and the tying of it to the past, the future and the present.

11.2.3.3 The importance of history for the Peaceful Historian

The mobile responsibility and its relationship to the past, present and future (more on this below “A mobile responsibility”) is also exposed through the importance of history for the Peaceful Historian. He/she substantiates arguments against the opposing party with historical events, as elucidated in quote 13-15 (p. 43-44). The Peaceful Historian values history to the extent that it’s transferrable to dissidents’ present ideas and arguments, but not the other way around. Simmel’s (1971) the Nobility’s ancestry entails self-assurance. However, the ancestry and legacy are, in the case of the dissidents of the Peaceful Historian, instead something that undermines their self-assurance. Their political conviction or party are not entitled to their existence specifically because of their history. This, since the history of Nazism and communism is argued to be a reason not to believe in their ideas and therefore, a reason for extinction (quotes 14, 15 p. 43-44). Hence, the Peaceful Historian uses history as a mean to undermine the opposing party’s self-assurance and right to their opinions. This is the opposite from Simmel’s (1971) the Nobility, since it’s the good traits from the ancestry and legacy that create the Nobility’s own self-assurance. This revocation of self-assurance in this sense, when negative traits are elucidated instead of positive ones, is a significant difference from Simmel’s (1971) the Nobility.

12.0.0.0 Conclusion

This study has shown a variety of argumentative behaviours, argument types, master strategies and impression management efforts in *Det fria ordet* and the connectedness of the characteristics in the different ideal types. The Lonely know-it-all is an ideal type giving a pragmatic impression, appreciates facts as substantiation for arguments which lead to conflicts when they're questioned. The type shares general characteristics with the group but they're overshadowed by the differences in ideas of appropriate behaviours. The Lonely know-it-all uses ridiculing to refer to stupidity in the dissident and attains dominance by emphasising his/her knowledge and educatedness. The Limitless Victor and the Mastering Artist share similarities regarding an urge and greediness to win discussions but have different ways of attaining superiority. They use the fallacy argumentum ad hominem, but the Limitless Victor uses harsh language whilst the Mastering Artist uses refined language. The Peaceful Historian emphasises history in his/her substantiations and compares his/herself with the dissident. He/she uses the straw man fallacy, and the levying of a historical responsibility is mobile and is arbitrarily moved.

There're both similarities and dissimilarities between Simmel's (1971) social types and the constructed ideal types. This indicates that the concept still has relevance but requires widening to fully reflect individuals and their argumentative behaviours in an online setting. Ås' (1980) master strategies and argumentative fallacies are overall pertinent in the material, which highlights their importance. Goffman's (2004) impression management theory is adequate in their application onto the comments and displays different efforts of self-portrayals. The ideal types' characteristics can also be connected to societal and social phenomenon such as "fake news" and particularities of the online setting. This gives them relevance as they mirror the current times and today's society.

The study demonstrates that there are discrepancies in the discussion and argumentative behaviours, master strategies and fallacies between the individuals in *Det fria ordet*. As many aspects of the ideal types differ, it's important to address them according to their specific characteristics. There's no universal formula to meet arguments and behaviours, it needs adaption to the individual. Otherwise, the aim for constructive discussions and mutual understanding can't be reached. How to practically refute and discuss with these individuals requires further inquiry though. Thus, my recommendation for future research is to delve develop a practical strategy to meet different types of argumentations. This, to help us get past the Nazi-communist discourse.

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