"Wow, they took turns":

Evaluation in the US and UK press coverage of the final US presidential debate of 2020

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April 2022

Tiedekunta/Osasto – Fakultet/Sektion – Faculty	Laitos – Institution – Department
Faculty of Arts	Deparment of Languages

Tekijä – Författare – Author
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Työn nimi – Arbetets titel – Title
"Wow, they took turns": Evaluation in the US and UK press coverage of the final US presidential debate of 2020

Oppiaine – Läroämne – Subject
Master's Programme in English Studies

Työn laji – Arbetets art – Level	Aika – Datum – Month and year	Sivumäärä– Sidoantal – Number of pages
Master's Thesis	April 2022	60

Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract

This thesis explores press bias in the US and UK news coverage of the final 2020 US presidential debate between Joe Biden and Donald Trump. An integral part of the US presidential election campaigns, the debates are televised events where the presidential candidates discuss controversial topics, and the press reports about the debates in real time. The goal of this thesis is to analyse whether a bias towards one of the candidates can be identified in the press coverage, and whether there is a difference between the coverage in the two countries. While the topic of press bias in elections has evoked academic interest in other fields, linguistic research has been minimal. Previous studies have found that the press coverage of presidential debates is sometimes biased or inaccurate, which might have the potential to influence voter behaviour. In this thesis I analyse whether a linguistic approach can offer new insight on how these biases manifest.

The data comes from 8 US and 10 UK newspapers and consists of 69 newspaper articles. These countries were chosen, because their media systems have been found to share many similarities in the past, and they can give a general idea of the press coverage in the English-speaking world. More than just bias, this study analyses something called evaluation, an area of linguistics that deals with how writers express their views, how they build discourse with the readers and how they reflect the values of their community. Appraisal Framework (Martin and White, 2005) was used in the analysis, as it has been specifically designed for analysing evaluation and has been applauded for its ability to recognise implicit attitudes of the writers. The framework consists of three categories: ATTITUDES of the writer, ENGAGEMENT with the reader and GRADUATION, the degree of the attitudes. The collected data was analysed and classified manually in a close reading.

The differences between the countries were found to be small, and a consistent bias favouring Biden was identified in the press coverage of both countries. In the ATTITUDE category, Trump was more often evaluated negatively than positively in both countries, especially regarding his moral standing (PROPRIETY) and his skills and capabilities (CAPACITY). Biden, on the other hand, was not evaluated negatively as much as Trump, and in the US, there were more positive than negative evaluations of him. He was most often applauded for his successes in the debate (CAPACITY). ENGAGEMENT was most often used by the journalists to oppose Trump's views and to support Biden's.

The framework made it possible to build a more detailed description of how the biases manifest in the presidential debate news coverage and especially excelled in recognising implicit attitudes. At the same time, the framework had some issues regarding replicability of the study due to the subjectivity in identifying implicit attitudes. Some of these issues have been brought up by researchers in the past and adjustments for the framework have been suggested. Future studies using the Appraisal Framework could benefit from using one of these adjustments and seeing how that affects the results.

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1. Introduction

Traditionally, the press was expected to deliver an unfiltered and unbiased picture of reality to the general public. However, the power of the media to frame stories goes beyond faceless reporting and, in recent years, a consensus has emerged that journalists are not merely transmitting information. Instead, they have ways of bringing their viewpoint into the texts and persuading readers to agree with them (see e.g., Bednarek, 2006, 3; Stenvall, 2014; Lichter, 2014). Considering that millions of people all over the world rely on the news to get their information on current topics and political events, the media's ability to frame news stories from their point of view means that they might also possess the power to influence the readers' viewpoints and the way they perceive things.

The media's power to mould readers' viewpoints is also a concern in politics, and more specifically in elections. For instance, the way the media presents the presidential candidates in an election could influence the way potential voters perceive the candidates and possibly even the way they decide to vote (see e.g., Benoit and Currie, 2001; Tsfati, 2003; Hwang, et al., 2007; Nwokora and Brown, 2017). In the United States, there is a long tradition of televised presidential debates that have become an integral part of the presidential campaigns. In the debates, the presidential candidates debate and discuss current issues, and the goal of the debates is mainly to influence any undecided voters (Benoit and Currie, 2001, p. 28). The debates are popular, with millions of Americans watching them every year and newspapers covering the debates in real time (Benoit and Currie, 2001, p. 37). Watching the debate can possibly sway voters who have not yet settled on a candidate (see e.g., Hellweg, Brydon and Pfau, 1992; Pfau, 2002; Benoit and Hansen, 2004), as it gives them a chance to compare the candidates and their viewpoints. By watching the debate, the voters might get a more authentic portrayal of the candidates, as the candidates might have to answer surprising questions on the spot (Benoit, Stein and Hansen, 2004, p. 1). The audience also gets a chance to see the nonverbal cues such as body language of the candidates (Cho, et al., 2009, p. 246).

While millions of American voters get their information about the debates from watching the debates personally, there are numerous people who get their information about the candidates from the news (Benoit and Currie, 2001, p. 29; Tsfati, 2003, p. 74). Essentially this means that the way the media portray the candidates could also influence the readers, especially if they did

not watch the debate or only watched parts of it (e.g., Tsfati, 2003). This might cause the readers to form uninformed opinions of the candidates, as their portrayals could be solely based on the journalists' personal opinions rather than accurate depictions of the debate. In fact, Benoit, Stein and Hansen (2004, p. 23) found that the news coverage of the presidential debates was not painting an accurate picture of the debates and thus, millions of voters who rely solely on the press coverage to form their opinion could be making a voting decision based on inaccurate data.

While there has been some interest into press bias and how the press reports about political events and presidential debates (e.g., D'Alessio and Allen, 2006; D'Alessio, 2012; Lichter, 2014), the focus of past research has been in the field of communications and social sciences. A larger body of linguistic research is still missing, especially regarding presidential debates. In this thesis, I aim to fill that gap to see how press bias in presidential debate coverage can be analysed linguistically and whether a linguistic approach can shine new light on the topic. More specifically, the goal of this study is to see how the newspapers in the US and the UK reported on the final US presidential debate of 2020. In the 2020 US presidential election, Joe Biden was the presidential candidate of the Democratic Party. He was known for being the former vice president of the USA. His opponent in the presidential debate was Donald Trump, the presidential candidate of the Republican Party and the incumbent president of the US at the time. The debate occurred and was broadcast on the 22nd of October 2020.

To analyse how the press judged the candidates during and after the final debate, I look at articles from newspapers in the UK and the US to see whether any bias can be found and whether there is a difference in the evaluations the journalists have made of the two candidates. The framework that was chosen for this study is the Appraisal Framework, by Martin and White (2005). It is widely considered one of the most extensive frameworks for mapping something called evaluation, a topic that has been of keen interest in the field linguistics in the past few decades. By analysing evaluation in text, one can find the implicit and explicit viewpoints of the writer and, in this instance, the attitudes of the journalist. As well as attitudes, evaluation encompasses the ways the writer persuades readers to feel about the entities mentioned in the text, and moreover, it shows how the writer's viewpoints reflect the shared values of their community (Hunston and Thompson, 2000, pp. 5–6). Bednarek (2006, p. 5) notes that evaluation is not only something found in texts, but an integral part of any discourse, and humans are not even capable of speaking objectively without communicating value judgements. Evaluation was chosen for analysis in this study as it has a big role in everyday communication,

and it can reveal even the implicit attitudes the journalists might have. The Appraisal Framework is particularly known for its strength in recognising the implicit attitudes in texts, which could help pinpoint how the possible bias regarding the presidential debates manifests.

For this analysis, newspapers articles about the 2020 final presidential debate were chosen for analysis from 18 different newspapers from the US and UK. The newspapers from these two countries were chosen because they can give us a good overall idea of how the candidates are portrayed internationally in English. Amer (2017, p. 3) justifies choosing American and British newspapers for his analysis because they represent 'international media' to an extent, as English is the most widely used language all over the world and the newspapers are not only read in their respective countries. The US and UK medias also represent a something called the *Anglo-American media*, which means that the media in these countries have been found to share some widely recognised similarities, although these similarities have more recently been questioned (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, p. 198; Hampton, 2008, p. 1). The comparison between the two countries could also offer some insight into how presidential candidates are portrayed domestically compared to their portrayal in a different country.

In this thesis, I aim to answer the following questions:

1. What types of evaluation are present in the articles?
2. Can the evaluations reveal a bias towards one of the candidates?
3. Do the evaluations differ between countries?
4. Does the Appraisal Framework reveal anything new about press bias in presidential debate news coverage?

The goal of this study is to discover any biases for one candidate and to see whether these differ between the two countries. At the same time, my goal is to analyse if the Appraisal Framework can complement the past research of press bias and to see what new insight it might bring to the topic.

In the next chapter, I discuss the media systems in the US and the UK in more detail and give examples of media bias and how it has been studied in the past. Then I discuss the Appraisal Framework in more detail. In the third chapter, I discuss the methods and materials that were used in this study. The fourth chapter lays out my results and their implications. In Chapter 5, I discuss what my findings might indicate and how they tie in with earlier studies. The final chapter is where I conclude the thesis and suggest some ideas for future research.

2. Background

In this chapter I provide an overview of previous research on media bias, especially regarding media bias in the news coverage of presidential debates. Then I briefly discuss some of the key elements and differences of the media systems in the UK and the US, mainly regarding print media. In the last part of this chapter, I discuss some studies conducted on evaluation in the media and finally, I introduce the Appraisal Framework in detail.

2.1 Bias in the press

In 1989, Biber and Finegan conducted a study to analyse authorial stance in different genres of text and found news reporting to be relatively free of stance markers showing journalists' attitudes (1989, p. 103). According to them (Biber and Finegan, 1989, p. 109), this is due to the expository nature of the press, whereby transmitting information is the most important aspect rather than the writer's viewpoint. They conclude that "[t]he norm for written expository genres in English is thus a text relatively devoid of both affective and evidential stance markers" (Biber and Finegan, 1989, p. 109).

This view of the press as mere transmitters of information has been widely refuted in more recent studies (see e.g., Stenvall, 2014; Lichter, 2014). In fact, Stenvall (2014, p. 461) analysed stance in news journalism and found that although objectivity is generally an ideal in journalism, it is now commonly acknowledged that such ideal is nearly impossible to reach, and it is hard to even define the concepts related to objectivity, such as 'impartiality'. Moreover, any topic a journalist wishes to cover could have a large number of different sides and aspects related to it, which might make it impossible for the journalist to evenly cover all sides of a story (D'Alessio, 2012, p. 11).

If the press does not merely transmit information, does that mean that the journalists can freely express their own opinions? More importantly, does this necessarily lead to bias in the media? To answer these questions, the concept of media bias needs to be defined. Media bias is something that specifically the US press has come under scrutiny for in the past few decades. The term media bias can be used in different meanings, but often refers to "distortions of reality, favoritism or one-sidedness in presenting controversies, and closed-minded or partisan attitudes" (Lichter, 2014, p. 404). Such biases are often criticised for upholding the status quo and for not providing the readers with sufficient information, which would be necessary for them to be able to make educated decisions (Lichter 2014, p. 405).

When it comes to media bias during elections in the US, there has been conflicting evidence whether the media has a tendency to side with one presidential candidate over the other or not. Watts, et al. (1999, p. 167) found in their study of the press coverage of the presidential elections of 1988, 1992, and 1996 that there was not a great deal of bias, at least not in a way that would have promoted one candidate over another. D'Alessio and Allen's meta-analysis (2006, p. 133) also supports this view, as their analysis of 59 quantitative studies about partisan media bias during presidential elections uncovered no significant, overarching bias in the newspapers. However, they (D'Alessio and Allen, 2006, p. 149) discovered that there were some individual newspapers that had an identifiable bias in favour of the Democrat or Republican party. Kenney and Simpson (1993) also found that during the 1988 presidential campaigns, some newspapers tended to be biased in favour of the Republican Party. Schaefer's (1997) findings suggest that the partisan and political biases of the newspapers influenced the way they reported about presidential speeches, and he added that other factors that influenced the biases were the popularity of the president and the amount of support the president was getting from the elite.

Even if the portrayals of the candidates vary in different newspapers, it is still unclear whether than can affect voting decisions. This view is supported by Cho, et al. (2009), who analysed how journalistic practices regarding presidential debates influenced viewer opinions of the presidential candidates. They (Cho, et al., 2009, p. 246) point out that newspaper accounts of presidential debates have a tendency to highlight the candidates' performance rather than policy and to focus on stylistic elements rather than current issues. They (Cho, et al., 2009, p. 246) also note that by focusing on the performances of the candidates rather than current political topics, the press can influence how the presidential candidates' personalities were perceived. Hwang, et al., (2007, p. 55) analysed how the post-debate coverage in the press influenced the viewers and found that post-debate press coverage did have an impact on how the viewers perceived the candidates, although they found the level of impact was subject to individual processing styles of the viewers. By contrast, Wlezien and Soroka (2018) found that the positive portrayal of Hillary Clinton in the press during the 2016 US presidential elections and the negative portrayal of Donald Trump did not influence voter decision, although they admit that in some other year and in different circumstances, it might have.

As I have demonstrated, there has been keen interest in media bias and the media portrayals of the presidential candidates. At the same time, there has not been much interest in how this could be analysed linguistically. Simultaneously, the findings of previous studies have given

conflicting results: some studies have found significant biases in the press coverage of presidential candidates, while others have found no such biases. There is also uncertainty about the implications of such biases and whether they could influence voter decisions.

In this study, I address some of these gaps and see whether a linguistic approach can reveal any press evaluation and bias in the news coverage of the US presidential debates of 2020. More specifically I am interested to see whether the approach can pinpoint the biases more precisely. I also look at differences between the news coverage in the UK and in the US, to get a wider perspective on the topic. However, I will not be analysing differences between individual news outlets. While there have been studies that have found differences in the newspaper outlets when it comes to judging the presidential candidates (e.g., Kenney and Simpson, 1993; Nwokora and Brown, 2017, p. 35), the amount of news articles being analysed in this study is too small to adequately prove differences between individual news outlets. For instance, some newspapers included in the study only had one relevant article that was analysed, and thus, comparing it to other news outlets would be fruitless as any detected bias could be purely down to the journalist's own views instead of reflecting a general bias in that newspaper.

2.2 Press in the UK and the US

Before going into more detail about evaluation and bias, some background on the media systems in the US and in the UK is necessary to offer an understanding of how the media there typically functions and what ideals they follow.

For a long time, there was a consensus that the UK and the US media represent something called *the Anglo-American* media model and that the media systems in these countries share multiple similar features and ideologies (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, p. 198). While acknowledging that these countries media systems share many similarities, Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 198) point out that more recently it has been acknowledged that there are, in fact, significant differences between them. They (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, p. 198) argue that the American and British media systems have commonly been considered to be far more uniform than they are in reality.

In North America, the main professional ideal of journalism is objectivity, "the idea that news could and should be separated from opinion" (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, p. 219). Although there are similarities in the media systems of the two countries, Hampton (2008, p. 477) argues that the underlining ideal for objectivity was never adopted quite so thoroughly in the UK. The

British press is more commonly known for its division into the so-called 'broadsheet' quality press and tabloids, and the difference between these two is considerable (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, p. 198). Williams (2010, p. 9) points out that these newspaper types follow class lines, and the higher quality (broadsheet) newspapers are aimed at people who have a higher education and social status, whereas the mass media (tabloids) are read by less educated people with a lower income. On the contrary, the press in the US does not have such a noticeable distinction between their newspapers, even if there are a few newspapers classified as tabloids (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, p. 206).

Whereas the mass media in the US aims for political neutrality and their ideal is objectivity, the British press is "characterized by external pluralism" and the political orientations of each paper are very distinct (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, pp. 208–211). Hampton (2008, p. 483) points out that the British newspapers generally tend to identify with one party over the other. Especially the tabloid media are known to have stronger political biases, because they aim to be the voice of the "common citizen" (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, p. 211). Goddard, Robinson and Parry (2008, p. 12) also find that UK media tend to be opinionated and politically partisan, despite their aim for journalistic objectivity. In their study, they (Goddard, Robinson and Parry, 2008, p. 13) found that newspapers had a tendency to support specific political parties and then, be supportive of them once they were in power and vice vera, oppose the other party if they rose to power. In the US, on the other hand, the newspapers have not been found to be very different form each other when it comes to their political orientation, and, in fact, newspapers in the US generally try to represent both parties during elections (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, p. 209).

2.3 Evaluation

One way media biases can be analysed linguistically is by studying evaluation, which is a topic that has raised keen academic interest in the past few decades (see e.g., Biber and Finegan, 1989; White, 2003; Hyland and Sancho Guida, 2012). Hunston and Thompson (2000, p. 5) define evaluation as "the expression of the speaker or writer's attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about". According to Hunston and Thompson (2000, p. 6), evaluation is the part of texts where the writer expresses their viewpoints reflecting the values of their community; where they build relations with the readers; and where they structure discourse.

Newspaper journalism and press bias have previously been the topic of analysis in evaluation. For instance, Bednarek (2006) analysed a news corpus for evaluation to see how the writers in newspapers expressed their views in news discourse linguistically. Bednarek (2006, pp. 4–5) points out that analysing evaluation is important, as it is impossible for humans to write texts completely 'objectively', and without making value judgements and communicating them. According to Bednarek (2006, p. 5), analysing news discourse can be useful for challenging the traditional view that news discourse is objective. In her analysis, Bednarek (2006) compared a number of 'hard news' pieces from tabloids and broadsheets to find out whether there were differences in the amounts and types of evaluation. Although she has developed her own framework to study evaluation, her findings offer some interesting comparisons, as the data comes from both tabloids and broadsheets, which is similar to the data used in this study. Bednarek's main finding was that there were not that many differences between tabloids and newspapers when it came to evaluation (2006, p. 190). She also comments (Bednarek, 2006, p. 204) that although press bias does have a connection to evaluation, evaluation does not merely express bias and has other functions too, such as building relationships with the reader.

While there are multiple different ways to analyse evaluation, one of the most extensive frameworks comes from Martin and White (2005). In *The Language of Evaluation* (2005), Martin and White established a systematic approach for analysing evaluation and developed the framework that I use in this thesis. Their framework offers a way for completing a systematic analysis on how writers adopt stances towards objects and items and build a narrative with the readers. Their framework focuses specifically on how such evaluations are achieved linguistically (Martin and White, 2005, p. 93). The reason for choosing this framework is in its pervasiveness and flexibility to look at many types of linguistic features. Furthermore, as Thompson (2014, p. 53) says, the Appraisal Framework has been used a noticeable amount and it has been capable of finding meanings in texts where other frameworks have failed.

2.3 The Appraisal Framework

The Appraisal Theory is within the field of linguistics called 'Systemic Functional Linguistics' (Martin and White, 2005, p. 1). In 'Systemic Functional Linguistics', language is considered to consist of possibilities of meaning-making that are shared by a community, and these possibilities available are instantiated by individual texts (see e.g., Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014). Essentially this means that the language we produce is limited to our shared community and all individual texts are, in fact, part of a larger body of texts. Thus, any text will only have

a certain number of choices available within their community, which means that the variation between texts varies depending on which meaning-making possibilities are available (Martin and White, 2005, p. 161). Martin and White (2005, p. 52) argue that language use is contextual, so the attitudinal meanings will vary in different contexts. Their framework attempts to offer a systematic approach for mapping such contextual differences.

This framework was chosen due to its capability for in-depth analysis and its ability to find implicit attitudes of the journalists. Macken-Horarik and Isaac (2014, p. 68) also point out that the strength of this framework is that it offers a range of different ways to identify not only explicitly stated opinions and attitudes, but also the implicit forms. Martin and White (2005, p. 61) call these inscribed (explicit) and invoked (implicit) attitudes. Inscribed attitudes are statements where the writer overtly voices their opinion, whereas invoked value judgements are not as clear-cut: the writer is making a statement that seems superficially neutral but assumes that the reader will reach the right conclusion and understand that the described occurrences are "right or wrong, strange or normal, attractive or distasteful, heart-warming or upsetting, and so on" (White, 2001, p. 6).

Martin and White's framework identifies three main categories of evaluation: ATTITUDE, ENGAGEMENT and GRADUATION. In the next section, each of the three main categories of evaluation will be explained in more detail, with some examples given from the data I have gathered and some examples from Martin and White (2005).
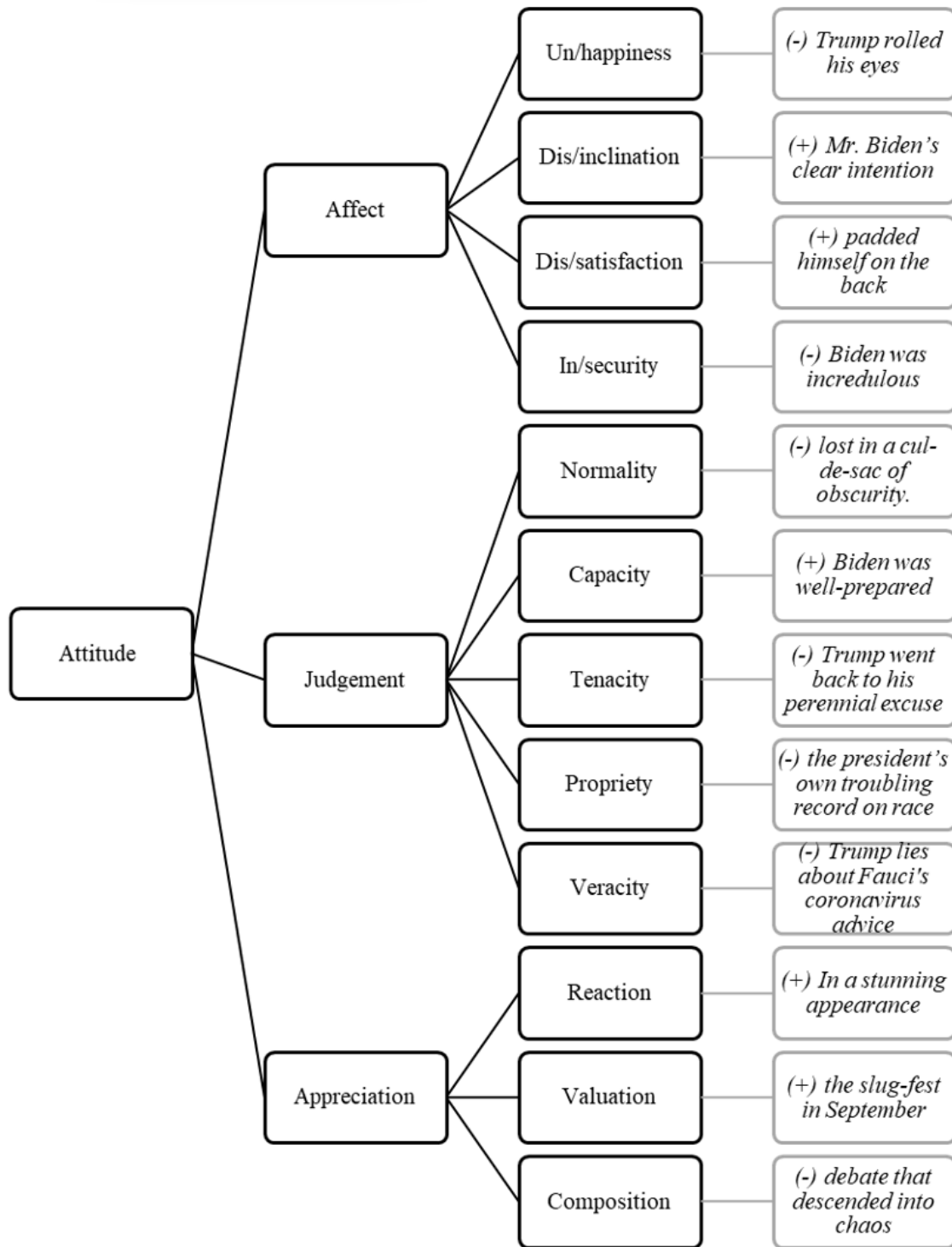
2.3.1 Attitude

Figure 1. The ATTITUDE system of the Appraisal Framework (adapted from Martin and White, 2005, pp. 42–57). Examples are taken from the data of this study.

The ATTITUDE system of Martin and White's framework deals with the parts of texts where the writers "pass judgements and associate emotional/affectual responses with participants and processes" (White, 2001). The attitudinal category is divided into three sub-categories: AFFECT,

JUDGEMENT, and APPRECIATION, which can all be either negative or positive (Martin and White, 2005, p. 52).

AFFECT is the part of the framework where the writer registers positive or negative feelings, either their own or others'. Feelings can vary in strength, which is why some attitudinal meanings can also have different strengths and attitudinal arguments may be intensified or contrasted (Martin and White, 2005, p. 44). The four sub-categories of the affect category are called UN/HAPPINESS, DIS/INCLINATION, DIS/SATISFACTION, and IN/SECURITY, where UN/HAPPINESS deals with feelings like happiness or sadness; DIS/INCLINATION deals with desires or lack of them; DIS/SATISFACTION deals with feelings regarding activities, such as being impressed or frustrated; IN/SECURITY includes things like feeling peaceful or anxious (Martin and White, 2005, pp. 51–52).

The second ATTITUDE sub-category is JUDGEMENT, the type of attitude that deals with the writer's attitudes towards people and the way they behave (Martin and White, 2005, p. 52). JUDGEMENT evaluations deal with norms: the writer takes a stance on how people should and should not behave (Martin and White, 2005, p. 45). For instance, a writer can criticise, reprimand, applaud or commend a type of behaviour. JUDGEMENT is divided into two main sub-categories: SOCIAL ESTEEM and SOCIAL SANCTION, whereby SOCIAL ESTEEM deals with NORMALITY ("*how special?*"), CAPACITY ("*how capable?*") and TENACITY ("*how dependable?*"), and SOCIAL SANCTION deals with VERACITY ("*how truthful?*") and PROPRIETY ("*how far beyond reproach?*") (Martin and White, 2005, pp. 52–54).

APPRECIATION, although similar to JUDGEMENT, is the sub-category of ATTITUDE that deals with evaluations of semiotic and natural phenomena (Martin and White, 2005, p. 45). Unlike JUDGEMENT, which targets people and their behaviour, APPRECIATION refers to evaluations towards things and evaluations of their worth (Martin and White, 2005, p. 45). Authorial evaluation towards things is also a reflection of the value the phenomena are given in the specific field (Martin and White, 2005, p. 43). APPRECIATION is divided into three sub-categories called REACTION, COMPOSITION and VALUATION (Martin and White, 2005, p. 56). The REACTION sub-category includes the writer's affectual reactions to the item in question, such as something being dramatic or boring (similar to AFFECT). COMPOSITION includes the valued item's balance and complexity. The last sub-category, VALUATION, includes evaluations where the writer expresses how they value the items, such as being important or worthless (Martin and White, 2005, p. 56). When using the Appraisal Framework, one should take a close

look at the target being evaluated when defining the categories, in order to distinguish between JUDGEMENT and APPRECIATION, because the difference may not always be clear cut (Martin and White, 2005, p. 59). For instance, "*he's a skilful player*" is an example of JUDGEMENT, whereas "*it was a skilful innings*" is an example of APPRECIATION (Martin and White, 2005, p. 59).

2.3.2 Engagement

The second part of writer evaluation in Martin and White's framework deals with reader ENGAGEMENT, which refers to those instances where the writers "adopt a stance towards [...] the value positions being referenced by the text and with respect to those they address" (2005, p. 92). Martin and White's approach (2005, p. 93) is dialogistic, meaning that the writer is always considered to be referring to prior discussions and dialogue. ENGAGEMENT deals with how the writers acknowledge prior speakers and how they engage their current readers and build dialogue with them (Martin and White, 2005, p. 93). Martin and White's (2005, p. 93) framework offers a way to analyse this type of engagement linguistically and provides the means to analyse the writers' interpersonal styles and the rhetorical strategies they use.

Martin and White (2005, p. 96) note that when a writer expresses their own opinions, they also announce their normative assessments and invite the readers to agree with their viewpoint. As such, their assertions are "aligning the addressee into a community of shared value and belief" (Martin and White, 2005, p. 96). In other words, ENGAGEMENT deals with how the writers position themselves with respect to other voices. ENGAGEMENT shows how the writer is trying to convince the reader to side with them; take for granted that the reader will share their opinion; assume specific topics are problematic, etc. (Martin and White, 2005, p. 95). ENGAGEMENT is not only about agreeing – it can also mean that the writer accepts that there are differing views, which they can then dispute or recognise as being equally valid (Martin and White, 2005, p. 96).

ENGAGEMENT is divided into two main sub-categories, although in this thesis, I focus only on one of these. MONOGLOSSIA refers to instances where the writer does not acknowledge that there are other opinions about the topic and makes no references to possible opposing views (Martin and White, 2005, p. 99). On the contrary, HETEROGLOSSIA refers to the occasions where the writer acknowledges and assumes that the reader has an opinion about a topic and

acknowledges the existence of other voices (Martin and White, 2005, p. 102). In this thesis, the focus is on the HETEROGLOSSIC assertions, which are explained below.
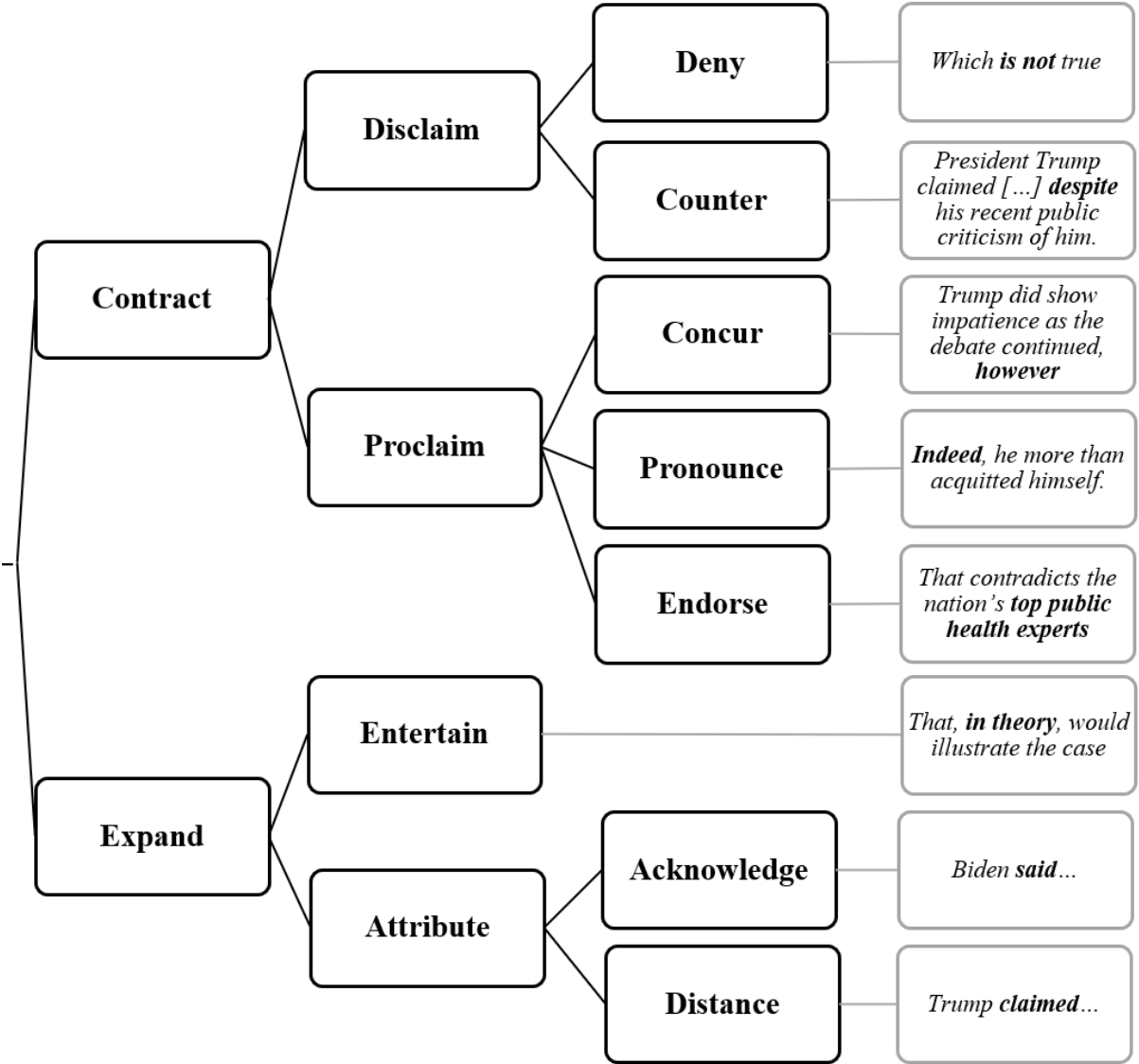

Figure 2. *The HETEROGLOSSIC part of the ENGAGEMENT SYSTEM (adapted from Martin and White, 2005, pp. 42–57). Examples are taken from the data of this study.*

Heteroglossic statements can be divided into two sub-categories: CONTRACT, which includes instances where the writer brings up opposing views only to challenge them or to otherwise support their own views; and EXPAND, where the writer acknowledges that there are opposing viewpoints and makes allowances for them (Martin and White, 2005, p. 102).

CONTRACT is divided into two sub-categories: DISCLAIM and PROCLAIM. DISCLAIM includes instances where the writer disagrees or rejects an opposing view. Furthermore, DISCLAIM includes two sub-categories: DENY, when a view is completely denied (“*you don’t have to*

exercise") as well as COUNTER ("*even though he never exercised, he was still fit*") when a view is disputed by countering it with an alternative (Martin and White, 2005, p. 97). PROCLAIM, on the other hand, deals with the writer agreeing with a topic and, thus, supressing alternative viewpoints. It includes three sub-categories: CONCUR deals with the writer implying that he agrees with someone, assumingly the reader. This sub-category includes phrases and words implying certainty, such as "*naturally"* or *"obviously"*. PRONOUNCE is a sub-category where the writer includes explicit authorial interventions in the text, such as "*there is no doubt that…*" or "*the facts are…*" The ENDORSE sub-category includes cases where the writer brings in an external authority to back up their viewpoint, as well as phrases such as "*proves that*", "*demonstrates*" (Martin and White, 2005, p. 98). The function of these types of arguments is that the writer can take a stance on whether an assertion is true or not by agreeing with an external voice (Martin and White, 2005, p. 103).

The EXPAND sub-category of HETEROGLOSSIC assertions includes cases where other voices are acknowledged. By saying somebody claims something, for instance, the writer is admitting there are opposing views (Martin and White, 2005, p. 103). Dialogic expansion is where the writer makes allowances for opposing views and is divided into two sub-categories: ENTERTAIN is when the writer makes it known that their viewpoint is just one of many, and that there may be many alternatives. This can be done through words or phrases, such as "*it seems", "possibly"* or *"I think"*. ATTRIBUTE is when an opinion or comment is credited to another person and can be either done through the ACKNOWLEDGE sub-category, such as in "*he says that…"*. In these instances, it is left unclear whether the writer supports or disagrees with the quote. On the other hand, the DISTANCE sub-category of ATTRIBUTE includes formulations like "*he claims that…*", which means that the writers can distance themselves from the argument (Martin and White, 2005, p. 98). ATTRIBUTE system is most commonly used in the form of reported speech and is common in so-called 'hard news' reporting (Martin and White 2005, p. 111, p. 168).

2.3.3 Graduation

According to Martin and White (2005, p. 135), gradeability is a relevant part of attitudes and GRADUATION is the part of their framework that analyses the degree of positivity or negativity in attitudinal utterances. GRADUATION includes mechanisms that writers can use to increase (upscale) or decrease (downscale) the force of their arguments (Martin and White, 2005, pp. 152–153). GRADUATION can allow writers to:

"present themselves as more strongly aligned or less strongly aligned with the value position being advanced by the text and thereby to locate themselves with respect to the communities of shared value and belief associated with those positions" (Martin and White, 2005, p. 94).
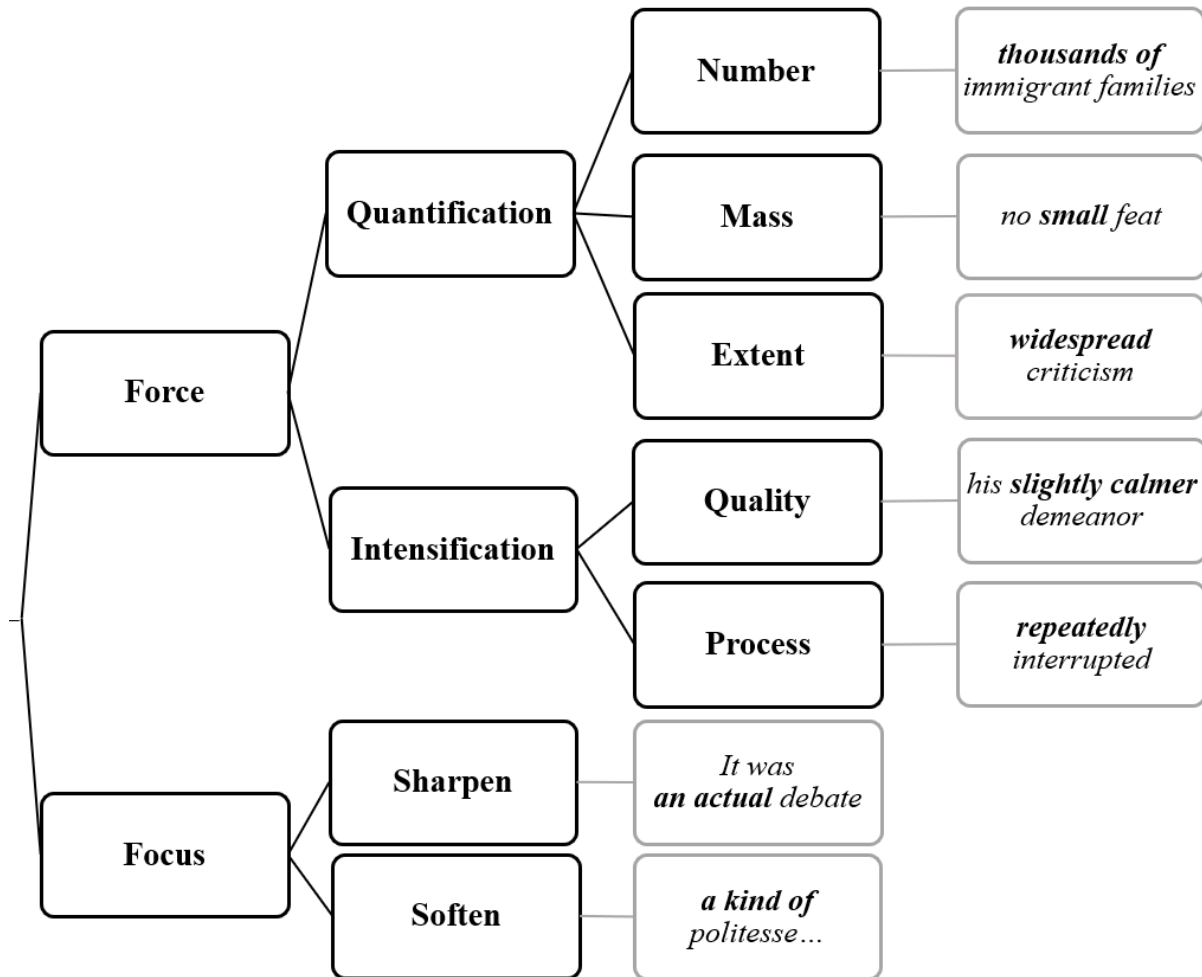
Force
Quantification
Number — *thousands of immigrant families*
Mass — *no small feat*
Extent — *widespread criticism*
Intensification
Quality — *his slightly calmer demeanor*
Process — *repeatedly interrupted*
Focus
Sharpen — *It was an actual debate*
Soften — *a kind of politesse…*

Figure 3. *The GRADUATION system of the Appraisal Framework (adapted from Martin and White, 2005, pp. 139–152). Examples come from the data of this study.*

GRADUATION is divided into two sub-categories: FORCE and FOCUS. The FORCE sub-category is where the GRADUATION is achieved through intensity or amount and is divided into INTENSIFICATION and QUANTIFICATION (Martin and White, 2005, p. 137). INTENSIFICATION can be isolated, which is the case when there is an external modifying term, such as in "*a bit chilly*", "*very sad*", and it can also include noun modifiers, such as in "*ice cold*" (Martin and White, 2005, p. 143). INTENSIFICATION can also be achieved through infused terms, for example by describing how something occurred. For instance, if water "*trickled*" or "*poured*", the meaning is quite different and one would infer that poured is a more intense version of trickled (Martin and White, 2005, p. 143, p. 148). QUANTIFICATION deals with the amounts and extents of the evaluated things (Martin and White, 2005, p. 151).

The FOCUS sub-category, on the other hand, deals with the prototypicality of the items being evaluated (Martin and White. 2005, p. 137). FOCUS takes a stance on whether the item being valued is genuine or counterfeit. Arguments can be sharpened, whereby something is classified as more genuine or true, or softened whereby something is classified as only marginally prototypical, such as "*of sorts*" or "*kind of*". If a neutral term such as 'friend' is used in connection with FOCUS, the term can turn attitudinal, such as in "*she's a true friend*" or "*jazz of sorts*" (Martin and White, 2005, p. 139).

2.3.4 Journalistic keys

Martin and White have used their framework to study what types of attitudes and engagement can be found in different types of texts. They (Martin and White, 2005, p. 161) found that the types and amounts of evaluation are highly dependent on the genre of the text. According to them, there are many similarities in texts of the same field. Generally, these similarities are called 'styles', although Martin and White refer to this kind of generalisation of evaluative options as 'keys' (Martin and White, 2005, p. 163).

The relevance of these keys for my study relates to Martin and White's findings about journalism as a genre, more specifically the 'journalistic keys' identified by them. Martin and White have found that in journalism, there are multiple common evaluative 'keys' that depend on the type of the news story (Martin and White, 2005, p. 164). They identify three types of evaluative keys that were commonly used in news and current affairs journalism (Martin and White, 2005, p. 164), mainly in English speaking 'broadsheet' print media. Martin and White found clear differences in 'hard news' reporting and articles under the heading of 'opinion' and 'commentary' and labelled their two keys REPORTER VOICE and WRITER VOICE respectively (Martin and White, 2005, p. 169). WRITER VOICE is further divided into COMMENTATOR VOICE and CORRESPONDENT VOICE (Martin and White, 2005, p. 173).
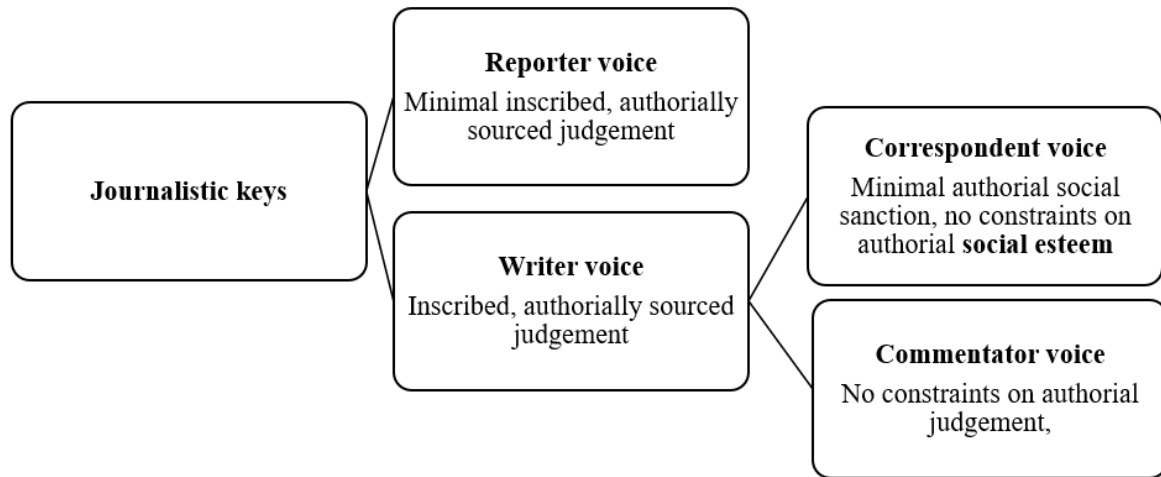
The REPORTER VOICE, which was most common in 'hard news' reporting, had no authorially sourced inscribed JUDGEMENT and all judgements were attributed to other sources (Martin and White, 2005, p. 169). The WRITER VOICE, on the other hand, had some authorial inscribed JUDGEMENT, with the COMMENTATOR VOICE utilising all five sub-categories of JUDGEMENT (Martin and White, 2005, p. 169). In texts where the CORRESPONDENT VOICE was identified, only JUDGEMENT values of SOCIAL ESTEEM occurred, but SOCIAL SANCTION evaluations could be attributed to other sources (Martin and White, 2005, p. 169).

In this study, I focus my analysis entirely on newspaper articles from the 'news' section of the newspapers, leaving out any articles classed as 'comment', 'commentary', 'analysis', etc. This should place my data within the REPORTER VOICE category. However, the results of this study might also resemble a different category, as I assume that the topic in question will still yield commentary from the writers, even if the article was published under the heading of news.

The journalistic keys are not a major theme in this thesis, especially since the focus of this study is on the evaluations made of the two presidential candidates. However, looking at the journalistic keys and how they relate to my results might give an overall idea of what news genre the presidential debate press coverage represents and how it functions in comparison to other news genres.

3. Materials and methods

In this chapter I describe the data in more detail and give details about the criteria that was used to select the data. Then I discuss my methods and give examples of some decisions I had to make.

3.1 The newspapers

The newspapers chosen for analysis came from the US and the UK. Since my goal is to get an idea of any overarching media bias in the two countries, the data was narrowed down to the most widely circulated newspapers. The decision to focus on the most widely circulated newspapers stemmed from my interest to see how the general print media was representing the two presidential candidates.

The newspapers from the US that were chosen for analysis were the most widely circulated newspapers of 2019 (based on *Cision Media Research 2019*). Only articles that fulfilled some predetermined criteria were chosen, and those criteria are discussed in more detail in Section 3.2. In total, eight newspapers were chosen for analysis from the 10 most widely circulated papers: *USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, New York Post, Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, Newsday,* and *Boston Globe.* Out of the eight newspapers, five are classified as broadsheets, two are classified as tabloids and one is classified as a 'daily', although these distinctions between newspaper types are not very significant in the US (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, p. 206). Only eight papers were analysed from the top 10 of the US newspapers, while two other newspapers were left out of analysis. *Star Tribune* was left out because the only articles that would have fulfilled the criteria for analysis were removed from their website by the time material was being collected two months after the election. *Chicago Tribune* was left out of the analysis, as they had only published articles that were written for them by a wire service or articles that did not qualify for the other criteria detailed in Section 3.2.

The British newspapers articles analysed in this study came from *The Sun, Daily Mail, Daily Mirror, Daily Express, Metro, The Guardian, The Telegraph, Independent, The Times,* and *Evening Standard*. These newspapers were chosen as they were the ten most widely read newspapers or online papers in the UK in 2019 (PAMCo, The Publishers Audience Measurement Company 2019). According to PAMCo, no data was gathered about the most widely circulated papers in 2020 due to the coronavirus situation in the country. The British

newspapers consist of a combination of broadsheets and tabloids, with tabloids being more common, making up 7 of the 10 newspapers. *The Independent* is the only one of the newspapers that is only published online, and *The Guardian* is classed as a 'compact', a broadsheet printed in tabloid form.

The high number of tabloids among the most read newspapers in the United Kingdom is due to many broadsheets turning into tabloids in recent decades because of increased competition and the influence of the internet (McNair, 2009, p. 69). This phenomenon is often called 'tabloidisation' or 'Americanisation', when quality journalism becomes less about 'hard news', and more about entertainment (McNair, 2009, p. 68). While McNair (2009, p. 69) acknowledges that the increased competition and need to make profit has forced the quality press to go "down-market", he argues that this does not mean the amount of hard news has decreased, there is just more entertainment related reporting alongside it these days. Bednarek (2006, p. 13) remarks that tabloids are widely considered as being 'the popular media', while broadsheets are generally classed as 'the quality media'. In countries where the newspapers are divided into broadsheets and tabloids, broadsheets are generally aimed at well educated people from the middle-class and tabloids are aimed at a working-class readership (White and Thomson, 2010, p. 1). Considering such differences in the nature of the newspapers, it could mean that there might be some differences in the results purely based on the differences in the number of tabloids in the UK compared to the US newspapers.

3.2 Data selection criteria

Even though I had originally considered analysing the news coverage of all the US presidential debates of 2020, I decided to narrow down my focus on the press coverage of the final debate due to some issues with the first debate. The first presidential debate had taken place in September 2020, but it was widely criticised for the repeated interruptions of the two candidates. The majority of the articles I originally looked at were mainly critique of the debate and the way it was organised, whereas I was more interested in the press coverage of a more typical debate where the two candidates discuss and debate current topics. As the second debate was cancelled, I decided to focus my analysis on the third debate that took place on the 22nd of October 2020.

The articles gathered for this study were all collected from the chosen newspapers' archives by searching for any articles written on the 22nd or 23rd of October 2020 and picking all the articles that were about the debate and available online. Only articles published on these dates were

chosen for analysis, because it was the date of the debate (22nd in parts of the US and 23rd in parts of the US and the entire UK due to the time difference). Any articles that were published later were left out of the analysis, because later developments in the presidential election campaigns and other global events could have influenced the way the journalist discussed the debate retrospectively. The debates are a popular event with millions of viewers watching them in real time, and many others reading the newspapers to get their information from there (Benoit and Currie, 2001, p. 37), which means that there was a sufficient amount of data even with these strict criteria.

Articles reporting on the presidential debates were mainly found in two categories of the newspapers' websites: political news section or opinions section. The focus of this thesis is how much evaluation of the candidates is present in the so called 'hard news' or regular 'news' sections of the newspapers, which is why any articles that were classed as 'opinions', 'commentaries' or 'analyses' were left out, as they would, naturally, have the journalists' evaluations by default. Articles that were included for analysis were taken from 'politics' or 'news' sections. There are several different types of articles that were written about the debates, such as political commentaries, guesses about who will win the election, video articles, articles about the social media commentary, etc. After a close reading, I determined a number of types that I ruled out of the analysis. These included articles, that only had a headline and standfast alongside a video; articles, where the main focus was in an interview of a political expert regarding their opinion of the debate; articles that only focused on one single comment a candidate had made in the debate and how people watching the debate reacted to it in social media; articles that focused solely on the practical organisation of the debate such as the instalment of plexiglasses and mute buttons that were introduced in this final debate to decrease interruptions. Many of these articles did not even mention the presidential candidates or the focus was somewhere else, which is why they were ruled out.

Even with these criteria, there was still a wide variety in the types of newspaper articles that made it to the analysis. Many newspapers had articles with very similar topics and viewpoints, and one of the most common types included articles about which candidate had 'won' the debate. There were also many articles that focused on a single comment from one candidate above all else. These similar articles were found in different sections of the newspapers. For instance, one newspaper may have classed the article about who won the debate as 'opinion', whereas others had it under the 'news' section. Although the articles were narrowed down to

'news', some articles still certainly resembled political commentary even if they were not classed as such.

The final number of newspaper articles chosen for analysis consisted of 27 articles from the US and 42 articles from the UK. While there are more articles from the UK, the wordcounts of the data are similar in the two countries. The US newspaper articles had an overall wordcount of 25,716 words and, in the UK articles, it was 28,964. This means that the UK newspapers tended to publish a few more articles than the US papers, but the individual articles were much shorter.

Collecting the data was conducted by manually copying the text to a separate text file. All the articles were available online and no permit was required to collect the data from the newspapers' websites.

3.3 Data annotation

The collected data was annotated manually by conducting a close reading and marking each case of ATTITUDE, ENGAGEMENT and GRADUATION. An analysis was then conducted to see how the amounts varied in the newspapers and where the differences were. While allowing for analysis and comparison of the overall amounts of evaluation in the two countries, Martin and White's framework does not allow for counting exact normalised frequencies of evaluation, because instances of evaluation may span across multiple words. Rather than counting frequencies, I find that the amounts of evaluation should be comparable per se, as the wordcount in the newspaper articles in the two countries overall was very similar.

A close reading was chosen as the best method for conducting this study because evaluative utterances are entirely context dependent. Using computational methods or an automated annotation system with a word list would not have been able conduct such an in-depth analysis and could have resulted in a number of inaccuracies. Aloy Mayo and Taboada (2017, p. 45) also defend manual annotation as a method for analysing evaluation, as it allows the annotator to consider the whole context rather than focusing on individual words. They (Aloy Mayo and Taboada, 2017, p. 45) argue that this gives the annotator the ability to catch the true meaning of the word and give the word *feminist* as an example: it could certainly be used in a positive way ("*a proud feminist*") or in a negative way ("*an angry feminist*"). In Bednarek's (2006, p. 8) analysis of a news corpus, she also opts for close reading, because according to her "many evaluative means belong to open classes. There is no clearly defined list of linguistic means of evaluation that could be looked for in a large-scale corpus with the help of a computer."

Moreover, there are utterances a computer might not be able to classify correctly, and, in fact, one such example can be found in the title of this thesis. The title includes a quote from a newspaper article, where the journalist commented "*wow, they took turns*" (Article 25, see Appendix) regarding the two presidential candidates. Superficially the utterance could seem like a compliment because it has the word "*wow*" in it, and it does technically compliment the candidates for their turn-taking skills. However, looking at the comment in its context, it becomes clear that it is not a compliment: the journalist is actually making a judgement of the presidential candidates' past behaviour when they were unable to wait for their turns and repeatedly interrupted each other. Another example of complex structures or words that might be too ambiguous for an automated annotator included cases related to AFFECT. The two candidates were often described to be 'laughing' or 'chuckling', which an automated annotator might have classified as examples of positive HAPPINESS. In reality, the context these words usually appeared in made it clear that the candidate was, in fact, laughing at the other candidate, which instantly changes the emotion from positive to negative.

Another benefit of manual annotation is that I was able to focus on specific parts of the newspaper articles, as only the evaluation of the journalist was taken into consideration. I decided to focus on journalist evaluations of the candidates and what the journalists themselves were saying, rather than what the candidates said about each other in the debate. This means that the contents of direct quotes were completely left out of the analysis, although reporting words were included. While the content of these quotes certainly could have offered an extra level of meaning to analyse, it is beyond the scope of this study. I did, however, end up including evaluations that the journalists made of other entities than the two candidates, since this could give some idea of how much the journalists tended to evaluate things overall, and how the evaluations compare to the evaluations targeting the two candidates.

Another noteworthy feature in Martin and White's framework is that it allows lexical items to be classified into only one category at a time, which mean that an utterance cannot represent two different categories simultaneously. While Alba-Juez and Thompson (2014, pp. 6–7) found that quite often, an utterance can have more than one purpose and thus, should be included in multiple categories, I decided to class lexical items to one category only (same as Martin and White), as classifying items into multiple categories can present a variety of issues when it comes to staying consistent. Some of these issues are covered in Chapter 5.

4. Results

The close reading of the newspaper articles detected many instances of evaluation in the newspaper articles, both inscribed and invoked. In this chapter, I discuss the results in more detail, dividing them into the main three categories of the Appraisal Framework, ATTITUDE, ENGAGEMENT, and GRADUATION. Examples of the categories are provided from the newspapers. All the newspaper articles used in the analysis have been given a number in the Appendix. With each example or quote I provide the corresponding number of the article.

4.1 Journalist attitudes

The Appraisal Framework was able to recognise multiple instances of ATTITUDE in the newspaper articles. Although all the different sub-categories of ATTITUDE were present in the newspaper articles, their amounts varied significantly. The most commonly found ATTITUDE was JUDGEMENT, which is where the candidates and their behaviour was being evaluated. The part of the Appraisal Framework that deals with feelings, AFFECT, was not quite as common as JUDGEMENT, and APPRECIATION was the least common of the three sub-categories.

In the analysis, I decided to look at all evaluations made of the two candidates, instead of only including evaluations that focused on the candidates in this debate. Effectively this means that evaluations targeting the candidates' behaviour outside the debates were also included, which ensured that a more accurate picture of the journalists' attitudes could be painted. Naturally, this could mean that solely the fact that Donald Trump was the incumbent president at the time could lead to a larger number of evaluations of him than Biden, especially if the journalists also evaluate him as a president. At the same time, all these evaluations add to the overall attitude of the journalist. For instance, if a journalist complimented a candidate's performance in the debate, but then listed all of that candidate's past failures, the overall attitude conveyed to the reader would still be negative. Only focusing on evaluations of the candidates' performance in this debate would then paint an inaccurate picture of how the journalist had evaluated the candidate. Out of all the JUDGEMENT evaluations targeting the two candidates, the evaluations that targeted them particularly in the presidential debate made up 86%, which means that the decision to include all evaluations of the candidates probably does not have a significant influence in the results.

As previously mentioned, any content of direct quotes was also left out of analysis, as that would reveal more about the opinions the candidates had, and not evaluations made by the

journalist. While other things and other people than the two candidates were also evaluated in the articles, the amounts of these evaluations were quite minimal. Regardless, I included them in the analysis mainly to see how their amounts compared to those of the two candidates. The other people and things that were evaluated in the articles included the debate moderator Kristen Welker, as well as both candidates' families, the venue, online comments etc. In this analysis, my main focus is on the evaluations made about the candidates, and the other evaluations were mainly looked at to offer a comparison.

4.1.1 Third person affect

While instances of AFFECT were present in the newspaper articles, these did not include any mentions of the journalists' own feelings. Instances of AFFECT were mainly found in third-person reporting, when the journalist was describing the emotion of another party – mainly the two candidates. As well as the candidates, other people whose emotions were evaluated included the audience of the debate, the Americans in general, the families of the two candidates, etc. Nonetheless, most of the AFFECT evaluations targeted the two candidates.

The most common way feelings were described was through the actions of the candidates, as was the case with "*bewildered laughter from the Democrat*" (Article 39) and "*Trump grimacing and shaking his head*" (Article 50), rather than directly naming an emotion the candidate was feeling.
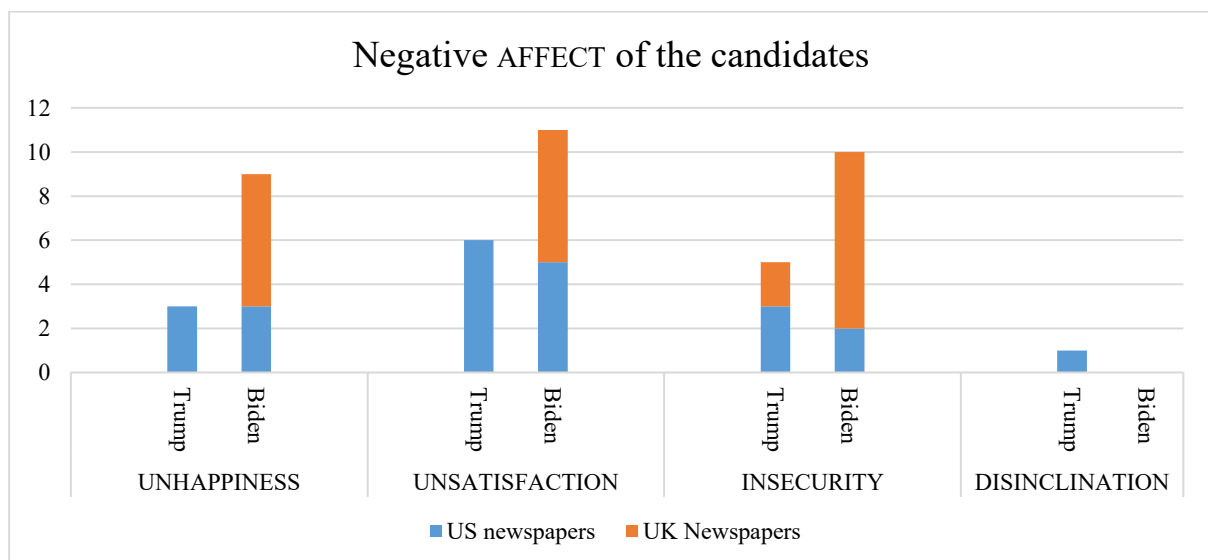

Figure 5. The amount of negative AFFECT evaluations of the candidates in the US and UK news articles.

In the UK newspapers, Biden's negative emotions were described more often than Trump's negative emotions. In fact, Trump's negative emotions were hardly mentioned in the UK

newspapers articles. In the US newspapers, the amounts of negative AFFECT regarding the candidates were similar. While the sub-categories of UNHAPPINESS, UNSATISFACTION and INSECURITY occurred with similar frequencies, DISINCLINATION was very rare.

Negative AFFECT evaluations of the two candidates were more common than positive AFFECT. Biden was described to have negative emotions more often than positive emotions in the newspapers of both countries. Trump, on the other hand, had similar amounts of negative and positive AFFECT in the US newspapers and less negative AFFECT than positive in the UK newspapers.
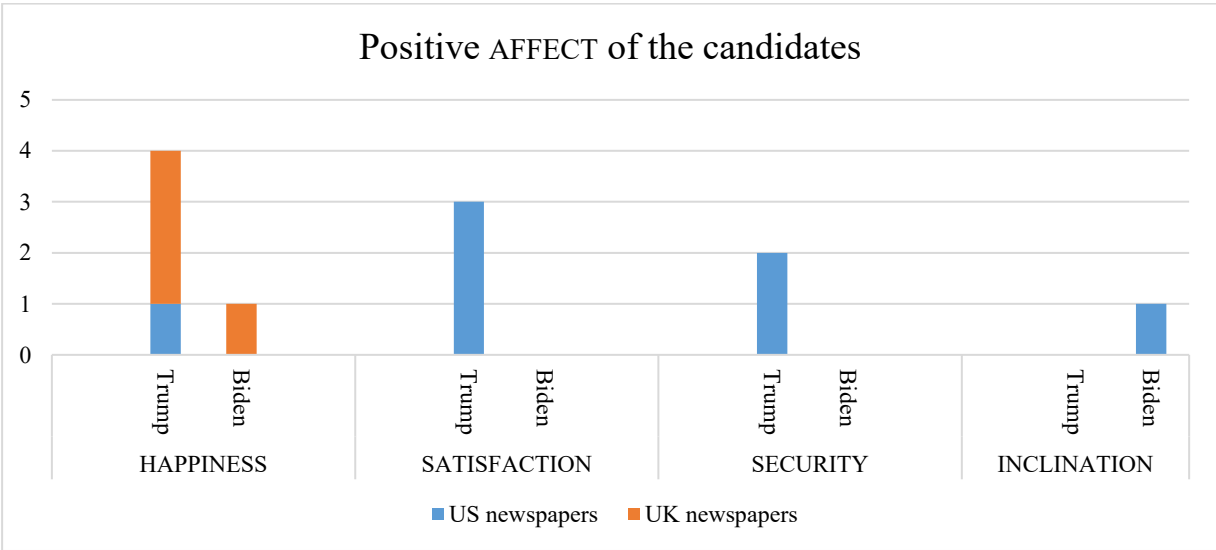
Figure 6. Positive AFFECT evaluations of the candidates in the US and UK news articles. Note that the scale is different from Figure 5.

The overall number of positive AFFECT evaluations was quite small. Trump's positive emotions were described slightly more often than Biden's, but no definite conclusions can be drawn from that as the overall amounts were so small. Both negative and positive AFFECT taken into consideration, Trump's emotions were described more than Biden's in the US newspapers, whereas in the UK newspapers Biden's emotions were mentioned more. In total, Trump-related AFFECT appeared 19 times and Biden-related AFFECT 11 times in the US newspapers. In the UK newspapers, Trump's emotions were brought up only 5 times and Biden's 21 times. Altogether, the differences between how the candidates' emotions were described were minor.

Compared to JUDGEMENT evaluations of the two candidates, AFFECT evaluations were not as common and mainly came from descriptions of the candidates' actions, such as them laughing. Essentially this means that the journalists did not state their own feelings, nor did they generally state the two candidates' feelings directly either, only by describing their actions.

While this sub-category of ATTITUDE did not reveal significant differences in the description of the two candidates or between the countries, the results seem to coincide with the findings of Benoit, Stein, and Hansen (2004), who found that journalists often focus on the negative in the news coverage of presidential debates. This certainly seems true for the AFFECT sub-category, as more negative emotions were brought up by the journalists than positive. This could be due to news coverage of presidential debates having a tendency to focus on the negativity (Benoit, Stein and Hansen, 2004, p. 23). On the other hand, this negativity could be due to the nature of the debate: it is possible that the candidates genuinely were showing more negative feelings. As a matter of fact, Thompson (2014) argues that these kinds of third-person emotions should not necessarily be included in the Appraisal Framework as they do not build dialogue between the writer and the reader. Thompson (2014, p. 53) argues that these descriptions of third-person affect are merely the writer observing the emotions of another entity and questions whether this actually reveals much about the writer's own attitudes.

4.1.2 Judgement of the candidates

JUDGEMENT was the most common evaluation found in the newspapers. Since these newspaper articles have specifically been written to evaluate how the candidates did in the debate, this result is not very surprising. The findings regarding are detailed in Figures 7–10.
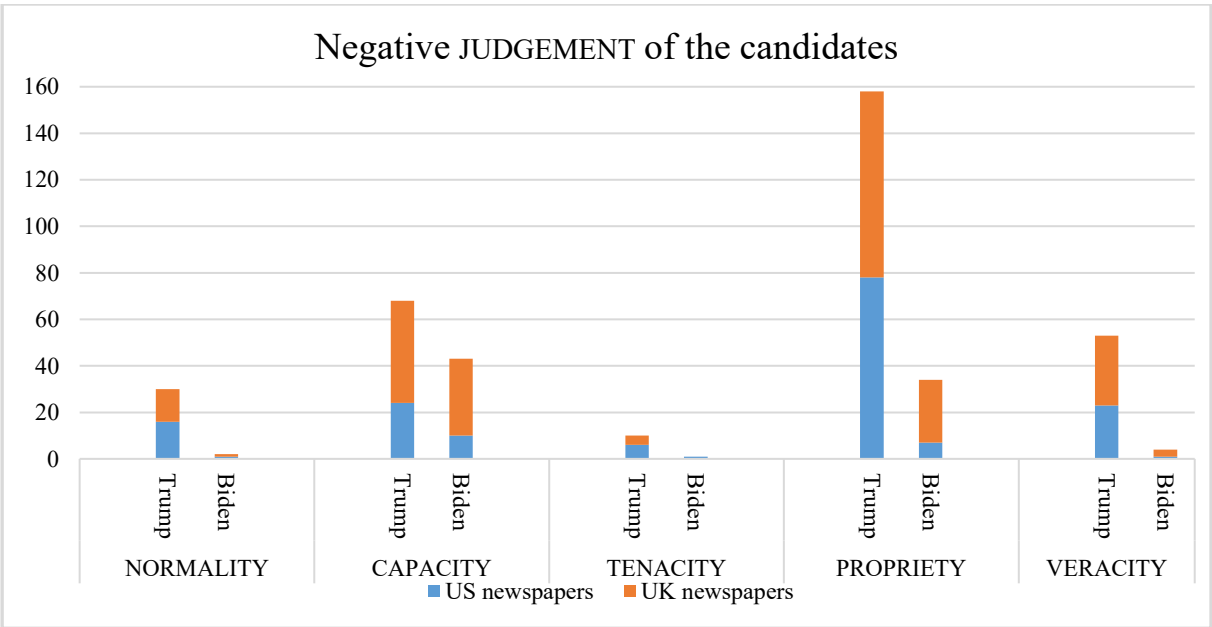

Figure 7. *Negative JUDGEMENT of the candidates in the US newspapers and the UK newspapers.*

Figure 7 shows the negative JUDGEMENT evaluations the journalists made of the two candidates. Overall, Trump was judged more negatively than Biden in all five sub-categories of

JUDGEMENT. In the US newspapers, the overall number of negative JUDGEMENTS of Trump was 147, whereas there were only 20 negative JUDGEMENT evaluations of Biden. In the UK newspapers, there were 172 negative JUDGEMENT evaluations of Trump, compared to 64 negative JUDGEMENT evaluations targeting Biden. With results from both countries' newspapers combined, Trump was judged negatively 319 times and Biden only 84 times, which means that negative JUDGEMENT evaluations were targeted at Trump far more often than Biden – nearly 80% of the negative JUDGEMENT evaluations of the candidates targeted Trump.

Of the negative JUDGEMENT evaluations targeting Trump, the most common sub-categories were PROPRIETY, VERACITY and CAPACITY in the US and UK newspapers alike. The negative PROPRIETY evaluations towards Trump were relatively similar in the different newspaper articles and targeted the same aspects of his behaviour. These aspects included him having been rude in the previous presidential debate, such as in "*Mr. Trump repeatedly interrupted the former vice president*" (Article 62). Another type of common negative PROPRIETY judgement included Trump's alleged support of white supremacist groups, such as in "*he failed to denounce white supremacists when given multiple opportunities to do so*" (Article 4). He was also often judged negatively for defending his administration's policy to separate immigrant children from their parents.

CAPACITY was the next most common type of negative JUDGEMENT targeting Trump in both countries. The negative CAPACITY judgements included mostly evaluations of Trump's performance in the debate, but also evaluations of how Trump had ruled the country for the past four years and how his presidential campaign had gone so far. "*The president didn't get the joke*" (Article 8) is an example of a negative CAPACITY judgement regarding his performance in this debate. The next most common negative JUDGEMENT targeting Trump in both countries was VERACITY, which deals with truthfulness. Trump was quite often blamed for lying or twisting the truth, such as in "*Trump moderated his tone this time, but he used false information*" (Article 4). There were also some negative JUDGEMENT evaluations regarding NORMALITY, which were usually related to something Trump said, such as in "*Donald Trump made a bizarre series of statements*" (Article 8).

Biden, on the other hand, was most commonly evaluated negatively on his CAPACITY both in the UK and the US newspapers. These evaluations were mostly inscribed, which means that they were overtly stated and mainly included instances of him making mistakes when speaking, such as in "*Biden's gaffe-prone ways*" (Article 11) and "*He stumbled over his words at times*"

(Article 4). There were also some negative PROPRIETY evaluations targeting Biden, but these were not nearly as common as evaluations targeting Trump. The negative PROPRIETY evaluations of Biden mainly included cases of him being rude, such as in "*Joe Biden is FIRST to interrupt*" (Article 12) and "*Biden launches BRUTAL attack*" (Article 18).
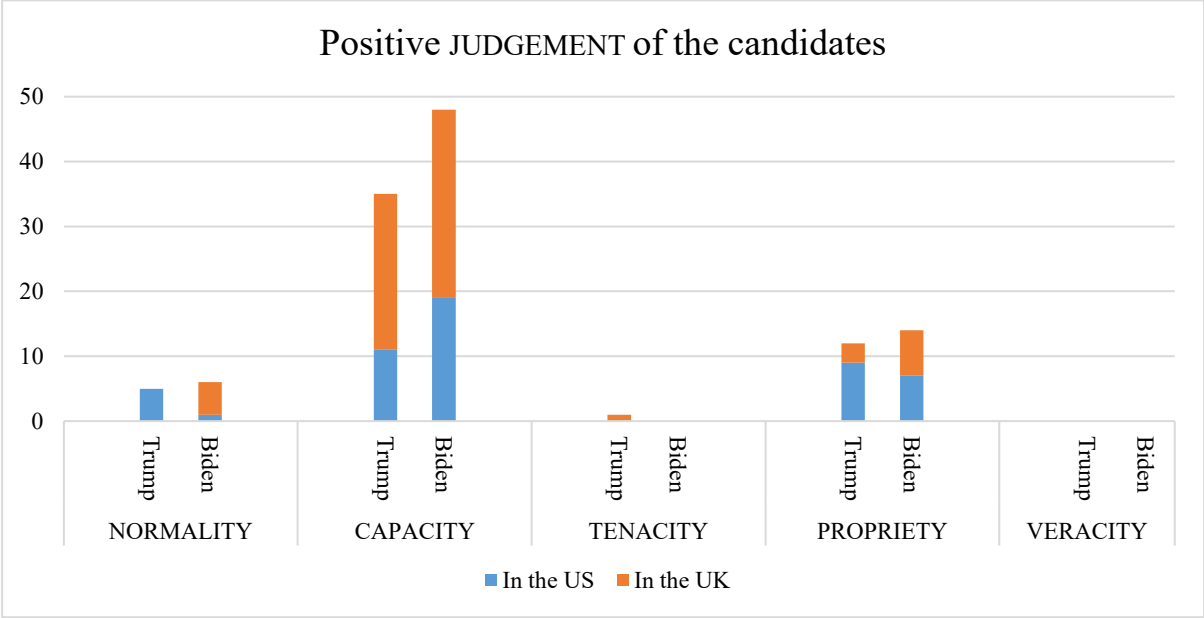

Figure 8. Positive JUDGEMENT of the candidates. Note that the scale is different from Figure 7.

While there were notable amounts of negative JUDGEMENT evaluations of both candidates, the positive JUDGEMENTS were more infrequent. Trump was judged positively 28 times in the UK press and 25 times in the US press, while Biden was judged positively 41 times in the UK press and 27 times in the US press. All in all, there were 53 positive JUDGEMENT evaluations of Trump and 68 of Biden. The difference in the amounts of positive JUDGEMENT evaluations between the candidates was minor, especially compared to the differences in the negative evaluations.

Trump was most often positively judged on his CAPACITY, for instance, doing well in the debate as well as PROPRIETY. The PROPRIETY evaluations were often contrasted with his negative behaviour in the previous debate or by saying things like "*Mr Trump was generally well-behaved*" (Article 67). The positive CAPACITY evaluations dealt with him being more capable this time and succeeding in his arguments.

Although Biden had been most negatively judged regarding his CAPACITY in both countries, the most common positive JUDGEMENT evaluations of him were also regarding CAPACITY. In fact, there were more positive than negative CAPACITY evaluations of him in the US newspapers

and nearly as many positive CAPACITY evaluations as negative evaluations in the UK newspapers. The journalists quite often acknowledged that while Biden had had a tendency of misspeaking or getting his words mixed up, it did not happen this time, which made it a positive CAPACITY evaluation.

The difference between the JUDGEMENTS of the candidates is more noticeable, when the amounts of positive and negative evaluations are compared. Of all identified JUDGEMENT evaluations targeting Biden, 45% were positive, which means that there were nearly as many positive evaluations of him as there were negative. On the other hand, of all identified JUDGEMENT evaluations targeting Trump, only 14% of were positive, which means that he was predominantly judged negatively, unlike his counterpart.

Also, as can be seen in the data, the negative evaluations that relate to the two candidates (AFFECT and JUDGEMENT) seem to be far more common than positive evaluations. This coincides with the findings of Benoit, Stein and Hansen (2004, p. 23) who found that the news coverage of presidential debates tended to be inaccurate and mainly focused on the negative, which could then make it seem like the candidates' campaigns were negative. They (Benoit, Stein and Hansen, 2004, p. 24) argue that the reasons for the negativity could be that conflict might be more interesting to the readers of the newspapers, which would then lead the newspapers to emphasize negative content. They (Benoit, Stein and Hansen, 2004, p. 25) also state that media may just favour personality descriptions in general, which could be the reason to focus on the personalities of the candidates. My results are also in line with the findings of Cho, et al. (2009, p. 246) who found that the newspaper accounts of presidential debates had a tendency to highlight the candidate's performance instead of policy. Likewise, my results show that JUDGEMENT, the evaluation that targets humans and their behaviour, was far more common than APPRECIATION, that targets objects and things. The results regarding APPRECIATION are discussed in more detail in Section 4.1.3. Before discussing APPRECIATION, it is important to look at the way the JUDGEMENT evaluations manifested in terms of explicit and implicit attitudes, because JUDGEMENT was the most prominent and frequent type of evaluation.
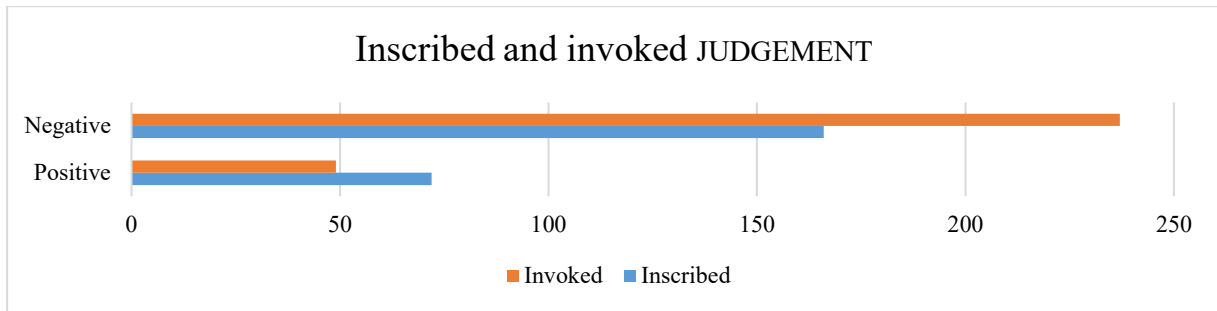
Figure 9. *Inscribed vs. invoked* JUDGEMENT.

The issue with identifying invoked evaluations is that it can be affected by the person making the analysis. Therefore, it is important to know how many cases of evaluation belong in this category. As can be seen from Figure 8, negative JUDGEMENT evaluations were more commonly invoked rather than inscribed, whereas with positive JUDGEMENT it was slightly more common to explicitly state the evaluation rather than imply it. In total, most JUDGEMENT evaluations were invoked. The difference in the amounts of inscribed and invoked JUDGEMENT between the US and the UK newspapers was not found to be significant. In the US newspapers, 60% of JUDGEMENT evaluations were invoked and in the British newspapers, the number was 50%.

As mentioned before, the key difference between inscribed or invoked attitudes is that in inscribed evaluations, the opinion is quite clearly stated. Examples of inscribed negative JUDGEMENT: PROPRIETY include "*Mr. Trump was still aggressive, blustery and often slashing*" (Article 47) and "*Trump's racist comments about Mexicans*" (Article 1). Invoked evaluations, on the other hand, are cases where the journalist mentions something a candidate has done and then assumes that the reader will read between the lines to understand what is truly meant. Invoked negative JUDGEMENT: PROPRIETY evaluations included a statement such as "*The president made no apologies to the low-income communities of color bearing the brunt of pollution*" (Article 27). The journalist is implying that something that Trump did was inappropriate or immoral, but it is not explicitly stated.

The amounts of inscribed and invoked JUDGEMENT evaluations varied in the way they spanned across the sub-categories, as shown in Figure 9.
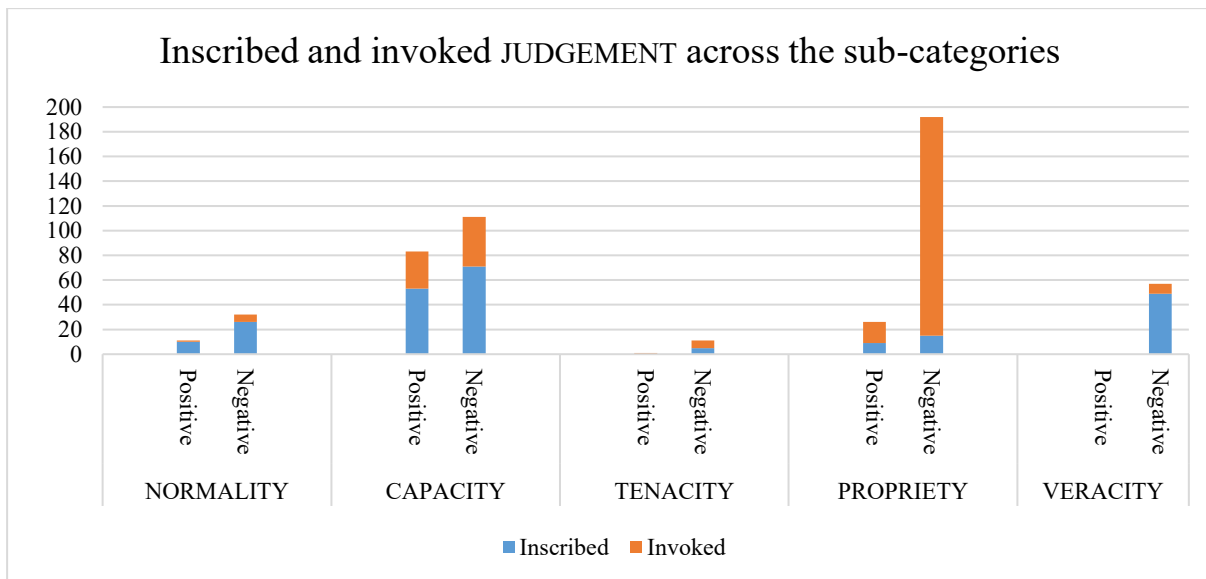
Figure 10. Invoked and inscribed JUDGEMENT by sub-category.

There were noticeable differences in the sub-categories of JUDGEMENT, and while evaluations in some sub-categories were almost always invoked, in other categories they were mainly inscribed. For instance, CAPACITY evaluations tended to be more slightly more often inscribed than invoked. This sub-category of inscribed utterances includes instances where the candidates' performance in the debate or their life outside it was evaluated, such as in "*Biden was well prepared*" (Article 63) and "*his mismanagement of the pandemic*" (Article 11). VERACITY and NORMALITY also tended to be inscribed, which means the evaluations were generally explicitly stated. An inscribed VERACITY evaluations of Trump was relatively common in the newspapers in both countries and included statements such as "*Trump has repeatedly lied about windmills*" (Article 8) and "*he frequently misrepresented the facts of his own record*" (Article 11). Inscribed NORMALITY judgements included cases such as "*Trump said something very odd*" (Article 59).

The most noticeable deviation in the proportions of invoked and inscribed evaluations is within the PROPRIETY sub-category, where a large majority of the evaluations were invoked. Generally, this meant that a condemnable act of Trump or Biden would be brought up, but the journalist would not specifically state things like "*Biden is rude*" or "*Trump is racist*." Instead, the journalist would describe the actions of the candidate and then rely on the reader to be able to identify this behaviour as immoral or bad. The journalist thereby assumes that the reader shares their opinion of this commonly judged behaviour, which means that the reader will have to share the same values that the journalist does to understand that such a behaviour – such as interrupting – is considered rude (Thompson, 2014, p. 51).
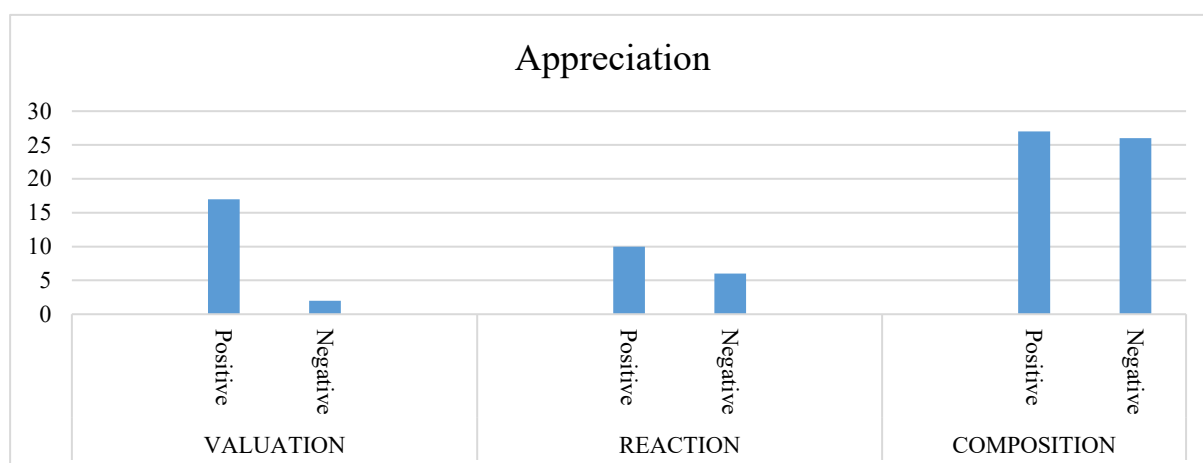
4.1.3 Overview of appreciation

Figure 11. APPRECIATION in the newspapers.

APPRECIATION was not found to be a very prevalent part of the evaluations in the newspaper articles in both countries. The most commonly evaluated thing that was not the two candidates, was the debate itself, which was generally classified as positive APPRECIATION: COMPOSITION. Generally, the journalists found that the final debate was much clearer and structured than the previous debate in September. The previous debate between the presidential candidates was generally classified as negative APPRECIATION: COMPOSITION, such as in "*the train wreck of the first encounter*" (Article 41) and "*as decorous and edifying as a 2-year-old's tantrum*" (Article 1). Specific parts of the final debate were classified in a way that made them fall more into the category of APPRECIATION rather than JUDGEMENT, such as in "*one of the most memorable exchanges*" (Article 56).

What is noticeable is that the polarity of APPRECIATION evaluations tended to focus slightly more on the positive aspects rather than the negative, contrary to the results of AFFECT and JUDGEMENT evaluations. All in all, the APPRECIATION system of the Appraisal Framework did not offer much to analyse in the newspapers, which is not very surprising, considering that the main purpose of the news coverage regarding presidential debates is evaluating the two candidates.

4.2 Engagement with the reader

I have now established that the journalists' attitudes were identifiable in the newspaper articles, and now I lay out my results regarding the ways the journalists try to establish dialogue with the readers and position themselves in regard to other voices. The ENGAGEMENT system is divided into MONOGLOSSIC assertions, which are things that the writer presents as taken-for-

granted, and HETEROGLOSSIC arguments, which are things that make the reader aware that the writer acknowledges the existence of other voices (Martin and White, 2005, p. 100). In this study, the focus is on HETEROGLOSSIC arguments, as they offer more insight on how the writers position themselves in connection to other views. In a more extensive study, the MONOGLOSSIC arguments might be an interesting factor to analyse, but it is beyond the scope of this thesis.

The results regarding HETEROGLOSSIC ENGAGEMENT are shown in Figure 13, slightly modified from Martin and White's framework. While Martin and White's framework can be used to analyse if the journalist agrees or disagrees with a statement, I also wanted to see how these agreements and disagreements were positioned regarding the candidates. For instance, the journalist could first represent a statement from Trump and then COUNTER it or ENDORSE it. They could also ENDORSE a statement that was *against* something Trump had said, which is why I have classified these different ENGAGEMENT sub-categories into two: each of these categories can either support the candidate's views or oppose it. Firstly, I look at how ENGAGEMENT evaluations were used in the supporting or opposing of the candidates overall. Then I discuss candidate-related ENGAGEMENT in detail and give examples of each category.
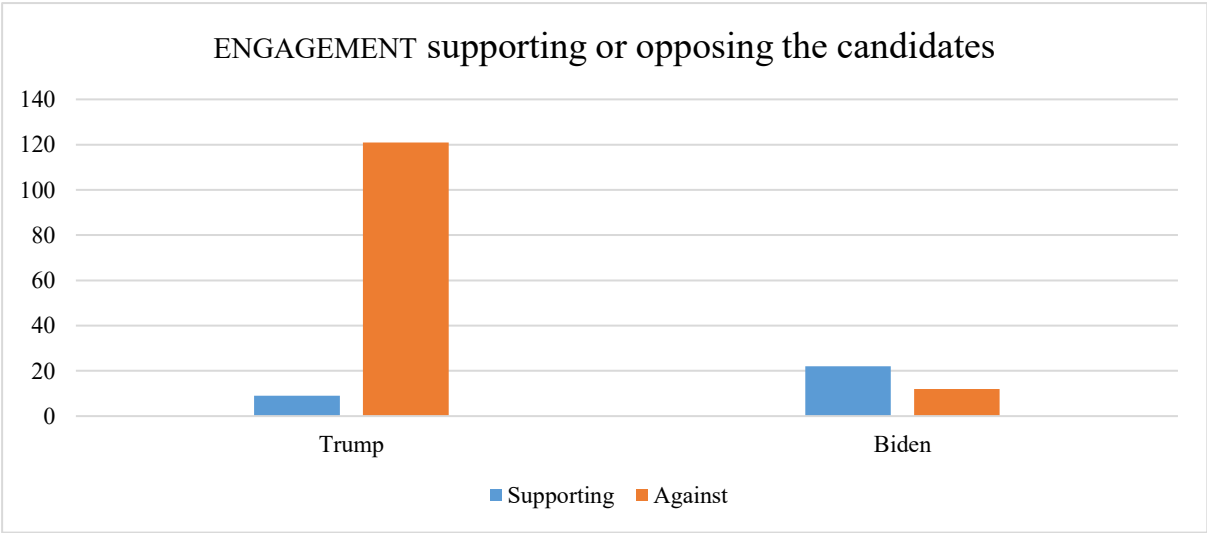
Figure 12. ENGAGEMENT *supporting or opposing the candidates.*

Altogether, ENGAGEMENT was used in connection with Trump much more than with Biden and a large majority of the ENGAGAMENT that targeted Trump was to oppose him rather than to support him. Biden, on the other hand, was supported slightly more than he was opposed. There were also some differences in how these were distributed across the different sub-categories of ENGAGEMENT in the two countries, as demonstrated in Figures 13 and 14.

Figure 13. Trump-related ENGAGEMENT.

Both in the UK newspapers and US newspapers, most of the ENGAGEMENT was used to build an argument against Trump, rather than to support his views. Of all identified ENGAGEMENT that targeted Trump, 93% opposed him or his views instead of supporting him. There were no significant differences between the US newspapers and the UK newspapers.

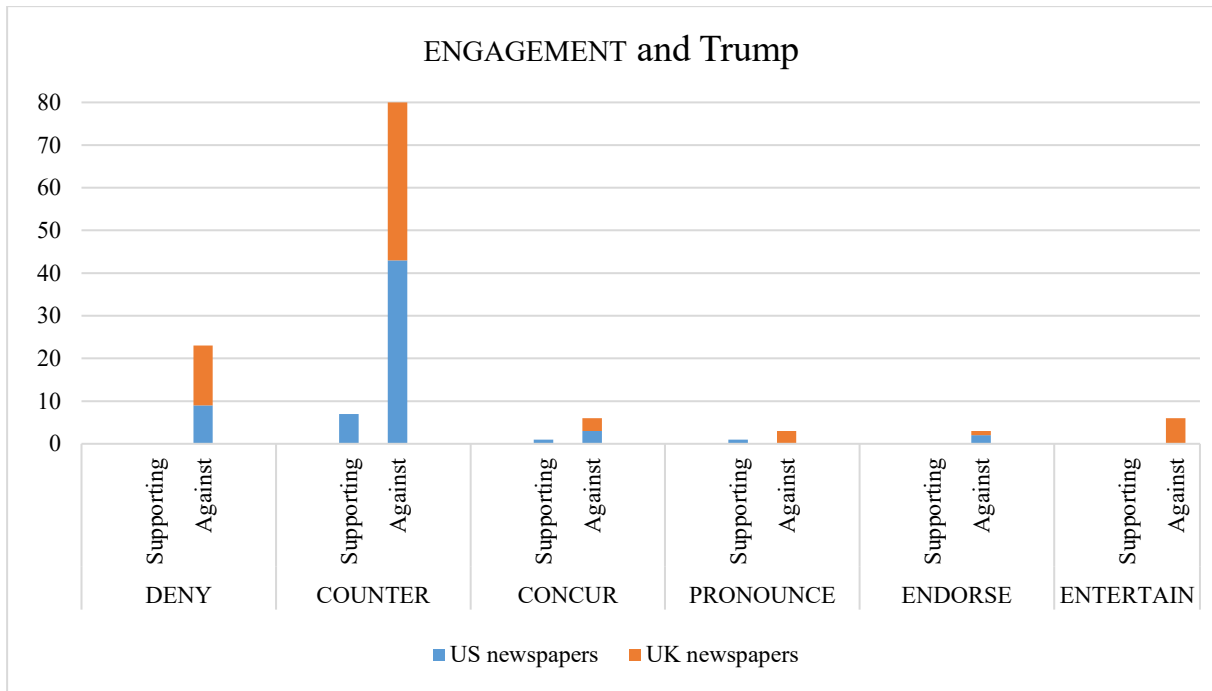By far the most common type of ENGAGEMENT that was identified in the newspaper articles was COUNTER, and it was most commonly used to oppose Trump. The most usual example from this sub-category would be a statement from Trump that would be brought up to then be countered with another statement, such as in "*The president […] insisted that states like Texas and Florida had seen the virus fade away, <u>even as</u> case counts are on the rise across the country*" (Article 11). Although COUNTER was most often used against Trump, there were some cases where the same type of COUNTER was used to support or compliment him instead, such as in "*the president held up his hands while Biden spoke as if to intervene, <u>but</u> he held back until it was his turn*" (Article 41). Basically, this excerpt implies that first Trump nearly did something negative (interrupted), but then he did something positive instead (waited for his turn). The DENY sub-category was the second most common and included instances where a statement from Trump was mentioned and then outright disputed, such as in "*Mr Trump uttered: 'I have bank accounts all over the place. They're all listed.' (Fact check: They <u>are</u> <u>not</u>.)*" (Article 2).

The other sub-categories ENDORSE, PRONOUNCE, CONCUR and ENTERTAIN were far less frequent with only a few cases in all the data altogether. This suggests that rather than supporting the views of Trump, the journalists focused more on countering his claims or denying them altogether. However, there were some cases were these types of ENGAGEMENT appeared. These include utterances where a view (either supporting Trump's view or opposing it) was endorsed by some external force or authority, such as in "*Most experts, including administration officials, have said…*" (Article 44). Instances of PRONOUNCE could also either support Trump's view or supress it. For instance, in "*Mr Trump […] arguing, accurately, that mortality rates have gone down*" (Article 24) the journalist backs up Trump's statement by saying that it was factual. Instances of CONCUR included phrases that function as concessions, such as "*The president did, however, say for the first time, 'I take full responsibility'*" (Article 11). Instances of ENTERTAIN were quite rare, but included words like "*alleged*", implying that there may be other opinions about the topic.
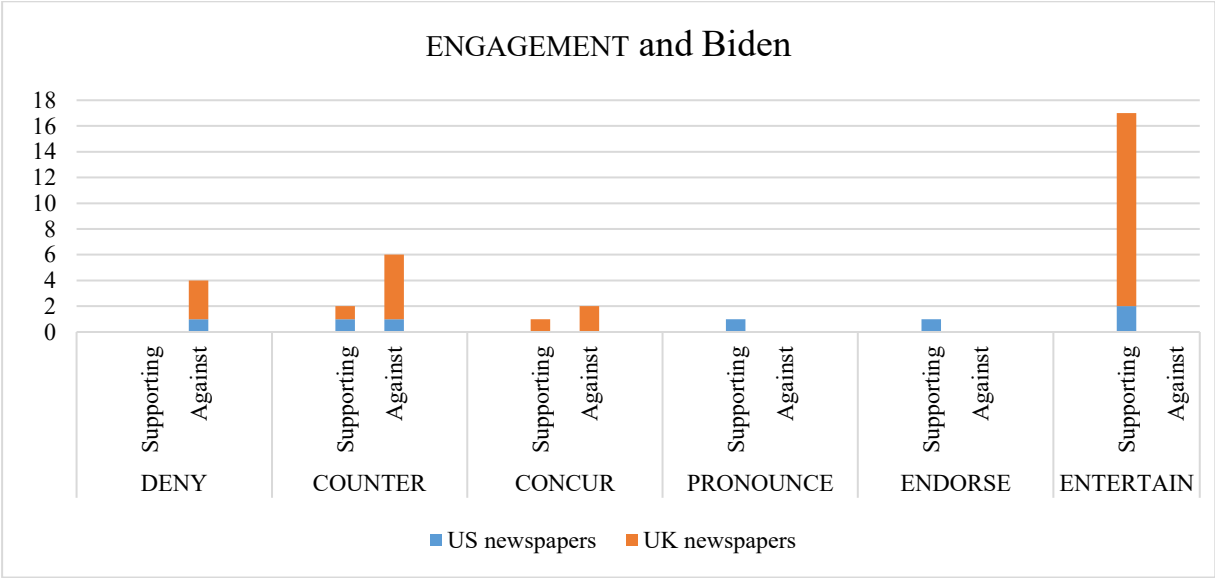
Figure 14. Biden related ENGAGEMENT. Note that the scale is different from Figure 13.

As can be seen from Figure 14, ENGAGEMENT was used more commonly to support Biden's views rather than to oppose his views. There were still a few instances of DENY and COUNTER against him, such as "*he claimed that no one lost their health insurance during the Obama administration, which is not true*" (Article 50) and "*[d]espite his lead in polls, Biden is far from locking up the race*" (Article 27). However, the journalists generally did not COUNTER or DENY Biden's arguments as often as Trump's.

Most noticeable was that in the UK newspapers, it was very common to use ENTERTAIN in favour of Biden, such as in "*unproven allegations about his son's business dealings*" (Article

45). In fact, the word "*alleged"* mostly appeared in connection to Biden, mainly to defend him. The journalists would bring up an accusation Biden has faced and referred to it as "*alleged*", to make the readers question the validity of the accusations. At the very least, the function of these types of terms is that the readers are made aware that there can be opposing views. The tendency to use ENTERTAIN to support Biden was only the case in the UK newspapers. Contrary to ENGAGEMENT related to Trump where there were no noticeable differences between the countries, there were noticeable differences in Biden-related ENGAGEMENT. The UK newspapers used ENGAGEMENT in relation to Biden a noticeable amount more than the US newspapers.

There is another sub-category of ENGAGEMENT that I have analysed, and in fact, this was the sub-category that had the one of the biggest differences regarding the candidates. The sub-category ATTRIBUTE is divided into the sub-categories DISTANCE and ACKNOWLEDGE. The ATTRIBUTE category includes instances where the journalist attributes a part of text to another person. A neutral way to do attribute a part of text to another person is the sub-category ACKNOWLEDGE, which includes reporting words, such as "*Trump said that...*". On the other hand, the journalist can use formulations such as "*Biden claimed that...*" to DISTANCE themselves from the argument being made.
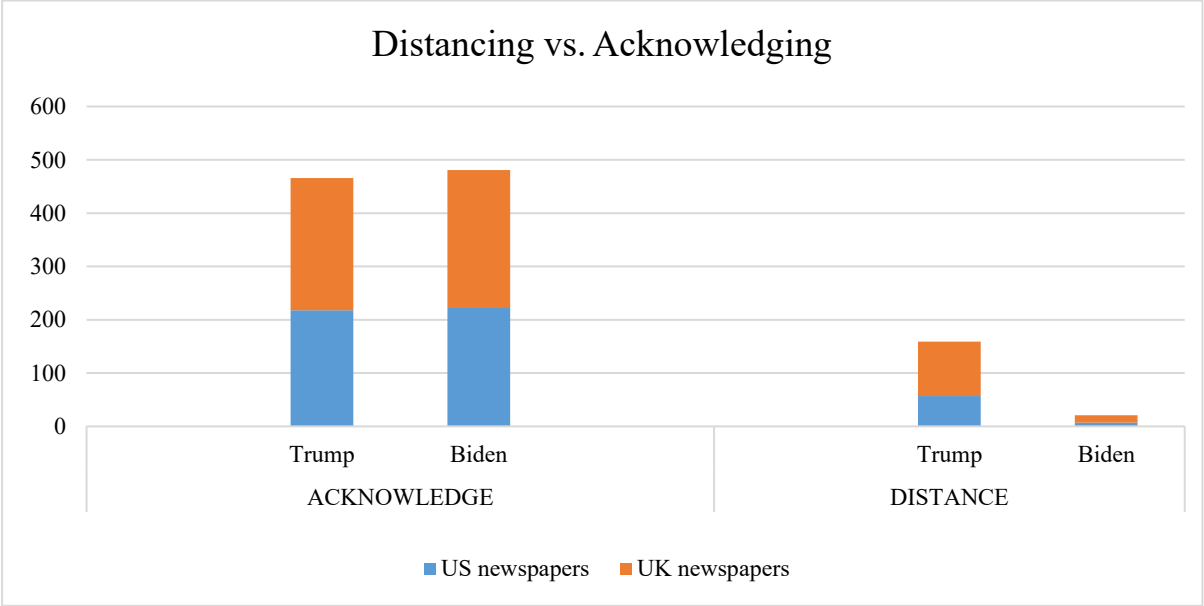

Figure 15. Distancing vs. acknowledging

In the US newspapers, Trump was quoted with a neutral reporting word 218 times and Biden 222 times. The journalists used the DISTANCE strategy in connection with Trump's quotes 57 times in the US newspapers, while in connection with Biden, they only used it 7 times. In the

UK newspapers, the amount of ACKNOWLEDGE, again, was used similarly for both candidates, 248 times in connection with Trump and 257 times in connection with Biden. A notable difference between the candidates in the UK newspapers was in the frequency of DISTANCE, which was used in connection with Trump 102 times and only 14 times with Biden. With both countries' newspapers combined, 25% of the reporting words of Trump's quotes were in the sub-category of DISTANCE, whereas with Biden's quotes, the number was only 4%.

To offer some comparison, I analysed how people other than the two candidates were quoted in the articles. These included quotes from all the other people that were mentioned, such as the debate moderator Kristen Welker. In total, there were only 42 quotes from other people in all the newspaper articles. Out of these, the reporting word was in the DISTANCE sub-category 12% of the time, which means that DISTANCE was used in connection with Trump more frequently than his opponent or other people.

4.3 Graduation of the evaluative elements

One of the key parts of the Appraisal Framework is the GRADUATION system, which deals with the gradeability of ATTITUDE and ENGAGEMENT (Martin and White, 2005, p. 136). It has two sub-categories: FORCE refers to grading based on the number or intensity of the object being evaluated and FOCUS according to the prototypicality (Martin and White, 2005, p. 137).

	THE US				THE UK			
	Pos. Trump	Neg. Trump	Pos. Biden	Neg. Biden	Pos. Trump	Neg. Trump	Pos. Biden	Neg. Biden
Force								
Upscale	8	66	7	1	9	56	5	24
Downscale	5	3	1	3	3	17	4	1
Focus								
Soften	1					3		1
Sharpen					4	1		

Figure 16. GRADUATION of the evaluations.

For this study, I adapted the GRADUATION category slightly and analysed how the GRADUATION resources were used in connection with either positive or negative evaluations of the candidates. For instance, a negative evaluation of Trump could have upscaling FORCE GRADUATION in connection with it, such as in "*Mr. Trump's constant interruptions*" (Article 4). A negative evaluation could also be downscaled, which was the case in "*his slightly calmer demeanor*" (Article 61). The most noticeable result was that the negative evaluations of Trump tended to appear in connection with upscaled FORCE GRADUATION connected to them, which would include intensifying and quantifying words, such as in "*repeatedly*", "*constantly*" and "*very,*

very odd" (Article 59). In total, there were 122 cases of upscaled GRADUATION in connection with negative evaluations of Trump and only 25 in negative evaluations of Biden. On the other hand, the differences in GRADUATION of positive evaluations were not as significant.

There were also a few cases of FOCUS, such as the SHARPEN sub-category in connection with a positive Trump evaluation "*This genuinely quite funny joke from Donald Trump*" (Article 59) as well as the SOFTEN sub-category in connection with a positive Trump evaluation "*displaying a kind of politesse*" (Article 1).

As shown in this chapter, many differences in all the three main categories of the Appraisal Framework were identified in the newspaper articles. In the next chapter, I discuss what these findings could indicate and what their implications are regarding media bias. I also discuss the benefits of using the Appraisal Framework for this type of study and raise some issues I came across with the framework.

5. Discussion

In the previous chapter, I have established that there were some relatively notable differences in the portrayal of the two candidates. These differences were found in all the main categories across the Appraisal Framework, although the differences in some specific sub-categories were more distinct than in some other categories. On the other hand, the differences between the newspapers in the US and UK were surprisingly small. In this Chapter, I discuss some of the key findings and suggest some improvements for future studies in the same field.

5.1 The key differences

Firstly, there were many differences in the way the candidates were being evaluated regarding their behaviour, which is under the category of JUDGEMENT. Trump was most commonly evaluated for negative PROPRIETY, followed by negative CAPACITY and VERACITY evaluations. In contrast, the most common evaluation of Biden was a positive CAPACITY evaluation. While Biden was also negatively evaluated, it was far less common. Simultaneously, far more ENGAGEMENT was used to oppose Trump's views whereas the ENGAGEMENT targeting Biden was used to support his views, especially in the UK newspapers. The reporting words in Trump's quotes were in the DISTANCE sub-category more often than Biden's. The function of using a reporting word with DISTANCE is that the journalist can dissociate themselves from the statement. They not necessarily disagree with the statement, but they do not want to be held responsible if the statement is not correct (Martin and White, 2005, p. 114). As well as the negative evaluations of Trump in the ATTITUDE and ENGAGEMENT categories, there were also a few aspects of GRADUATION that targeted him more than Biden. Most notably, upscaled GRADUATION: FORCE: INTENSITY, which is used to make arguments stronger, was most often used in connection with negative evaluations of Trump. There were some other minor differences in some categories, but the ones mentioned above emerged as the categories with the most significant differences.

While there were notable differences between the evaluations of the two candidates and how these spanned across the different sub-categories, the differences between the newspapers in the two countries were only minor. On the whole, there were fewer evaluations in the US newspapers. The total number of evaluations in all three main categories was 417 in the US newspapers and 551 in the UK newspapers. This difference is partly explained by the fact that the data from the UK included some 3,000 words more than the data from the US newspapers. At the same time, the differences are not as notable as could be expected, when the difference

in the types of newspapers in the two countries are taken into consideration. The UK newspapers analysed in this study consisted of mostly tabloids unlike the newspapers from the US, and it has been argued that the UK newspapers tend to be less objective than the US newspapers. As mentioned by Hallin and Mancini (2004) and Hampton (2008), there are some differences in the British and American media systems, especially regarding the ideal of objectivity. Yet, considering the differing ideals of the two countries' media systems and the differences in the newspaper types analysed, the differences that were found in this study were still quite small. This could support the idea that these media systems do share many similarities. Furthermore, the evaluations that were identified in this study were distributed very similarly into the different sub-categories in the newspapers of both countries. As a matter of fact, I found it quite surprising how similar the results were in the two countries, considering that Hallin and Mancini (2004, pp. 208–211) have pointed out that the British press is "characterized by external pluralism" and that each newspaper has a distinctive political orientation. These were not obvious from the results. At the same time, my results might support the findings of Bednarek (2006, p. 190) who found no significant differences in the amounts of evaluation of the tabloid and broadsheet newspapers in her study.

On the other hand, the small differences or similarities between the countries that were noted in this study may not offer a representative sample of the media systems in the two countries in general. After all, only 69 articles were analysed in this study, and one cannot draw any conclusions about the overall differences and similarities in the US and UK media systems from such a small amount. Furthermore, the journalists from the two countries approached the topic from a different position: for the journalists in the UK, reporting on the presidential debates of the US is a topic of foreign policy, whereas in the US, the topic is an extremely important domestic event. This alone could have led the journalists in the US into being more cautious with their evaluations than normally or they could have been paying extra attention to representing both sides as equally as possible.

While other studies regarding presidential debates and their press coverage have had conflicting results about whether one candidate was preferred in the press over the other, based on the results of my study it seems evident that Donald Trump was overall judged more negatively in the press of both countries. At the same time, Biden was generally favoured in the press, even though the contrast between the negative and positive evaluations was not quite as notable in the US newspapers. Even though I only focused my analysis on articles from the 'news' and 'political news' sections of the newspapers, which normally represent the REPORTER VOICE, or

the CORRESPONDENT VOICE Martin and White have identified, my findings place the presidential debate coverage into the COMMENTATOR voice category, which is typically found in 'analysis' or 'opinion' type news articles (Martin and White, 2005, p. 170). This means that there were no restraints on the amounts and types of authorially sourced JUDGEMENT in my data, which could imply that the news reporting about the presidential debates falls into its own category when it comes to Martin and White's journalistic keys. One reason for the high amount of authorial JUDGEMENT could be that essentially these articles were functioning as political commentaries of sorts, even when they were published on the 'news' section of the newspaper. It could purely be down to a preference of the newspapers whether they clearly headlined their articles with 'news', 'analysis', 'commentary' or just published everything in the category of 'news'.

5.2 Bias and influence on voters

In this section, I discuss what implications it might have that the media was portraying the candidates in a different light. There is conflicting evidence from previous research about the correlation between press portrayals of presidential candidates and the voting decisions made by the general public. While some studies (e.g., Hwang, et al., 2007; Cho, et al., 2009) have found that post-debate news coverage can influence the way the audience perceived the candidates and thus, the coverage may influence their voting-decision as well. On the other hand, some studies (e.g., D'Alessio, 2012; Wlezien and Soroka, 2018) found no strong correlations in candidate portrayals and voting decisions. From the results of my study, one naturally cannot tell whether the press coverage influenced any voters, but it does reveal that there was an overarching bias in the press favouring Biden.

At the same time, while I cannot argue that the portrayals of the two candidates in the media had an influence on voters, I can say the press have certainly used many ways to explicitly and implicitly persuade the reader to see their point of view, which means they were not necessarily delivering an unfiltered view of the debate. This means that when it comes to voting decisions, the voters did not necessarily make a well-educated decision if they solely relied on the press coverage of the debate – at least not to the extent they would be, had they watched the debates personally.

Benoit, Stein and Hansen (2004) found that the press was not painting an accurate picture of the debates, but this cannot be concluded from my results without conducting a deeper analysis and comparing the evaluations to the actual debate. While the media was biased in favour of

Biden and generally evaluated Trump more negatively, this does not mean that the media was painting a very inaccurate picture of the debate, nor does it mean that the journalists necessarily were personally biased against Trump. Firstly, invoked negative PROPRIETY evaluations were the most common sub-category targeting Trump, which included bringing up his reprehensible actions. At the same time, these were things that Trump truly had done, such as frequently interrupting his opponent in the previous debate, so the journalists were simply stating a fact by mentioning what had happened. In fact, this is one of the shortcomings of the Appraisal Framework: if describing a reprehensible act is considered an instance of invoked JUDGEMENT, can a journalist ever completely neutrally report what someone has done?

It should also be noted that from these results it cannot be determined whether the media bringing up views to oppose a candidate is definitely a reflection of their personal bias. Instead, it could be a sign of the journalist striving to follow common journalism ideals such as objectivity. When the journalists were countering Trump's views, it does not necessarily mean that they were opposed to him or his views, and they could have just been fulfilling their journalistic duty of objectivity and making sure all sides of the story were brought up. At the same time, even if the common attitude in all newspaper articles in general was more negative towards Trump than Biden, these negative evaluations could also have stemmed from something other than personal bias, such as him being the president at the time. It might be customary that the incumbent president is evaluated more negatively, in which case it would mean that it was not Donald Trump as a person who came under judgement, but the incumbent president. D'Alessio (2012, p. 105) found in his meta-analysis of research on the presidential election coverage between 1948 and 2008 that there were conflicting results when it came to incumbency. According to him (D'Alessio, 2012, p. 105), the incumbent presidents were generally favoured in the amounts of coverage they got in the press, but the coverage tended to be more negative. This coincides with my results and could be an explaining factor for the negativity targeted at Trump.

5.3 The Appraisal Framework and the genre

While there has been previous research into press bias in the presidential debate news coverage, the Appraisal Framework has offered some new ways to look at how the candidates were evaluated, as it was able to both identify a relatively consistent bias and pinpoint the areas that the bias most commonly manifested within. In the previous studies, it has been acknowledged that the media does not depict the presidential debates accurately (e.g., Benoit and Currie, 2001) and that they often focus on the candidates' characters rather than policy, the Appraisal

Framework has been able to deepen some of that knowledge and pinpoint more precisely where those evaluations manifest. The absolute strength of the framework has also been its ability to recognise implicit attitudes and how many tools the journalists can use to implicitly disagree or agree with a candidate. For example, they can bring in expert opinion; distance themselves from views they do not endorse and bring up reprehensible actions of the candidates to make the readers read between the lines and catch the meaning. Similarly to some previous research (e.g., Kendall, 2000), it does seem true that the journalists focus far more on the candidates and their capabilities than current policy and matters of the discussion in their coverage of the presidential debates. In future studies, it would certainly be beneficial to be able to recognise the implicit attitudes of the journalists rather than only focusing on the explicitly stated opinions.

At the same time, there were still some issues in the Appraisal Framework when completing an analysis like this. Firstly, the presidential debate news coverage generally tends to focus on the evaluations of the candidates, but the Appraisal Framework only has the five sub-categories of JUDGEMENT that can be used to analyse people and their behaviour. Even though the Appraisal Framework is specifically known for being one of the most extensive description of the different types of evaluation, in this study these categories were not sufficient or, in the very least, some of the categories were in need of expanding.

There were also many instances of evaluations where the sub-category was unclear. This means that when I conducted the analysis, I had to make some decisions about how to classify these unclear cases. I then had to ensure that those decisions were transparent and that I stayed consistent for my analysis to be replicable in the future. At times, this meant making some complicated choices about how to classify words. Some of the complicated choices I had included words that seemed attitudinal but could have just as easily been examples of genre-specific vocabulary. For instance, when journalists referred to the candidates' speeches as "*attacking*", "*clashing*", "*railing against*", these could merely have been ways for the journalist to use the language creatively. However, I decided to classify these as instances of negative PROPRIETY, as I thought that a completely neutral way of saying the same thing would have been "*to counter*", "*to oppose*", "*to disagree*".

In fact, the sub-category of PROPRIETY was the sub-category that I thought needed expanding or elaborating the most to be better suited for this kind of analysis. As specified by Martin and White (2005, p. 53), the sub-category of PROPRIETY spans from evaluations like *rude* and *snobby* to *immoral* and *evil*. I found that at least in the context of presidential debates, these

categories might benefit from being separated into two different categories or from a better system of gradeability. For instance, in the PROPRIETY sub-category, Biden was most often evaluated for being 'rude'; at the same time Trump was often judged as being 'immoral' for defending the separation of immigrant children from their parents or even for being responsible for millions of COVID-19 related deaths in the US. Lumping these types of evaluations together in the same category could distort the results, if it makes it seem like both candidates were evaluated in an equally negative way, when, in reality, one was evaluated as *truly evil* and the other as *slightly rude*.

While the GRADUATION system does bring some gradeability into the Appraisal Framework, I found that it was not sufficient. Although it can reveal whether arguments against Trump were intensified more and whether arguments against Biden were downscaled, I found that especially in the JUDGEMENT and APPRECIATION sub-categories it still did not account for all the differences in the evaluations towards each candidate. Especially in the PROPRIETY sub-category there were judgements, such as "*Joe Biden was the first to interrupt*" (Article 30) compared to "*Mr. Trump has defended his controversial child separation policy*" (Article 30), which seem to be quite different in their level of reprehensibility. However, this was not recognised by the GRADUATION category.

There were also a few unclear cases in the newspaper articles, where the journalist clearly had a negative attitude towards a candidate, but the expressions did not directly fall into any of the categories of Martin and White's framework. For instance, in Article 39, the journalist sarcastically mentioned Trump's 'famous' hair flowing in the wind. This might be an example of (and it was classified as) negative APPRECIATION of Trump's hair, because it is a thing and not a person. However, deep down the journalist was quite clearly making fun of Trump, trying to make him seem silly and perhaps subjecting him to ridicule. This was something I generally did not find easy to classify: the journalist's attitude towards a candidate was clearly negative, but no clear JUDGEMENT was being communicated.

I also had some other issues in deciding what to do with words that had double meanings and the differences between the categories of JUDGEMENT and APPRECIATION. While on the surface, an evaluation may be an example of APPRECIATION, deep down it could be functioning as a JUDGEMENT of a person and vice versa. For instance, when the journalists call the first debate a "*chaotic shouting match*" (Article 59), this certainly evaluates the two candidates for shouting, which would make it a JUDGEMENT evaluation. However, with Martin and White's

framework, this is classified into the APPRECIATION category. Thompson (2014, p. 49) also argues that an expression may be functioning as an example of one category, but actually, the true meaning of the expression could be something else. These levels of what is truly meant by an expression may go even deeper than two levels, which according to Thompson (2014, p. 49) presents a challenge to the analysis: how deep should one go in the analysis and how can one make sure that they then stay consistent in the level of depth they go to with each evaluation. He (Thompson, 2014, p. 59) calls this the problem of 'Russian dolls', where you can keep opening up the dolls, always finding another doll hidden inside and calls for a clear definition of the different sub-categories of the Appraisal framework (Thompson, 2014, p. 64).

Another issue in the framework is its contextual nature. The surrounding community will give the reader a limited number of ways to interpret the text, but what happens if someone from a different community and culture would try to analyse the text? For instance, Don (2016, pp. 2–3) points out that including invoked attitudes in the analysis makes it more unreliable, because identifying them relies on shared values and assumptions. Since the invoked instances of ATTITUDE are largely down to the person completing the analysis, this raises some concerns of replicability also in my study. As many invoked attitudes need to be inferred from context and from sharing the same cultural values (such as knowing that interrupting is considered rude), it means that this analysis might be hard to repeat precisely in the same way and with the same results. Don (2016) has suggested some adjustments for the sub-categories of the Appraisal Framework's ATTITUDE system to provide a solution for this issue. The suggested adjustments focus on the differences between identifying attitudes that rely solely on shared values and identifying attitudes where at least some overt signals are offered (Don, 2016, p. 23). Future studies that use the Appraisal Framework could certainly benefit from Don's adjustments, or at the very least, they could explore whether the adjustments make a difference in the results.

Due to the aforementioned shortcomings of the Appraisal Framework in the context of presidential debates, there are some limitations to this study, such as the difficulty in ensuring that the study is replicable. However, I have done my best in staying as consistent in my analysis as possible, as well as being transparent about some of the choices I have made to ensure that this study is reproducible.

6. Conclusion

In this thesis, I set out to see whether there was bias for one of the presidential candidates in the press coverage of the 2020 final US presidential debate. The Appraisal Framework was successful in identifying evaluations in the data and recognised an overarching bias for Joe Biden over Donald Trump in the press coverage of the US and the UK. The bias was found on multiple different levels of the Appraisal Framework, such as the higher number of negative JUDGEMENT evaluations of Donald Trump, GRADUATION that was used to intensify negative evaluations against Trump and ENGAGEMENT that the journalists more often used to oppose Trump and to support Biden. Donald Trump was judged more negatively than Biden, especially regarding his PROPRIETY, whereas Biden was most often judged positively for his CAPACITY. The findings were in line with some of the other previous studies done on the topic that have been able to identify bias in the presidential debate coverage.

As well as finding out differences in the portrayals of the two candidates, one of my research questions was to find out if there were differences between the newspapers in the two countries. Relatively surprisingly, the differences between the two countries turned out to be minor, especially considering that the data from the UK included a large number of tabloids unlike the data from the US. I have contemplated whether this similarity could be purely due to the unique nature of presidential debate coverage as a news genre or an implication of the general similarity of the press in the two countries, but no absolute conclusions can be drawn from this amount of data.

The Appraisal Framework worked relatively well in pinpointing the areas of the bias and did especially well in recognising implicit attitudes. However, the framework did not turn out to be the best framework for analysing presidential debates. While it did identify many cases of bias, the categories simply were not sufficient in this context, or at least they would benefit from the addition of new sub-categories. The presidential debate news coverage might not be a genre typically analysed with Appraisal Framework, which is supported by the finding that it did not fit in the expected category of the REPORTER VOICE, typically found in 'hard news' reporting. Instead, the presidential debate coverage resembled most aspects of the COMMENTATOR VOICE identified by Martin and White (2005, p. 170), a category which normally includes 'opinion' or 'commentary' type news pieces. This could mean the debate news coverage form their own type of genre within the news reporting world.

Due to the issues with the Appraisal Framework, the results in this study can be somewhat subjective, since a majority of the JUDGEMENT evaluations were invoked. Analysing invoked evaluations means that the way the statements were classified is down to the person conducting the analysis and the context in which they are reading the text. A different person conducting the study might find slightly different results.

Some of these issues are also brought up by Don (2016), and a future study using the Appraisal Framework could benefit from using the adjustments made by Don. There might also be other interesting topics in the presidential debate news coverage to analyse in the future. Online news is becoming increasingly common and offers a wide range of features to study beyond text. For instance, a multimodal aspect could be added to the study of presidential news reporting, such as analysing pictures, videos or other data included in the articles. Breeze (2014, p. 303) supports this view as the modern world revolved largely around the use of the internet that includes other aspects than just text. Aspects they (Breeze, 2014, p. 304) suggest could be included in the analysis include photos, page design and headline, because these guide the reader to interpret the articles in a certain way, and furthermore, online sources can include things like links to other related articles, adverts, reader comments, etc.

At the same time, Donald Trump might reapply for presidency in the US election of 2024. Conducting a similar study regarding that election could offer some insight into his portrayal and whether it has changed.

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Appendix

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