

# Swiss Center for Affective Sciences

How to identify public emotions?  
Detecting needs and motivation-related arguments  
in the media.

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## LECTURE

**Monday,  
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**16:00 - 17:00**

Campus Biotech  
Room 144.165  
9, chemin des Mines  
Geneva

Emotions can be triggered by various factors. According to Appraisal Theories (De Rivera, 1977; Frijda, 1986; Scherer, 1987; Ortony et al., 1988; Johnson-Laird and Oatley, 1989) emotions are elicited and differentiated on the basis of the cognitive evaluation a person does of the significance of a situation, an object or an event based on “appraisal criteria” (e.g., intrinsic characteristics of the eliciting event, significance of events to individual needs and goals, the individual’s ability to cope with the consequences of the event, the compatibility of the event with social or personal standards, norms and values, etc). For example, a topic such as “refugees” or “immigration” can activate a number of ideas. One is the possibility of losing one’s job to the refugee workforce, which would threaten basic needs of the individual such as food, safety or shelter. In consequence, thinking of refugees and considering this possibility could trigger fear as a public reaction. Secondly, refugee immigration is sometimes associated to different vaccination habits and the possibility of introducing foreign diseases, which are both a threat to health (another basic human need) and can thus trigger fear. Finally, the moral/societal values of the refugees may be perceived as different from those of the hosting society (e.g. regarding women’s freedom to walk with their face/body uncovered, or to carry out a job). These differences in values can trigger reactions such as anger, disgust (contempt) or sadness in the population, because the corresponding behaviors can be evaluated as incompatible with their social/personal standards, norms or values. Ideas and arguments like the ones illustrated above are frequently present both in mainstream media and social media, building a society’s view, attitude and emotional reaction towards refugees/ immigrants. In this presentation I will talk about our work to annotate and detect in texts factual arguments and opinions linked to human needs/motivations which can, in consequence, trigger emotion reactions in the media audience.

Swiss Doctoral School in Affective Sciences

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