



The lockdown in British media: Emotion talk in opinion  
articles from *the Guardian* and *the Sun*

Bachelor's thesis

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## Abstract

This study focusses on opinion articles from the Guardian and the Sun written about Covid-19 lockdown. A qualitative discourse analysis was conducted to compare and gain insight on how emotion terms appear in both newspapers. Emotion terms were analyzed based on valance, polarity, the emoter, emotion attribution, emotion source and how the emotion was put in the text. In total 163 emotion terms were found, 105 for the Guardian and 59 for the Sun. Emotion terms appeared most often in the form of nouns and majority of emotion terms were negative. The three main patterns found pertain to positive emotions and the two-sided positivity they highlight, to the author's emotions being seemingly absent, and to **the author ascribing feelings to others without a source.**

*Key words: Covid-19 lockdown, emotion talk, the Sun, the Guardian, opinion articles*

The coronavirus has been plaguing the world for over a year and has taken over every aspect of life. The virus, which originated in China back in December 2019, relentlessly spread at an exponential rate. When the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic in January 2020, no one could have imagined how big the impact of the pandemic would be. The initial positive attitude quickly changed to a negatively charged and emotionally ridden outlook on the future, when it became clear the pandemic would last longer than initially expected. Many countries invoked numerous measures to try and keep the spread of the virus under control. Countries went into a lockdown, closed stores and restaurants, established curfews; all to maintain society's physical health, but at the cost of their mental health. An example of this is the situation in Great Britain. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2020, the UK went into its first lockdown. The regulations were gradually eased in June and July, but England went into another month-long lockdown in November. Wales and Northern Ireland also went into lockdowns lasting 6 to 8 weeks. In December 2020, a new variant of the coronavirus emerged, which was blamed on a rise of cases in southeast England. On January 4, 2021, Prime Minister Boris Johnson another announces the third national lockdown. The entire UK is in lockdown at this point, with the next relaxation of measurements taking effect on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2021.

The Office of National Statistics in Great Britain conducted research based on the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey to measure the depressive symptoms between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of July 2020, including if and how the signs of depression within British society changed since the pandemic. It reports that one in five adults were likely to suffer from depressive symptoms during the pandemic in June 2020, whereas this was only one in ten before the start of the pandemic in 2019. It was also found that more than half of the adults (58%) who already suffered moderate to severe symptoms had higher levels of anxiety during the pandemic (Office for National Statistics, 2020). The number of adults with depressive symptoms has thus doubled in Great Britain during the pandemic. Those who already had some form of depression developed more severe symptoms.

Everyone experiences the corona crisis differently. For instance, the media all hold different perspectives towards the crisis. A significant place where this can be seen is in the newspapers, especially in the opinion section, a place for the public to share and discuss their opinions on matters currently in the news or other aspects relevant to society. The COVID-19 crisis is a highly emotional time, and these emotions are also present in opinion pieces writing about the pandemic. Emotion and discourse, and specifically emotion within written discourse in the media, is a topic that has not been extensively researched yet. Conducting such a

research provides an opportunity to get more insight into how emotion is represented in texts produced by media outlets, as emotions are running higher than ever now that the pandemic has held on for over a year. This research attempts to give insight on the representation of emotion in opinion articles about the Covid-19 lockdown.

## **Theoretical framework**

### **Emotion and Journalism**

Emotion is becoming an increasingly important dynamic in how news is produced and consumed, redefining the classic convention of journalistic objectivity and reshaping the idea that news is an objective statement of facts (Beckett & Deuze, 2016). Emotion is a way to create more engagement with the public, which is strengthened by online media platforms that offer a multitude of possibilities to share and respond to publications. Furthermore, it contributes to the entertainment value of news articles, as it is also becoming increasingly necessary to entertain the public. An overload of media outlets continuously demands the public to rapidly focus their attention on the next notification popping up on screen. The use of narrative elements of storytelling is an effective method to engage this progressively busy and hectic public (Peters, 2011). Narrative elements such as storytelling are used to infuse emotion in texts, which is something the public can connect with. However, in journalism objectivity is the highly valued standard and thus views emotion in a negative light, as it clouds the objective representation of facts with (un)conscious subjectivity. Despite this dislike towards emotion in journalism, even when focused on “just the facts”, emotion is most certainly present, for the particular style and presentation of an article are always attuned to a certain level of involvement of the writer (Peters, 2011). Simply put, emotion is always present to a certain level as the writer has to be involved to a certain extent to write a story.

### **Representation of Emotion in Language**

Emotion occurs in a variety of forms in written text. It can either be expressive content or descriptive content, or even a combination of the two. The analysis of emotion in discourse thus is not an easy task. The Appraisal Theory by Martin & White (2005), which is perceived as the most articulate theory of evaluation to date, deals with emotion within the sub-system of affect, implicating that affect is some type of evaluation and thus does not define emotion outside the spectrum of evaluation. Functional Discourse Grammar, a theory that holds that the internal organization of linguistic expressions encodes Discourse Acts, views emotion as an overlay on structures that communicate interpersonal and representational meanings

(Mackenzie & Alba-Juez, 2019). It suggests emotion is more than just an evaluation and that language is not an objective representation of reality, but rather a subjective expression which heavily relies on emotion (Mackenzie & Alba-Juez, 2019).

Everyone adheres their own nuanced meaning and emotion to the words they choose to convey a message. Emotions and the way they are talked about are an essential part of what makes human beings human and help describe as well as express our own and others' feelings. An example of how emotion surfaces in language due to specific individual choices are swearwords. For instance, the emotion of anger is conveyed through swearwords and accordingly has expressive meaning. Here, someone makes an active choice to convey their emotion in this direct and expressive manner, whereas someone else could choose a descriptive manner and say "I am very angry". In the descriptive manner, the central emotion is directly described through the linguistic term for the emotion, rather than using expressive language to signal the emotion.

Emotion talk, not to be confused with emotional talk, may reveal personal and cultural attitudes towards emotional experience (Bednarek, 2008). *Emotional talk* includes human behavior that signals emotion without linguistic expressions that explicitly indicate emotion. All expressions that describe an emotion using linguistic expressions, referring to the self or the other, are considered *emotion talk*. Comparing the sentence "Jack shouted: Shut up, Daisy!" with the sentence "Jack was very angry with Daisy." illustrates the difference. The first sentence signals emotion through the phrase 'shut up' which does not explicitly indicate emotion through the use of linguistic expressions. The second sentence does make use of the linguistic expression 'angry', referring to Jack's emotion towards Daisy. Bednarek (2008) lists the following terms as the most frequently used emotion terms based on the British Register Corpus such as 'love', 'sad', 'worry' and 'surprised'. Happiness, sadness, fear, anger and surprise are recognized by an extensive number of researchers as basic emotions. Emotion terms can be grouped under these separate emotions. Emotion terms also maintain a certain polarity, either positive, neutral or negative.

### **Representation of Emotion in Media**

Within the media, emotion plays an increasingly bigger role and is implemented strategically to engage the public. This is highlighted by the research of Pantti and Wahl-Jorgensen (2011), which looks at the connection between public emotions concerning British politics and the role of news media. Emotions are powerful motivators that incite people to participate in political processes. Emotionality is key in separating neutral fact-based journalism from

popular or tabloid journalism. The research looks at the role of anger within the community after disasters caused by human errors, in which the media actively facilitate participation and public emotion. Emotional expressions in news media are carefully directed, as some emotions are magnified while others are actively concealed. The representation of emotions is consequently obstructed, as emotion is heavily filtered and it is carefully chosen what is shown. Pantti and Wahl-Jorgensen defined which forms of anger expressions occurred: direct, indirect or authorial expressions. They examine the circumstances in which anger is expressed, who expresses it and why, and at whom the anger is targeted. The conclusion is that there indeed are systematic patterns that structure the expression of anger. It is expressed by the individual through letters to the editor or in stories where 'ordinary' people were used as a source. Coverage of more recent disasters demonstrates a more emotional society, where open displays of emotions are valued. The news media have greatly contributed to this, as our culture is highly mediatized.

Another study that delves deeper into emotion representation in the media, is that of Zou (2018). In this research, Zou (2018) discusses the construct of an emotional climate based on fear within the Chinese diasporic media bloggers in America. Traditionally, journalists refrain from emotional judgement, separating facts from values. Emotionality is more so associated with tabloid news, whereas quality journalism is perceived to be objective and rational. The rise of emotional engagement comes from the increasing personalization of media. Emotion inspires engagement and, increasingly, the media desire participation from the audience. Within the blogging sphere, many creators are not professional journalists, yet they are engaged in producing information the audience reads as news whilst implementing emotionally oriented strategies. Emotion in the media thus also is represented as some sort of secret ingredient, its presence concealed but making stories extra appealing. In his analysis, Zou (2018) notes that emotive language is a common occurrence in news titles, used to draw attention to the story. It also appeared that emotive language was either the reporter's judgement or the expression from another source. The value of emotion in media may not be underestimated. Next to it being a powerful motivator, it represents the connection that audiences seek.

### **Media Quality, Orientation and Representation**

Media quality, orientation and representation all are connected. The research of Uribe & Gunter (2007) focusses on the emergence of entertainment-oriented stories and the quality of news; news items have become more sensational over time. Some condemn this style as it

undermines the role of the press to bring the public facts and truth untainted. An instance of this are tabloids that heavily focus on celebrity gossip. News items that evoke emotions of news consumers can still contain high quality elements. Uribe & Gunter (2007) carried out a content analysis comparing televised news coverage that have emotion-eliciting characteristics, trying to find an answer for whether sensational news stories elicit more emotion than non-sensational news stories. They found that one did not contain different amounts of emotionality as the other. In fact, the small differences that were found indicated that news in non-sensational media contained more emotion-eliciting features than sensational news.

Apart from being defined as sensational or being of quality, newspapers also generally have a political orientation that impacts the story. A research by Salgado and Nienstedt (2016) provides an example of this. Within the research, newspaper coverage of the Euro Crisis is analyzed within right- and left-wing newspapers from 10 European countries. It is expected that political orientation influences news coverage and political ideology thus has an important impact. Audiences expect to read a particular interpretation of reality through the septic political lens of a newspaper. The political orientation is not always actively assumed in order to appeal to a bigger public but do clearly come through commentaries and opinion articles from readers. Salgado and Nienstedt's (2016) research found that both right- and left-wing newspapers did cover all relevant Euro Crisis topics, but that there are also notable differences within the newspapers regarding journalistic treatment of the topics. Both the categorization of quality or sensational newspapers and their political orientation add up to different representations within news stories. Looking at the research from Cook et al. (2006), this becomes evident. Here, the British press coverage of genetically modified (GM) food is analyzed using four newspapers, Sun and The Times as pro-GM, and the Guardian and Daily Mail anti-GM. The research concluded that broadsheet newspapers (The Times and Guardian) report opposing views through published letters to the editor, and that tabloid newspapers (Sun and Daily Mail) do not reference to specific sources of authority. Both sides of the GM food debate use hyperbolic and emotional language describing the other side. Terms such as 'hostile', 'irrational', and 'immoral' are used by the pro-GM newspapers, whereas the opponents use terms such as 'worrying', 'feeling' and 'fearing'. Both sides are claiming their truth is the right one, each paper heavily influenced by their political orientation and quality or tabloid label. How an event is represented is inevitably connected to politics and quality, which should not be undervalued.

## **Newspapers and Opinion Articles**

Newspapers also offer space outside of what they decide is newsworthy, for others to share what they believe is important. Every newspaper has such section devoted to opinion articles. Opinion articles are commentaries written by an external source independent from the newspaper, providing personal insights and opinions on a subject relevant to current news topics or other topics of societal relevance. Editorials can also be found in this section, but they may not be mistaken for opinion articles. An editorial is essentially also an opinion piece, but editorials are written by the editorial board of a newspaper. Both opinion articles and editorials aim to convince the audience of a certain standpoint, however, editorials voice the opinion of the newspaper, whereas an opinion article written by an independent source does not necessarily agree with the view of the newspaper. This makes opinion pieces a significant section in newspapers, as it is an opportunity for others to share and highlight different perspectives on subjects in the news. It is where the public can share ideas each other or simply speak out, with the potential to impact public debate (Mitman et al., 2012). It should be noted, however, that newspapers actively choose which opinion pieces are published; thus, not any- and everyone's opinion gets published in a newspaper. In this sense, newspapers act as gatekeepers and allow pieces to be published they deem to be worthy of publishing, likely based on their political and societal orientation.

The study by Mitman et al. (2012) on opinion pieces in American newspapers in the weeks leading up to the 2003 U.S. attack on Iraq offers an interesting insight. It shows that 76% of opinion pieces originated from the news sources itself, written by editors and regular columnists. The remaining 24% are academics, politicians and guest columnists. Opinion pages were meant as an intellectual arena where the public could provoke new ideas. Expert elites publish opinions, not only setting the agenda for the general public but also for fellow elites (Coppock et al., 2018). It is argued by Coppock et al. (2018) that opinion pieces do in fact have the impact of changing minds, and that individuals consider diverse points of view. Discourse in the formulation of opinions plays an important role in public opinion formation, especially during periods where social and political debate are spiked due to impactful events and consensus is called into question.

Opinion articles speak directly to the reader, unlike hard news (Greenberg, 2000). Greenberg (2000) researched how Chinese boat immigrants were discussed within opinion discourse in the Canadian media. He noted differences among opinions in the newspapers he chose to research, which were The National Post, The Vancouver Sun, the Victoria Times-Colonist, The Toronto Star and the Toronto Sun. Some were more sympathetic towards the

immigrants; others were very critical of the government's acts. There was also a combination of sympathy and criticism. Some media outlets provided a greater discursive space for others to express their opinion, where other outlets, in particular The National Post, were considered to be insensitive to the situation, which is associated with their right-winged political orientation. The Toronto Sun was consistent with its tabloid format by polarizing the actions of government and the needs of the migrants with "real" Canadians. Evidently, newspapers and their opinion sections display a variety of different opinions.

### **Present Study**

The COVID-19 pandemic has a large and undeniable emotional impact, and this study sets out to analyze these emotions with regards to emotion talk in opinion articles. Opinion articles are there to express opinion and emotion, but the emotion flowing from the corona crisis will be able to shed a light on how issues related to the lockdown are discussed in news media in general, and in opinion articles in particular. Furthermore, this research will also highlight what types of emotions are most present and, most importantly, how different newspapers deal with emotion talk.

In the present study, opinion articles about the COVID-19 lockdown in the UK will be analyzed based on the emotion terms mentioned earlier compiled by Bednarek (2008). The present study focuses solely on emotion talk. The angle of the coronavirus provides a highly emotional setting which offers a good case for the analysis of emotion talk in opinion pieces.

Emotion is a long-neglected element in academic research, while it is omnipresent in almost all aspects of human life and communication (Mackenzie & Alba-Juez, 2019). Not only in news articles but also in opinion pieces the influence of emotion and the presence of emotion talk has not received any particular attention. There are only few studies that compare newspapers on the basis of emotion talk in discourse. Furthermore, in general, most extensive studies on news or journalistic discourse seem to be rather outdated, meaning that the results might not hold anymore, because the impact of the digital world had not yet developed as far. The present study attempts to provide more insight regarding emotion talk in newspapers.

The Sun and the Guardian are two very different newspapers. The first is categorized as a sensational newspaper or even a tabloid, whereas the latter is seen as a quality newspaper. It is not only on this front that these newspapers differ, but also on their orientation in the political environment. The Guardian is seen as a platform for social liberal and left-wing newspaper. The Sun, however, is a more conservative right-wing newspaper. In these respects, the Sun and

the Guardian stand perpendicular to each other, and it comes as no surprise that their takes on the COVID-19 lockdown might be quite different. Where The Guardian takes a more cautious stance, the Sun focusses more on the lessening of measurements and being able to get life back to normal. For instance, a publication on February 20, 2021 of the Sun's opinion (The Sun Says) on the lockdown states that the lockdown should end quickly and effectively to turn around Britain's economy. Most importantly, there can be no turning back – there cannot be yet another lockdown. Overall, the tone of the article is positive and invests a lot of hope on the vaccinations but calls for Boris Johnson to see the dire state of the economy. An editorial published on February 22, 2021 in the Guardian takes a rather different stance. The confidence Boris Johnson had shown regarding the COVID-19 vaccination is questioned. The Guardian's viewpoint is a wary one and emphasizes a more cautious stance on relaxing lockdown regulations. These two articles constitute both newspapers' individual view on the corona crisis, lockdown and how to tackle it all.

In the British press, beliefs, opinions and emotions are more often explicitly used (Bednarek & Caple, 2012). It would be interesting to see if there is a difference between two such differently oriented newspapers regarding the use of emotion talk. It would provide an insight not only on the front of emotion talk, but also how the crisis surrounding COVID-19 is chosen to be portrayed through emotion talk. The Sun and the Guardian have a different political orientation, adding to their different stances towards the lockdown. The newspaper quality and political orientation combined provide an interesting basis to explore and analyze emotion talk.

This research will analyze opinion articles in the Sun and the Guardian based on the lexis that denotes affect of the self and of others (see Figure 1) to get insight on the use of emotion talk across quality and sensational newspapers that also vary on their political stance regarding the coronavirus, leading to the **following research questions:**

**RQ1:** How is emotion talk presented in the Guardian and the Sun regarding opinion articles in the coverage of the COVID-19 lockdown?

**RQ2:** How do the textual representations link to the context of the Guardian and the Sun?

The answer to RQ1 is presented in the results section and the answer for RQ2 is discussed in the discussion section, as this requires more interpretation in order to come to a concluding answer.

## Method

### Data

This research was based on a corpus collected from two British newspapers, the Sun and The Guardian. From these newspapers, opinion articles were collected on the topic of the Covid-19 lockdowns in the UK. The articles were collected from the websites of the newspapers in the respective periods of the lockdowns the UK has had up until the point of the start of this research: March up until May 2020, November 2020 and January and February of 2021.

Finding articles started with a broad search via Google using phrases such as ‘lockdown opinion 2020 the Guardian’ and ‘lockdown opinion 2020 the Sun’. From these searches, articles that were possible options for analysis were collected. After this general search, more articles were found by searching via each newspaper’s respective website. These searches used keywords on the topic and specifying the data: ‘lockdown opinion 2020’, with variations that added the months March, April, May and November, and ‘lockdown opinion 2021’, with variations that added the months January and February. After collecting all possible articles, a final selection was made based on a preliminary read-through scanning if enough possible emotion terms were present for analysis. The final collection consisted of 28 articles (14 per newspaper), all of which were analyzed individually.

### Procedure

Every text was analyzed separately on the premise of emotion terms. Each individual article was copied to a Word document, where the link to the website also was collected in case there was need to refer back to the webpage. The author, headline and date of publication were also noted. After this, the article was read thoroughly multiple times. When encountering a possible emotion term, it was highlighted. Then, the text was read a last time while focusing on the already highlighted emotion terms to determine whether the highlighted words were actual emotion terms. Bednarek (2008) defines emotion talk as all usages of emotion terms excluding emotional talk devices, i.e., emotion talk are linguistic expressions that denote (the speaker’s and others’) emotions. In this research, terms are excluded from analysis when they indicate an attitude or state of being, instead of an emotion. All emotion terms considered in Bednarek (2008) can be found in Appendix A 1.3. All found emotion terms were checked using this list. The following figure consists of a comprised list of emotion terms that provided the basis on which emotion terms were defined in this research. This table presents an overview of the most frequently used emotion terms.

Nouns	Hope, love, fear, feeling, shock, surprise
Adjectives	Happy, worried, surprised, sad, keen, anxious, angry
Adverbs	Happily, desperately, cheerfully, gratefully, sadly
Verbs	Love, worry, enjoy, care, hate, admire

Figure 1. Most frequently used emotion terms (Bednarek, 2008).

The final collection of emotion terms was used for analysis, where every single emotion term was identified, categorized, and further analyzed individually. For each emotion term found, the paragraph in which it occurs was noted down, whether the word is a noun, verb, adverb or adjective, and if the word was of the negative, neutral or positive polarity. After this, it was determined whether the emotion term is negated and if the emotion term was intensified, for example by being preceded by the word “very”. Finally, it was determined to whom the emotion is attributed, towards what or whom this emotion is directed and who puts the emotion term in the text, for example via a quotation. In cases where this process was not easily followed, for instance when an emotion is not clearly directed to a certain party, there is a separate analysis of the emotion term to define its potential function in the text. This procedure was followed for every emotion term present in the text. After identifying and categorizing each emotion term, a general analysis about the emotion terms in context of the article was written down. All the emotion terms were collected and categorized in an Excel file. In Appendix A, the codebook can be found explaining the categorization of every single emotion term. During the process of analyzing all collected articles in this manner, any notable patterns or other interesting finds of relevance were written down for each data set. These initial findings were revisited once all the data was analyzed to see if these findings were still relevant or had changed. The patterns were found by arranging the data in different ways. The Excel file contained three tabs, one for each newspaper and one combining the data from both newspapers. Sorting the different categories in alphabetical order made it possible to group the various sub-categories together, allowing the sub-categories to be studied independently. This was done by rearranging the first category in the tab containing all the corpus data and analyzing if any patterns arose. After this, the same analysis was conducted in the newspaper’s separate datasets in order to compare the results and see how these related to the analysis of the entire corpus data. This process was repeated for every category and sub-category. To establish if something is a pattern, the (sub-)category that was studied had to have a recurring connection with at least two other (sub-)categories, or a strongly indicated

recurring relation with one category. An example analysis following this procedure can be found in Appendix B.

### **Reliability check**

In order to ensure the data is reliable, a second coder coded three articles per newspaper, coding the articles in the same way as the first coding took place. The second coder read the articles thoroughly looking for emotion terms. Then, the second coder assessed if all the emotion terms found were also found initially and provided feedback in the cases where there was disagreement, for instance when a word was wrongly marked as an emotion term. In the case this occurred, a discussion took place to decide whether or not to include it in the analysis, while referring to Bendarek (2008). It also occurred that an emotion term was found in the text under an image. After some discussion, the mutual decision was made not to include this text, since in the Sun this text is a repetition of what occurs in the article and this research did not include the analysis of images. Continuing, the second coder coded the emotion terms separately and then looked at the initial analysis of each coded emotion term to check for discrepancies, which did not occur.

## **Results**

This study set out to explore emotion talk in opinion articles published in the Guardian and the Sun on the topic of Covid-19 lockdown. In this section, the results of the analysis are presented, elaborating on every category of the analysis. The patterns that arise from this analysis are further elaborated on to highlight how emotion talk is represented in the corpus.

The entire corpus contained 164 emotion terms. The total consisted of 91 nouns, 41 verbs, 29 adjectives, and 3 adverbs. The majority of emotion terms were of negative polarity (105). Emotion terms of positive polarity were less frequent (48), and neutral emotion terms were the least frequent (11). Across the entire corpus, a large share of emotion terms had a clearly defined emoter (73), but an almost equal amount of emotion terms had no clear emoter (65), meaning that the emotion terms were used as general statements to describe a certain atmosphere. This includes emotion terms that are described as being by ‘the public’, or any other large unidentified group. For the remainder of the emotion terms, the author was the emoter (25). Regarding attribution, the large majority of emotion terms were attributed to the emoter (110), meaning that the emotion experienced was directed towards the emoters themselves. A small portion of this (27 of the 110) pertained to the author. The remainder of emotion terms had no clear attribution and were general statements (40), or were attributed to

a defined other party (13). In total, a large share of 146 emotion terms were put in the text directly by the author, 11 emotion terms were used while paraphrasing others, and 6 emotion terms occurred in quotations.

The dataset of the Guardian contained 105 emotion terms and the dataset of the Sun contained 59 emotion terms. This is a significant difference in the number of emotion terms per dataset, as the Sun dataset contained just more than half of the emotion terms the Guardian dataset contains. Emotion terms in the form of nouns occurred most frequently in both the Guardian (58) and the Sun (33). Regarding the other linguistic levels of emotion terms, the Guardian contained a smaller portion of verbs (29), and even smaller frequencies of adjectives (17) and adverbs (1). The Sun has a similar situation with little adverbs (2), but there are an equal amount of verbs (12) and adjectives (12) present. As for polarity, the Guardian contained negative emotion terms (70) predominantly and had a smaller portion of positive (26) and neutral (9) emotion terms. This **was also observed** in the Sun, where negative emotion terms occurred more frequently (35) compared to positive (22) and neutral emotion terms (2). Purely looking at numbers, the Guardian and the Sun contain almost the same amount of positive emotion terms. Translating this into percentages, the data shows that the Sun contains more positive emotion terms (37.3%) proportionally than the Guardian (24.8%). The category of emoters was divided in three categories: clear emoters, general statements or undefined emoters, and the author as the emoter. In the Guardian, the distribution of emoters was as follows. 44 emotion terms had a clear emoter, 41 emotion terms had undefined emoters and 20 emotion terms of which the author was the emoter. The distribution of the emoter category in the Sun was similar, with the biggest category being emotion terms with an undefined emoter (28). There were almost an equal amount of emotion terms with a clear emoter (24) and a small portion of emotion terms (7) had the author as the emoter. What is striking, is that the authors have the lowest contribution as emoters. With regards to attribution, 73 emotion terms in the Guardian dataset were attributed to the emoter, of which 20 terms were attributed to the author. 23 emotion terms were general statement and had no clear attribution. The other 8 were attributed to clearly defined others. For the Sun, 37 terms were attributed to the emoter, 7 of which were attributed to the author. 17 emotion terms were general statements without clear attribution. The remaining 5 were attributed to clearly defined others. In both datasets, emotion terms are most frequently attributed to the emoter, meaning that the emoters experience emotions internally, instead of emotions externally directed towards others. In most cases, the author puts the emotion term in the text, both in the Guardian (91) as well as in the Sun (55). In other cases, the emotion term is put in

the text by **indirect quotations**, which was only a small portion in both the Guardian (8) and the Sun (3). Emotion terms also surfaced in quotations, but both in the Guardian (5) and the Sun (1) these frequencies were very low.

### **Patterns**

In the following figure, a comparison of the categories per newspaper can be found, in order to highlight the differences. Percentages are used in order to show the differences between the two newspapers in proportion, since the dataset of the Guardian is more extensive than that of the Sun percentages better convey the differences and similarities between the two datasets.

**See the codebook Appendix A for an explanation of the categories.**

	The Guardian			The Sun			
Polarity	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Polarity	Positive	Negative	Neutral
	26 (24.8%)	70 (66.6%)	9 (8.6%)		22 (37.3%)	35 (59.3%)	2 (3.4%)
Emoter		General statement/ undefined group	Defined other	Emoter		General statement/ undefined group	Defined other
	Author	41 (39.0%)	44 (42.0%)		Author	28 (47.4%)	24 (40.7%)
	20 (19.0%)				7 (11.9%)		
Attribution		General statement/ undefined group	Defined other	Attribution		General statement/ undefined group	Defined other
	To the emoter	24 (22.9%)	8 (7.6%)		To the emoter	17 (28.8%)	5 (8.5%)
	73 (69.5%)				37 (62.7%)		
In text via	Author	Indirect quotation	Quotation	In text via	Author	Indirect quotation	Quotation
	92 (87.6%)	8 (7.6%)	5 (4.8%)		55 (93.2%)	3 (5.1%)	1 (1.7%)

Figure 2. Comparative table on polarity, the emoter, attribution and how the emotion is put in the text in the Guardian and the Sun

### ***Pattern 1: two-sided positivity***

Although positive emotion terms are less frequent, an interesting pattern arose when looking at the attribution of the positive emotion terms in both the Guardian and the Sun. **Combining the polarity category and the emoter category, it shows that positive emotions (48) were more often expressed by a clear emoter (27) and appeared less often in general statements (21).** **Diving in further, the emotion source category indicates** that the source of positive emotions varies, but in most of the cases comes back to lockdown experiences. These experiences differ, as there is a clear divide between them. One half expressed positive emotions when discussing life before lockdown or once it is over (14), for instance having a drink at the bar, while the other half expressed positive emotions that were caused by the consequences of lockdown (18), like the lowering levels of social anxiety among those who have a mental health disorder. This highlights the two-sided blade of the lockdown, as many can acknowledge that there are positive things about living in lockdown, but at the same time also miss the things that are no longer possible due to lockdown. This effect was further illustrated by the most prominent positive emotion terms, **namely the verb ‘enjoy’ (8) and the noun ‘hope’ (6).** The term ‘hope’ was mostly used to express the positive emotion people feel when there is an indication to the end of lockdown and the return to normal life. The term ‘enjoy’ was most frequently used to express emotion about the current situation; people enjoy lockdown life. **The possible function for this pattern could be to highlight both sides of the lockdown and illustrate how individual experiences differ based on personal circumstances. This pattern could possibly emphasize the importance of being aware of how lockdown affects others and denote that lockdown is not all bad, nor all good. Within the scope of this pattern, the Sun has a slightly bigger focus on life before lockdown and the need for lockdown to be over. The Guardian has a slightly bigger focus on life during lockdown, but both newspapers largely follow this pattern.**

### ***Pattern 2: author’s expression of emotion***

The data revealed an interesting pattern regarding the role of the author. Firstly, when looking at the emoter category it was observed across the entire corpus that authors only make up a small portion (25) of the emoter category. What was interesting about this, is that opinion articles are written by an author who wants to share their opinion, yet the author barely expressed their own emotion directly. An interesting juxtaposition did occur where in the Guardian, when the emoter was the author (18), they predominantly used negative emotion

terms (15), whereas in the Sun the author as the emoter (7) only used positive emotion terms (7). Nevertheless, authors seem to favor expressing themselves via the use of more general statements, which were notably present in both the Guardian (22) and the Sun (17). A possible function of this might be that authors do not want to be too direct and thus present their individual emotions as something that is experienced by a large group of people, turning it into a general statement. Another possible function might be of authors being less explicit with their own emotions is that they actively seek to use general statements that are ascribed to larger groups of people to give more weight to the emotions expressed.

### ***Pattern 3: the author and emotions of others***

Pertaining to the entire corpus, the emoter and attribution category show that for in a large share of cases (105) those that express an emotion also are those who experience this emotion. Checking this with the in text via category, there are only a few instances (13) where these emotions appear in the text via a direct or indirect quotation. In all other cases, the emotion is placed in the text via the author. From this can be derived that the author writes about others' emotions from their own perspective and attributes emotions to others without a clearly indicated source that confirms others in fact experience the emotions the author describes. The function of this pattern suggests that opinion article authors might attribute emotions to others to underline their own story and create more value for it. If seemingly others agree or feel a certain way that strengthens the story, the author's perspective might come across as more agreeable. Comparing the Guardian and the Sun, within this pattern the Guardian uses less (3) quotations than the Sun (10), which would indicate that the described pattern is stronger in the Guardian than in the Sun.

## **Conclusion and Discussion**

This research focused on defining the differences between the Sun and the Guardian regarding emotion terms in opinion articles written about the Covid-19 lockdown and looked at how the textual representations link to the context of the Guardian and the Sun. It provides insight on how emotion comes forward in pieces written by the public while looking at two newspapers that differ with regards to political orientation, as well as perceived quality.

As to how emotion talk is presented in the Guardian and the Sun regarding opinion articles on the topic of Covid-19 lockdowns, there is quite some overlap between the papers. A total of 164 emotion terms were found. Both newspapers use emotion terms most frequently in the form of nouns and contain a significantly large amount of negative emotion

terms. Where they differ, is that the Sun proportionally has more positive emotion terms than the Guardian. Emotion terms were most often used in general statements or to indicate feelings of others; **within the emoter category**, authors only made up 16.6% of the total. Most emotion terms were attributed to the emoter and lastly, 89.6% of emotion terms were put in the text by the author, whereas the remainder exists of **indirect quotations** and **direct quotations**.

The most obvious reason for the large number of negative emotion terms is the subject of the opinion articles. Covid-19 and lockdown are **accompanied by** mostly negative experiences; it makes sense that the emotion terms are mostly negative. However, the Sun contains more positive emotion terms, which suggests that compared to the Guardian, the Sun frames the lockdown in a more positive way. The use of positive emotion terms in general across the entire corpus shows a two-sided positivity: the good things that come from lockdown and the hope that the nearing return to normal life brings. Everyone experiences lockdown differently, but by highlighting the positive side of lockdown the situation is framed **in a positive light** and decreases the negative frame of mind, as the hope for it to be over acknowledges that the current situation in lockdown is negative. Due to the nature of the Covid-19 lockdown and the few possibilities of social interaction, the experience becomes a lonely one, people are dependent on their own individual. **Additionally**, the author is barely present as an emoter and takes up a more indirect role. The emotion expressed using general statements or by just ‘people’ are a way for the author to add their emotions without it being too direct. In opinion articles, it would seem to be the point to share one’s own view and opinion, but maybe authors shy away from doing this directly in order to be more pleasing to the reader. **This is further illustrated by emotions often being put into the text and attributed to others by the author without a clear source; the author seems to add emotion where necessary to underline their own opinion.**

It is interesting to see that the Guardian contains more emotion terms than the Sun, as these findings expand upon the research by Uribe & Gunter (2007). This study provides more data that indicates that non-sensational news outlets use more emotion terms than sensational outlets, which goes against the initial expectation that emotion in the media is mainly connected to entertainment-based media. Including and showing emotion helps to connect with the audience, despite the aversion traditional journalism has regarding the use of emotion, as it defeats the point of objective writing (Peters, 2011). Pantti and Wahl-Jorgensen (2011) suggest that emotionality is key in separating neutral fact-based journalism from popular or tabloid journalism, and that the media actively direct the emotion. With regards to

the findings of the present study, this does not seem to be the case, as quality newspaper the Guardian contained significantly more emotion terms than the Sun. Of course, in this case the emotion was not as much directed by the newspapers, as the study pertains to opinion articles. However, the newspapers do actively choose which opinion articles they publish and thus actively choose to display emotions. As according to Coppock et al. (2018), opinion pieces do have the potential to change minds, so then too do opinion pieces have the potential to convey these emotions in an impactful way. **With regards to political orientation, the Guardian and the Sun are dissimilar as well. The Guardian, left-wing oriented, does not necessarily agree with the right-wing politics of Boris Johnson, but overall has an understanding attitude towards how the government deals with Covid-19 and lockdown. As for being right-wing oriented, the Sun is very outspoken about Boris Johnson leaving a lot to be desired. However, the Sun adapts a very different attitude than the Guardian and mainly focusses on voicing the need for lockdown to end. From the perspective of the textual representation of emotion talk, the way the two newspapers use emotion they strengthen the frameworks they have created around the topic of lockdown. The Guardian contains a lot more emotion talk and does not shy away from the emotionality of the lockdown situation. The Sun on the other hand, makes far less use of emotion talk, not denying the emotionality, but seemingly underlining they are tired of the negativity surrounding lockdown and moving forward to lockdown ending.**

During the analysis, other interesting observations were made which could be elaborated on in further research. These observations included layout and writing style, the effects of political orientation, and the background of authors. A more extensive research on the connection between emotion terms, the authors and political orientation might provide useful insight in the function and purpose of the opinion section of newspapers, and whether it is actually an intellectual arena for the people (Coppock et al., 2018).

This research is based on a thorough and in-depth textual analysis, wherein lies its strength, as there is room to pay great attention to **contextual** details, which is not easily achieved in a **number-driven** quantitative analysis. An extended analysis that also takes into account images (and videos) in opinion articles could be an interesting option to research image influence on emotion terms. The corpus of the present study is relatively small. With a larger data set, the results can be generalized more easily and larger patterns can be identified. Plus, cross-referencing the data with the already existing list of emotion terms in Appendix A 1.3 by Bednarek (2008) would be a lot more efficient using designated software. It has to be noted, however, that the list created by Bednarek (2008) is not exhaustive. **The difficulty of the approach in this study lies with terms such as ‘calm’ or ‘suffer’, which are considered to**

describe attitudes or states of being. These terms do not specifically or explicitly denote emotion, but are closely connected to emotion, making it difficult to differentiate between them and draw a hard line on what should be considered an emotion term. Further research expanding on this issue could help create clearer boundaries. Other observations that were made during this research such as the connection between the political orientation of a newspaper and the authors of opinion pieces, would be interesting to expand upon in further research.

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## Appendix A

### Codebook

The following is a list of the categories that were used to code the emotion terms

**Linguistic level:** Categorization of the emotion terms according to the following sub-categories: noun, verb, adjective, adverb.

**Polarity:** Categorization of the emotion terms denoting if the emotion term is negative, positive or neutral.

**Emoter:** This category denotes the party that expresses the emotion. This was categorized according to the following sub-categories: author, defined other (meaning an obvious other party which is not generalized) and general statement (meaning that the emotion term was not expressed by a defined party, but was used to describe the atmosphere or make general claims about a situation).

**Attribution:** This category denotes the party that experiences the emotion. This was categorized according to the following sub-categories: to the emoter (meaning that the party expressing the emotion is also the party that experiences the emotion), defined other (meaning an obvious other party which is not generalized experiences the emotion) and general statement (meaning that the emotion was not experienced by a defined party, but was used to describe the atmosphere or make general claims about a situation).

**Emotion source:** This category denotes what induces the emotion.

**In text via:** This category denotes how the emotion term occurs in the text. This was categorized according to the following sub-categories: author (the author themselves put the emotion term in the text), quotation (the emotion term appears in a **quotation**) and **indirect quotation** (the emotion term appears in the text via rephrasing what another party has expressed).

## Appendix B

### Example Analysis

The following example analysis shows how exactly the analysis was conducted. This paragraph is taken from the article “Lockdown 2: it's back, with more self-improvement guilt than ever before” by Eleanor Margolis, published in the Guardian.

*“It’s the night before Lockdown 2, and there’s a queue outside every restaurant on my local high street. Even the seriously iffy ones. Crowds of hunched-shouldered drinkers have formed outside pubs, and the white noise of their conversation is occasionally interrupted by the clap of a firework. No one knows quite what this is. The atmosphere – so highly charged with anxiety it could probably be harnessed as a renewable – is celebratory, pessimistic, and deeply chaotic.”*

During this first read, any terms that were possible emotion terms are noted down: ‘seriously’ and ‘anxiety’. Then, the text was read thoroughly a second time to check for terms that were missed the first time. The now collected terms were checked to conclude whether they were emotion terms and were to be included in further analysis. Each emotion term was checked using the list of Appendix A 1.3 in Bednarek (2008). After filtering out terms that were not on the list, the remaining emotion terms were analyzed. In this case, the term ‘seriously’ is excluded after it was not found on the list by Bednarek (2008). **This term is excluded because it does not denote a particular emotion, but rather an attitude or state of being.** The emotion term that will be analyzed here is ‘anxiety’. For each emotion term, the valance, polarity, intensifiers, emoter, attribution, who puts the term in the text, and source were determined. From the context and co-text, the analysis categories were filled, defining the properties of the emotion term. The term ‘anxiety’ is a noun, has a negative polarity, and there is no intensifying language present. The emoter of ‘anxiety’ is not clearly defined, as it describes the general atmosphere. The term is also not attributed to anything or anyone. It is a general statement describing a certain atmosphere or state of being, rather than a clearly defined emoter directing their emotion to a clearly defined subject. The term ‘anxiety’ is placed in the text by the author and gathering from the context and co-text the source of the emotion is the start of the second lockdown.

To provide an example from each dataset in the corpus, a paragraph is taken from the article “Most of us can cope in lockdown...but remember it’s a living hell for domestic abuse victims” by Karren Brady, which was published in the Sun.

*“Most people are struggling with a locked-down life. But those of us in a calm and happy home have no idea about the extent of the domestic abuse, both physical or mental, going on behind some closed doors.”*

As the article was read the first time, any possible emotion terms were noted down: ‘calm’ and ‘happy’. To check whether possible emotion terms were missed during the first read, the text was read thoroughly a second time. The collected emotion terms were checked using the list compiled by Bednarek (2008) in Appendix A 1.3, to determine if the collected emotion terms should be included in the analysis. After this check, the term ‘calm’ was excluded from the analysis, **as this term refers more to a state of being rather than an emotion being experienced**. The emotion term that will be analyzed is the term ‘happy’. For this term, the valence, polarity, intensifiers, emoter, attribution, who puts the term in the text, and source were determined. ‘Happy’ is an adjective and has a positive polarity. There is no intensifying language present. The emoter of ‘happy’ is not clearly defined, as it describes a state of being or emotional value of a subject. Thus, the term is also not attributed to anything or anyone. The term is placed in the text by the author and the source of the emotion is having a stable home, specifically a home without abuse.

**To find patterns within the datasets, the recorded data was rearranged in the Excel file. For instance, looking at the word ‘anxiety’ from the first example, to find out if there are more instances of negative emotion terms that are used to describe a general atmosphere and are not attributed to anything or anyone, the data can be arranged using the alphabetical filter on the polarity category for example, placing all negative emotion terms under each other. To further specify, the same filter could be used on the linguistic level category and looking at all the negative nouns. If it appears that a large number of negative nouns are not attributed to anything or anyone and describe a general atmosphere, a pattern is established.**

## Statement of Own Work

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