Vax and Anti-vax Rhetoric in the British Electronic Media during the First and Second Wave of the Covid-19 Pandemic

Benaković, Luka

Sveučilište J.J. Strossmayera u Osijeku
Filozofski fakultet Osijek

Studij: Dvopredmetni sveučilišni diplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti i njemačkog jezika i književnosti

Luka Benaković

Vakserska i antivakserska retorika u britanskim elektroničkim medijima tijekom prvog i drugog vala pandemije Covida-19

Diplomski rad

Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Goran Milić

Osijek, 2023.

Sveučilište J. J. Strossmayera u Osijeku

Filozofski fakultet Osijek

Odsjek za engleski jezik i književnost

Studij: Dvopredmetni sveučilišni diplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti i njemačkog jezika i književnosti

Luka Benaković

Vakserska i antivakserska retorika u britanskim elektoroničkim medijima tijekom prvog i drugog vala pandemije Covida-19

Diplomski rad

Znanstveno područje: humanističke znanosti

Znanstveno polje: filologija

Znanstvena grana: anglistika

Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Goran Milić

Osijek, 2023.

J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Study Programme: Double Major MA Study Programme in English Language and Literature and German Language and Literature

Luka Benaković

Vax and Anti-vax Rhetoric in the British Electronic Media during the First and Second Wave of the Covid-19 Pandemic

Master's Thesis

Supervisor: Dr. Goran Milić, Assistant Professor

Osijek, 2023.

J.J. Strossmayer University of Osijek

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Department of English

Study Programme: Double Major MA Study Programme in English Language and Literature and German Language and Literature

Luka Benaković

Vax and Anti-vax Rhetoric in the British Electronic Media during the First and Second Wave of the Covid-19 Pandemic

Master's Thesis

Scientific area: Humanities

Scientific filed: philology

Scientific branch: English studies

Supervisor: Dr. Goran Milić, Assistant Professor

Osijek, 2023.

Prilog: Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti i o suglasnosti za javno objavljivanje

Obveza je studenta da donju Izjavu vlastoručno potpiše i umetne kao treću stranicu završnoga, odnosno diplomskog rada.

IZJAVA

Izjavljujem s punom materijalnom i moralnom odgovornošću da sam ovaj rad samostalno napisao/napisala te da u njemu nema kopiranih ili prepisanih dijelova teksta tuđih radova, a da nisu označeni kao citati s navođenjem izvora odakle su preneseni.

Svojim vlastoručnim potpisom potvrđujem da sam suglasan/suglasna da Filozofski fakultet u Osijeku trajno pohrani i javno objavi ovaj moj rad u internetskoj bazi završnih i diplomskih radova knjižnice Filozofskog fakulteta u Osijeku, knjižnice Sveučilišta Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku i Nacionalne i sveučilišne knjižnice u Zagrebu.

U Osijeku, 12.09.2023

Luka Benaković

Ime i prezime studenta, JMBAG

Abstract:

The Covid-19 pandemic shook the world in 2020, and the aftermath can still be felt today. Scientists were working on a vaccine to help people, but that only brought up another problem. It led to the resurgence of the anti-vax movement, with anti-vax protests being staged all over the world. The movement gained momentum fast and anti-vax misinformation could be found anywhere. This is also closely connected to rhetoric, the main topic of this research. The media did report on vaccines, but what kind of job did they do in their reporting. This was the main idea behind the paper. Previous studies did show in what way anti-vax rhetoric was spread and the strategies they used. This served as the stepping stone for this research, which focuses on digital written media and the rhetoric that was being used when talking about vaccination related topics during the first and second wave of the pandemic, when the vaccines were still a fresh topic of discussion. The goal of this research was to map differences in rhetoric use between newspapers and to see how they handled the reporting of vaccination-related topics. A corpus of articles from The Guardian and The Daily Mail was analysed in this paper, with each newspaper representing opposing political stances. The research is based on the qualitative analysis of the corpus, with research questions being inspired by similar studies done on this topic. Results match previous studies, with both newspapers using balanced reporting in relation to the topic. The main difference being in the way these newspapers used rhetoric to convey information. These findings are significant, because they can be used to address shortcomings when reporting on important topics such as Covid-19 and the vaccine.

Keywords: anti-vax, anti-vaccination, anti-vaxxing, covid-19, coronavirus, rhetoric, rhetorical strategies, newspapers, news

Contents

1. Introduction

On May 5th, 2023, the chief of World Health Organization announced the end of Covid-19 as a global health emergency, (UN News, 2023) which can be effectively seen as the end of the Covid-19 pandemic. Looking back at the pandemic and the trajectory it had, it becomes clear just how important it was for the world overall. Ever since the first emergence of the Covid-19 virus in Wuhan, December 2019, Covid-19 was in the spotlight. The news reported on the death toll, the government's decisions, and, most importantly for this paper, on vaccines. While some people welcomed the news about the vaccines being ready to be used with open hands, there were others who were not as happy about it. While it would be easy to divide the public into two categories in such case, into those who are for the vaccine or pro-vax and those who are against it or anti-vax, the reality is not as black and white. The willingness or unwillingness to get vaccinated exists on a spectrum, with people in the middle of the two extremes being called vaccine hesitant. According to the study by Dubé et al. (2021:177) "the concept of vaccine hesitancy represents a shift from the dichotomous anti- versus pro-vaccine perspective to an approach characterizing behaviour on a spectrum of potential attitudes and behaviors, ranging from active demand for vaccines to complete refusal of all vaccines.". This leaves an enormous third group of people that somehow need to be persuaded to either side.

This paper deals with rhetorical strategies used in written digital media to examine the way in which people could have been persuaded to a certain side. The aim of this paper is to isolate and compare the use of rhetoric or more specifically rhetorical strategies in newspapers that could generally be seen as either pro-vax or anti-vax and to determine if a significant difference exists in the way that they use these strategies. According to the study by Baumgaertner et al. (2018) conservatives are "expressing less intent to vaccinate" and people "with lower levels of trust in government medical experts are also less likely to express intent to vaccinate", these people are also more likely to be conservative. A similar study by Featherstone et al. (2019) came to the same conclusion and since conservatism is a right-wing ideology, the most right-wing British newspaper will be used for the anti-vax side. The most probable newspaper to be anti-vax in this case is The Daily Mail, while the paper on the opposite side is The Guardian, seen as the most left-leaning and thus most probable to have pro-vax messaging, based on the results of a YouGov survey (Smith, 2017) that asked the general public to sort certain British newspaper by what they think their political tendencies are.[1] The focus is also only on the digital

[1] The Guardian had 71% of Brits putting it left of centre and The Daily Mail had 81% of Brits putting it right of centre; as a comparison The Mirror had 67% left of centre and The Daily Express had 74% right of centre

version of these newspapers, because of the easier access to such data. The one thing The Daily Mail and The Guardian have in common is the fact that they both use the tabloid format of reporting. The Daily Mail switched its format in 1971 (Samples, 2021), while The Guardian switched from broadsheet to tabloid in 2018 (GNM press office, 2018). This format is traditionally based on the use of smaller pages, many pictures, and short reports, usually with a sensational headline to pull people in. This allows for a more consistent comparison of the two newspapers. The rhetorical strategies that are being analysed come from the study by Savolainen (2022) and by Hughes et al. (2023), and will be explained in Section 1.4 of the paper. An introduction to rhetoric, the anti-vax movement and the Covid-19 pandemic will be discussed first, to give a theoretical background to the present paper.

1.1 *Theoretical background to rhetoric and rhetorical strategies*

Before fully immersing oneself in rhetoric, one should consider the etymology of the word itself. As stated by Corbett (1999) in *Classical rhetoric for the modern student*, a glance at the word's origin reveals that it has a strong connection to the idea of "words" or "speech." The Greek verb 'eiro' is the root of the related terms 'rhema' ("a word") and 'rhetor' ("a teacher of oratory") and the Greek feminine adjective 'rhetorike', which is elliptical for 'rhetorike techne' ("the art of the rhetor or orator"), is the source of the English term rhetoric, while the French rhetorique was the immediate source of the English term. (ibid:20-21) This obviously shows that speech and rhetoric are closely connected, but rhetoric by itself was first and foremost, the act of persuasion. "From its beginnings and throughout its history, classical rhetoric was thought of as the art of persuasive speech. Its end was to convince or persuade an audience to think in a certain way or to act in a certain way." (ibid: 21) The use of rhetoric is therefore quite clear, it is a tool of persuasion. Even tough rhetoric as an art is not really taught in modern times, according to Corbett, "one fact that emerges from a study of the history of rhetoric is that there is usually a resurgence of rhetoric during periods of violent social upheaval." (Corbett, 1999:22) Some of the examples given for these resurgences are historical events such as the Revolution in America and the Renaissance in Italy. Some modern events have also brought us famous speakers such as Martin Luther King Jr. with his "I Have a Dream" speech, Nelson Mandela with his "I am prepared to die" speech as well as Gloria Steinem with her "Adress to the Women of America" speech, to name a few. This is where a connection to the Covid-19 pandemic can be made. According to the study done by Rusch et.al (2023), the COVID-19

pandemic led to great societal upheaval because of the number of COVID-19-related deaths and an economic decline similar to the Great Depression, which will be discussed further down in Section 1.3.

As for the terminological basis for the analysis, one must mention Cicero (as cited in Corbett, 1999:22) and his book *De inventione: De optimo genere oratorum*. "By the time Cicero came to write his treatises on rhetoric, the study of rhetoric was divided, […], into five parts: inventio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria, and pronuntiatio." Which in English would be: Invention; Arrangement; Elocution; Memory and Delivery. These are their definitions according to Cicero (1470:202):

> Invention, is the conceiving of topics either true or probable, which may make one's cause appear probable; Arrangement, is the distribution of the topics which have been thus conceived with regular order; Elocution, is the adaptation of suitable words and sentences to the topics so conceived; Memory, is the lasting sense in the mind of the matters and words corresponding to the reception of these topics. Delivery is a regulating of the voice and body in a manner suitable to the dignity of the subjects spoken of and of the language employed.

While not hard to understand by their definitions, as given by Cicero himself, these parts are actually really complex. Invention deals with arguments, and the methods for finding them:

> Aristotle pointed out that there were two kinds of arguments or means of persuasion available to the speaker. […] there were the non-artistic or non-technical means of persuasion (the Greek term was atechnoi pisteis). These modes of persuasion were really not part of the art of rhetoric; they came from outside the art. The orator did not have to invent these; he had merely to use them. (Corbett, 1999:23)

It is true that they need to be found, and in order to find them one must be aware of their existence and the place to look for them. (ibid.) Furthermore, Corbett (ibid.) points out that "the second general mode of persuasion that Aristotle spoke of included artistic proof −"artistic" in the sense that they fell within the province of the art of rhetoric: rational appeal (logos), emotional appeal (pathos), and ethical appeal (ethos)." Logos (reason, word or discourse in Greek) deals with a person's rationale or logic. According to Corbett, the speaker is arguing his point and they reason either by deduction or by induction. Enthymeme is the deductive mode

of arguing, while an example is the form for the inductive mode of arguing. “Aristotle expressed the wish that rhetoric could deal exclusively with rational appeals, but he was enough of a realist to recognize that man is often prompted to do something or accept something by his emotions.” (ibid. 24) This is where pathos (suffering, experience or sensation in Greek) becomes relevant. Corrbett (ibid. 24) points out that if the speaker wanted to appeal to people's emotions, he needed to understand what those feelings were and how to trigger them. The third mode of persuasion was the ethical appeal or ethos. Meaning habit, custom, or character in Greek, it becomes clear that the appeal itself has to do with the character of the speaker. As Corbett (ibid.) points out, an orator's talent in persuading and influencing the will of an audience might be useless if the listeners do not regard and do not trust the speaker, according to Aristotle, who believed that the ethical appeal may be the most effective of the three techniques of persuasion. The second part of Aristotle’s rhetoric was Arrangement, and as the term itself hints at, it dealt with the arrangement of parts of a discourse. It is clear that a proper order is needed for the discourse to be functional, since it would not make sense to start in the middle of an argument. According to Corbett (ibid. 25), Aristotle himself believed in “two essential parts of a speech: the statement and the proof of the case”, but he did admit that in practice two more parts were added, an introduction and a conclusion. According to Corbett (ibid. 25), Latin rhetoricians refined these divisions and recognized six parts:

(I) the introduction (exordium);

(2) the statement or exposition of the case under discussion (narratio);

(3) the outline of the points or steps in the argument (divisio);

(4) the proof of the case (confirmatio);

(5) the refutation of the opposing arguments (confutatio);

(6) the conclusion (peroratio).

This order was not set in stone, and according to Corbett (ibid. 25), it could be easily manipulated in cases where rearranging them or omitting them would help the speaker. This manipulation is closely related to the third part of rhetoric, which is elocution or elocutio.

According to Corbett (ibid. 26), the modern notion that elocution has also something to do with speaking stems from the 18th century.

> “But for the classical rhetorician, elocutio meant "style." […] None of the major rhetoricians attempted to give a definition of style, but most of them had a great deal to say about it; […] All rhetorical considerations of style involved some discussion of choice of words, usually under such heads as correctness, purity, simplicity, clearness, appropriateness, ornateness. Another subject of consideration was the composition or arrangement of words in phrases or clauses. (ibid. 26-27)

Since the focus of the present paper are rhetorical strategies, of the five traditional one’s, invention will be the only relevant part in the paper. Of the five, Memory and Delivery will also be mentioned in this introduction, but due to the fact that these have more to do with spoken rhetoric than with written rhetoric they will not play an important role in the latter parts of the paper. Memory as well as Delivery should be self-explanatory in their meaning. Memory, or Memoria in Latin, deals with the act of memorizing speeches. As mentioned by Corbett (ibid. 27-28), memory was neglected in the rhetoric books on the basis that there is no “right” way to memorise something. The fifth and last part of rhetoric is Delivery, or pronuntiatio in Latin. It deals with the delivery of a speech and it was neglected in the same way as Memory was, and just like Memory it was even more neglected after the invention of the printing press. (ibid. 28).

The invention of the printing press also connects with this theoretical introduction, because of mass media as its focus. Before the invention of the printing press and before the internet the audience of a speaker was miniscule compared to the audience that modern mass media can realistically reach. According to the International Telecommunication Union (2022) and the data found on the World Bank website, an estimated 66% of the Earth’s population has used the internet in 2022. This means that theoretically, a writer could reach an audience of around 5,3 billion people, assuming that such a large percentage of people understood and spoke English.

Since rhetoric is a tool of persuasion, there always has to be someone the speaker needs to persuade and this “someone” is the audience. According to Perelman (1979:7), every persuasive discourse aims to affect an audience, even if it consists of a single person. Furthermore, Perelman (1979:14) mentions the importance of the audience, due to the fact that all arguments, when used to persuade, must be altered to the audience so that the rest of the discourse can be rooted in it. This means that to win an audience over, the speaker or writer have to adapt or tailor their arguments in such a way that everyone from the audience could understand. So, in order to persuade someone, things such as their background, experiences, beliefs, values and

attitudes should be considered. These things are also closely related to sociology and psychology, and these disciplines are as such also important when analysing rhetoric. They contribute to a deeper understanding of how language, structure and devices are used to communicate effectively with an audience. This also perfectly ties in with the next part of the introduction – the anti-vaccination movement.

1.2 *The anti-vaccination movement*

The anti-vaccination movement, also known as the anti-vax movement, is a loosely organized group of individuals who oppose vaccination. The term vaccination can be traced back to one man, Edward Jenner. During his life, Jenner (1749 – 1823) made many contributions to science and became a member of the Royal Society for his observation of "that it is the cuckoo hatchling that evicts the eggs and chicks of the foster parents from the nest" (Riedel, 2005:23). In a rejected paper, Jenner also introduced a precursor process to the modern vaccine.[2] "In his book, Jenner used the term "vaccinae" coming from the latin word for cow, vacca. (Riedel, 2005:24) He never sought to profit from his discovery, but instead vaccinated people for free in his garden. This is in clear contrast to the modern pharma industry and their focus on maximising profit, instead of helping people, which is also an important talking point in anti-vaccination circles. During the Covid-19 pandemic, a similar narrative trope of "Follow the Money"[3] from the codebook by Hughes et al. (2021), was used. Other narrative tropes and rhetorical strategies from the codebook will be further explained in Section 1.4.

With the *British Vaccination Act of 1840* inoculation was completely prohibited and as such vaccination became the standard for getting immunity. (*1840 Act to Extend the Practice of Vaccination | Policy Navigator*, n.d.). Thirteen years later, in 1853, vaccination became mandatory for every child within the three to four months after their birth. This was passed by the vaccination act of 1853, and it immediately led to the formation of the Anti-Vaccination League and the Anti-Compulsory Vaccination League.[4] These kinds of organizations also spread to the United States and they had almost the same arguments as the modern anti-

[2] In May 1796, Jenner used matter form a young dairymaid's cowpox lesions to inoculate an 8-year-old boy. The boy got better after 9 days, and was inoculated again with matter from a smallpox lesion. The boy did not get sick and Jenner concluded that he was protected. (Riedel, 2005:23)
[3] "This narrative paints the COVID pandemic as an unprecedented opportunity for corporate looting and medical profiteering" Hughes et al. (2021:9).
[4] For further detail on the development of the movement, see https://www.verywellhealth.com/history-anti-vaccine-movement-4054321

vaccination movement. They claimed that vaccines do not work, that the vaccines had poisonous chemicals in them, and that mandatory vaccination was authoritarian. George Bernard Shaw was one of the more prominent "anti- vaccinationists" of that time as can be read from his letter to the British Medical Journal published on October 8th, 1902.[5] We also have to keep in mind that at the time when this letter was published, only 2 vaccines had been discovered, the smallpox vaccine and the rabies vaccine from 1885. Scepticism about the vaccines would also make sense at that time, because it really was something new and information about it was not freely available. Until the 1970s more vaccines were developed, for rubella, mumps, measles, diphtheria as well as for pertussis or whooping cough and in 1974 a resurgence of the anti-vaccination movement happened. In a study from 1974 (Kulenkampff et al., 1974), published in the Archives of Diseases in Children, 36 children over the age of 11 that were vaccinated against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis were found to have developed complications in the first 24 hours after being vaccinated. This study was later disproven because the researches did not see the children for months or years after starting the research. (Ianelli, 2021) The study led to protests all over the United Kingdom, which happened during an outbreak of pertussis all over the country. This is very similar to what happened with the Covid-19 vaccine, which will be further elaborated on in Section 1.3 of the paper.

Just like George Bernard Shaw was a prominent anti-vaccination figure during his time, a reporter named Lea Thompson, who in 1982 sparked a national conversation with her television documentary *DPT: Vaccine Roulette*, was one of the movement's key members during that time. The initiative, which connected the DTaP vaccination to a wide spectrum of juvenile disorders, resulted in multiple lawsuits being filed against the vaccine's makers. (Conis, 2019) By giving the anti-vaccination movement this kind of reach it was expected that more people would be influenced by it. Certain celebrities were also influenced by it, and were outspoken about their views in public. As an example of one such case, on the Phil Donahue Show in 1990, Lisa Bonet, who played Lisa Cosby on The Cosby Show, compared immunizations to "alien microorganisms" that may result in "cancer, leukaemia, multiple sclerosis, and sudden infant death syndrome." (Dickson, 2020) We will test if claims such as these, that were common practice at the beginning of the anti-vaccination movement, had been and still are relevant.

This brings us to 1998 and to the most famous paper in the history of the anti-vaccination movement, one that still to this day is used as an argument by the anti-vaccination movement.

[5]"Even if I believed as devotedly in vaccination as you do, I should say the same as a practical politician. Here is a report by a public vaccinator to a public body which is bigotedly vaccinist." (Shaw, 1902:1283)

It was written by the British doctor Andrew Wakefield, who, in the paper, said that the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccination predisposed infants to neurological problems, including autism. What followed the paper was the revocation of Wakefield's medical license and the retraction of the article by the journal *The Lancet* 12 years after its publication, the reason being that his results tying the MMR vaccination to autism were falsely created. (Eggertson, 2010) As mentioned in Carapiano et al. (2023:967), in the last two decades anti-vaccine activism progressed from a small subculture into an coordinated movement with important consequences for public health. The rise of social media has made it easier for anti-vax activists to spread their message, and they have used these platforms to organize, share information, and mobilize their supporters. According to the letter "Online 'anti-vax' campaigns and COVID-19: censorship is not the solution" by Armitage (2021), "a recent report found that 400 anti-vax social media accounts contain 58 million followers based primarily in the US, UK, Canada and Australia." This has led to a decline in vaccination rates in some communities, which threatens both individual and public health as already stated above. In recent years, there have been numerous outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases, including measles[6], the mumps[7], and pertussis[8], which have been linked to low vaccination rates. In response to the ongoing threat from the anti-vax movement, public health officials and medical organizations have redoubled their efforts to promote the benefits of vaccines and provide accurate information about their safety and effectiveness.[9] The anti-vax movement remains an ongoing challenge and will likely continue to pose a public health threat in the years ahead. This brings us to the most recent resurgence of the movement – the Covid-19 pandemic.

1.3 *The Covid-19 virus and the pandemic*

The COVID -19 pandemic caused by a novel coronavirus was one of the most significant global events in recent history. The virus was first detected in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 and has since spread rapidly around the world, affecting millions of people and disrupting daily life in countless ways. (*Timeline: WHO'S COVID-19 Response*, n.d.) The spread to other countries,

[6] „ Sixty-one (86%) were unvaccinated, three (4%) had received 1 dose of measles, mumps, rubella vaccine before measles exposure, and vaccination status was unknown for seven (10%)" See link for further information: https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/wr/mm6819a5.htm

[7] 6366 cases were confirmed in 2016 and 6109 were confirmed in 2017 in the USA. See link for further data: https://www.cdc.gov/mumps/outbreaks.html

[8] A total of 6124 cases were confirmed in 2020 in the USA. See link for detailed report: https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/downloads/pertuss-surv-report-2020.pdf

[9] See example: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/why-vaccination-is-safe-and-important/

prompted the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) on the 30th of January 2020 and on 11th of March of the same year, Covid-19 was declared a pandemic. The initial response to the pandemic was characterized by efforts to contain the spread of the virus. The first steps were the closure of borders and the limiting of travel, either inside countries or between borders. The next steps were school and workplace closures, cancellation of public events and stay at home restrictions. (Mathieu, 2020) Face masks were a must, and most places did not allow entrance without a mask. It is important to mention that even though it was a global pandemic, not all countries chose to follow the WHO guidelines at first. Sweden is the best example of that, they did not want to limit the freedoms of their population and instead focused on "herd immunity", but the Swedish government later admitted that the initial response should have been more extensive. (Ludvigsson, 2022) Despite the efforts made by WHO, the virus continued to spread rapidly, and the number of cases increased dramatically worldwide. The COVID -19 pandemic also had a profound impact on global health and economies. Since most shops and businesses were closed the global economy got to a standstill. This led to closures of smaller businesses and millions of people losing their jobs.[10] A tremendous burden was put on health care systems as hospitals and medical personnel had been working overtime just to put up with the large number of patients coming into hospitals. Scientists have also worked tirelessly to understand the virus and develop effective treatments and vaccines. With the rapid spread of the virus, an effort in research and development surged, and there have been numerous breakthroughs in the understanding of the virus and its effects. The development of effective vaccines has been a critical part of the response to the pandemic, and several vaccines have been approved for use worldwide. As of 2023, 11 vaccines have been approved for emergency use listing (EUL) by WHO. (WHO – COVID19 Vaccine Tracker, n.d.)[11] The most prominent ones during the pandemic were:

1) Comirnaty by Pfizer;

2) Spikevax by Moderna;

3) Jcovden by Johnson&Johnson;

4) Vaxzveria by Oxford/Astrazeneca.

[10] https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/tracking-the-covid-19-economys-effects-on-food-housing-and

[11] See link for the whole list: https://covid19.trackvaccines.org/agency/who/

Even though the vaccines have definitive names, the general public called most vaccine by the name of their manufacturer. The quick development of the vaccines and the different type of technology used for the vaccines also played an important role in anti-vax circles. The claims were similar to the ones made by anti-vax circles 100 years ago; that the vaccines were unsafe, that they were poisonous and that they were made too fast to be effective. The vaccines had side-effects, which was true, and some side effects could be lethal for people, but when compared to a Covid-19 infection, the risks were argued to be miniscule at the time. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020)[12] The pandemic also highlighted the need for increased international cooperation and collaboration, and there have been numerous international efforts to share information, resources, and expertise. The story of the COVID - 19 pandemic has not yet been written, but according the study "Short and long-term Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic on health Equity" written by Mohamadi et al. (2022:2) "by influencing income, access to medical care, and employment, the pandemic has both widened the existing health equity gaps and created new ones." This only highlights the importance of international collaboration and cooperation, and the need for a more resilient and equitable global health system. But with anti-intellectualism steadily on the rise, people are less likely to trust scientists or experts. (Merkley & Loewen, 2021) Anti-intellectualism also played a central role in shaping the public's response to COVID-19, which also led to the public being more open to anti-vax rhetoric. (Merkley & Loewen, 2021:706)

1.4 *Previous studies*

Now that we have a theoretical introduction to the main themes of the paper, it is time to introduce the specific things relevant for the methodology of this paper. As mentioned in the prior part of the introduction, the studies from Hughes et al. (2021) and Savolainen (2022) are where the main ideas for this paper come from. Both of these studies deal with rhetorical strategies and their relation to Covid-19 vaccine information. Hughes et al. (2021) made an anti-vaccination rhetoric codebook, with rhetorical strategies and narrative tropes[13] that are

[12] See link for more detail: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/adverse-events.html
[13] "A "narrative trope," […] is some semiotic element—visual, aural, or written—which connotes a larger story or worldview." (Hughes et al., 2021:3)

common in these circles. Sixteen rhetorical strategies and 21 narrative tropes have been recognized in the codebook, and the following ones are the most important for this paper: "Brave Truthteller;"[14] "DYOR (Do Your Own Research);"[15] "Epic Significance;"[16] "Health Freedom;"[17] "Panic Button;"[18] "Mountains and Molehills;"[19] "People are saying;"[20] "Corrupt Elite;"[21] "Freedom under Siege;"[22] "Chinese Virus;"[23] "You made it political;"[24] "Sinister Motives;"[25] "Rushed Vaccine"[26] and "Imminent Threat"[27], with the trope "Follow the Money" already mentioned in Section 1.2 of the paper. It should also be mentioned, that the trope "Imminent Threat" entails calls to action, which are explicit or implicit cues designed to inspire the audience to do something.[28]

Savolanien (2022), on the other hand, approached his work with the Aristotelian approach to rhetoric and utilized logos, pathos and ethos in his research. His focus was on vaccine information sources and how people from both sides of the debate used certain rhetorical strategies to decide on the credibility of those source. The rhetorical strategies he used were sorted based on the appeal they use (See Table 1.).

Table 1.

[14] "This strategy celebrates vaccine resistance by depicting its messengers as heroic in their stand against the establishment, akin to a whistleblower standing up to corruption" (Hughes et al., 2021:7)
[15] "This approach often states a conclusion contrary to mainstream beliefs or scientific consensus, and then urges the audience to research the reasons why the conclusion is correct." (ibid.)
[16] "The struggle against vaccination is framed as one of global, historical, or even mythic proportions." (ibid.)
[17] "This strategy frames public health as a matter of individual freedom rather than collective responsibility." (ibid.)
[18] A common rhetorical technique that uses audio and visual cues intended to spark alarm, disgust, confusion, squeamishness, anxiety, or dread in audiences." (ibid.)
[19] "This strategy distorts the risk/reward calculus of vaccines in order to seed doubt, often by emphasizing fringe or outlier cases of vaccine injury." (ibid. 8)
[20] "This strategy states or implies that "many" people feel a certain way, evoking a social norm against vaccination." (ibid.)
[21] "This narrative is a standard populist appeal. [...] So the reasoning goes: the elites must be corrupt, because they are pushing an untrustworthy and potentially dangerous medicine." (ibid. 9)
[22] "This narrative paints a story in which common rights such as speech, assembly, or possession of some entitled object are being stripped from citizens." (ibid.)
[23] "These stories claim with absolute certainty while lacking in substantive proof that the virus was created or leaked from the Wuhan lab in China" (ibid. 10)
[24] It frames the vaccination conflict as a political issue, which can be used to fit any narrative a speaker might want to present. (ibid.)
[25] "The people behind the COVID vaccine are described as shadowy and suspicious. Geopolitical powers, pharmaceutical corporations, and intelligence agencies are likely implicated." (ibid.)
[26] "These narratives say that the COVID vaccine has been rushed to market without proper testing, that it could not have gone through trustworthy safety protocols, and that the public cannot trust that it will be safe." (ibid.)
[27] "Narratives of this sort warn their audience that "time is running out," and something terrible is either happening or about to happen very soon." (ibid. 11)
[28] An example of this would be a newspaper implying to get vaccinated, by presenting statistics or explicitly stating to get vaccinated.

Ethos	Appeal to authority[29]	Appeal to blameworthiness[30]	Social generalization[31]
Pathos	Ad hominem[32]	Appeal to ridicule[33]	Poisoning the well[34]
Logos	Appeal to reason[35]	Appeal to quantity[36]	Appeal to positive/negative consequences[37]

Using these rhetorical strategies as a basis for analysis, allows me to map the differences between newspapers and ultimately determine if a newspaper was either pro- or anti-vax. This is further explained in the next section of the paper.

2. Methodology and Research Questions

The corpus for both The Daily Mail and The Guardian was formed by using the Advanced Google Search function. This is due to the fact that The Guardian did not have an internal search function like The Daily Mail did, so the process would remain the same for both newspapers. The Advanced Google Search offers an extensive list of possible filters for the searching. The search was done by using anti-vax keywords; "antivaxxing," "antivaxx," "antivaxxers," "antivax," "anti-vaxxer," "discredit," "undermine," "confidence," and "immune."[38] These keywords were taken from the study "Public Figure Vaccination Rhetoric and Vaccine Hesitancy: Retrospective Twitter Analysis" done by Honcharov et al. (2023:2), where they used

[29] "An information source is deemed credible (or not credible) because of the authoritative position or perceived expertise of the author of the source" (Savolainen, 2022:5)
[30] "The credibility of information source is challenged, due to the moral questionableness of the ways in which the author of the source approaches an issue" (ibid.)
[31] "An information source is deemed credible (or not credible) because its author represents a particular class of people" (ibid.)
[32] "Attacking the character of a person who acts as an author of an information source" (ibid.)
[33] "Presenting the content of an information source in a way that makes it appear foolish" (ibid.)
[34] "Putting an information source or media in a dubious light, with the intention of discrediting everything that such sources or media offer for audience" (ibid.)
[35] "An information source provides a justification for an argumentative point, based on additional argumentation schemes" (ibid.)
[36] "An information source offers factual or statistical evidence of the state of affairs" (ibid.)
[37] "A source offers information whose use enables the individual to make a meaningful decision" / "A source offers information whose use can result in negative outcomes of action" (ibid.)
[38] The keywords were ideal for this paper, because of their relation to anti-vax hashtags. Since newspapers also used Twitter (now X) to post articles, it can be construed that similar words would be used in anti-vax news, to effectively utilize the hashtags, and reach a bigger audience.

the same keywords “to study Twitter posts about COVID-19 vaccination that specifically mentioned publicly known individuals or groups.” These keywords were taken from anti-vaccination hashtags. The first step was to use the keywords in the search function “any of these words:” with the search function “terms that appear:” being limited to the title, which would yield a preliminary result of possible articles. Since the focus of the paper is on the first and second wave, articles only from the beginning of March 2020 to the end of May 2020, and articles from the beginning of September 2020 to the end of April 2021 were considered for the corpus. This timeframe was taken from Delong’s (2021) study “Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey technical article: waves and lags of COVID-19 in England, June 2021”. The next step was to filter out articles from these timeframes, which was possible by using the “tools” option on Google and setting the timeframes needed. The next step was a manual sweep of the articles to filter out articles that fit the “news” category and not for example the “lifestyle” or the “sport” category. During that process articles that did not mention anything about the vaccine were discarded as well as articles that were not in written form. The articles that were discarded mainly used the keywords: “discredit”, “undermine” and “confidence”. These keywords were in those cases used in relation to some other topic and were not vaccine related, but that does not mean that there are no articles with these keywords in the title. The last step of the process was to discard the articles that were not based in Britain or the United Kingdom, since the focus of this study is on British media. This applied to both The Daily Mail and to The Guardian, although they are British news media, they still reported on events outside Britain. The Daily Mail gave a preliminary result of 2510 possible articles. The next step, filtering by timeframe, yielded 27 search results for the first wave, and 174 search results for the second wave. After the manual filtering of these articles only 24 articles were left and after discarding articles not relating to the United Kingdom or Britain, the final number of articles from The Daily Mail was 7. The same process was repeated with The Guardian, which gave a preliminary result of 4170 possible articles. After the second step, 10 search results were obtained for the first wave, and 47 search results for the second wave. After the manual filtering of these articles only 9 articles were left and when the articles that were not about Britain were excluded, only 5 articles were left from The Guardian. This means that the corpus encompasses 12 articles, on which a qualitative analysis will be done based on the following research questions:

1. Research question 1: Does the newspaper employ rhetorical strategies (such as ad hominem, poisoning the well…) in framing the COVID-19 pandemic and what are they?

2. Research question 2: Do the newspaper tailor their language in COVID-19 articles to specific demographics or reader interests and are there instances in the newspaper coverage where counterarguments are addressed or readers' concerns are anticipated?
3. Research question 3: What types of sources do the newspaper rely on for their COVID-19 reporting. Does the rhetorical strategy of "appeal to authority" impact the ethos and persuasiveness of the newspaper's COVID-19 articles?
4. Research question 4: Does the newspaper' COVID-19 coverage evoke certain emotions (such as fear, hope, empathy…) and how are these emotions achieved through language choices?
5. Research question 5: Does the newspaper's COVID-19 reporting include language that conveys political or policy-related messages?
6. Research question 6: What types of calls to action are presented in the newspaper COVID-19 articles, and how are they framed within the context of health recommendations, policy changes, or community support?

The basis for these questions comes from two studies mentioned in Section 1.4, the first by Savolanien (2022) and the second by Hughes et al. (2021). The rhetorical strategies by themselves are important for research question one and three, and the finding "[…] anti-vaccine messaging tends to be more focused on emotions and personal anecdotes with powerful imagery in contrast to the empirical strategies utilized by pro-vaccination literature and platforms." (Hughes et al., 2021:2) contributed to the reasoning behind the fourth research question. By pathos being already important for certain rhetorical strategies, it also made sense to document the possible emotions they might elicit. Since the codebook by Hughes et al. (2021) was developed with "the intent of providing public health communicators and social media moderation teams with a codebook of compelling anti-vaccination themes, against which counter-messages might be tailored." (Hughes et al., 2021:4), it is also served as the basis for the second research question. Maybe some newspapers already did tailor their articles for certain audiences, either pro- or anti-vax, which is interesting to explore. The fifth and sixth questions are related to the research paper written by Hughes et al. (2021) as well. They are inspired by the two narrative tropes from the research paper, which are: "You made it political!" and "Imminent Threat". As was previously mentioned, these research questions relate to both the pro- and anti-vax side of the conflict, and both sides could potentially be found using these rhetorical strategies and narrative tropes. While the present paper relies on the rhetorical strategies mentioned above it must also be mentioned that certain other rhetorical strategies not

mentioned before, could also appear in the articles. The results will be presented separately based on the newspaper that was analysed.

3. Results

The following qualitative analysis of the articles from the corpus, based on the research questions, gives us an overview on how these newspapers utilized their platforms. Did they have a more pro-vax or anti-vax approach, or were they balanced in their reporting, meaning that no side was taken.

3.1 *The Guardian*

The Guardian lived up to his reputation of being a more left-leaning paper, since all the articles that were analysed, had an overall pro-vax message, as suggested by the analyses below.

3.1.1 *Article 1: "Coronavirus: anti-vaxxers seek to discredit Pfizer's vaccine"*[39]

From the title we can see that both the keyword "anti-vaxxers" and "discredit" were found as tending to cooccur. With the framing of the title, it can be assumed that the article will talk positively about the vaccine and possibly negatively about anti-vaxxers. The article highlights the reaction of anti-vaxxer and conspiracy theorists to the results of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. It is mentioned that "Bill Gates" started trending on twitter, which can be directly connected with the "Corrupt Elites" rhetorical strategy mentioned by Hughes et al. (2021). The term "Plandemic" is also mentioned in relation to the US researcher Dr Judy Mikovits. Seen in the following quote from the article:

> 1. While some were poking fun at the conspiracy theories, others subscribed to views expressed by the disgraced US researcher Dr Judy Mikovits in the viral Plandemic video, in which she blames the coronavirus outbreak on a conspiracy led by big pharma, Gates and the World Health Organization.

The Guardian itself does not employ the strategy mentioned, but calls Mikovits "disgraced", to show that the person is not exactly trustworthy. Quotes and statements from both conspiracy theorists, such as Louise Creffied, and vaccine advocates, such as Heidi Larson and Prof. Melinda Mills, are featured in the article. This is used to diversify sources and allow readers to see different experiences, which is the balanced reporting mentioned prior. Some scepticism is

[39] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/10/coronavirus-anti-vaxxers-seek-to-discredit-pfizers-vaccine (Last accessed on 07.09.2023)

used in the article regarding the speed of the vaccine development, but it is immediately countered by scientists and experts on that matter. An example would be the following quotes:

> 2. Heidi Larson […] said: "There's a lot of language out there about speed but we haven't really talked about why things are faster and it's not because we're shortcutting old processes. These new Covid vaccines are on brand new platforms. There's never been an mRNA vaccine [which uses the genetic code rather than any part of the virus itself] before for humans. So, this Pfizer vaccine, for instance, would be absolutely brand new, made in a new way."

This is an example of the rhetorical strategy of appealing to authority. The articles also touch upon the mRNA technology for developing vaccines and raises potential questions about its efficacy by mentioning that the vaccine is "brand new, made in a new way". A quote from known anti-lockdown activist, Louise Creffield, is used in relation to the mRNA process. She said "I'm not about feeding conspiracy theories – I'm just about making sure that we have the full facts of the matter, including about where these things are coming from.", and while it may look as if she has concerns, this plays right into Hughes et al.'s (2021) "DYOR (Do Your Own Research)" rhetorical strategy. Combating misinformation is also mentioned in the article to give a balance to the article overall. No explicit mention of certain demographics or readers is made in the article and counterarguments to certain views are also not given. An example of one such case are the conspiracy theories; they are mentioned but no refutation is given in the article. The quotes from experts somewhat counter the quotes from sceptics, but in the way that they only provide more context about the vaccine and the novel mRNA technology. Which is also the same quote where the appeal to authority was used. Some sources have already been mentioned, such as sceptics and experts, but the article also mentions Boris Johnson. As then-Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, he is mentioned to have explicitly stated that there was no safety data for the vaccine and that it had not been peer-reviewed. This could impact the credibility of the article based on what the readers thought about Johnson. Certain emotions are clearly expressed in the article, such as scepticism, concern and urgency. With phrases like "no safety data yet", "slim to none" and "robustly independent body" the emotions of concern and scepticism are reinforced somewhat. These concerns are coming from Louise Creffield's Facebook Live video:

> 3. In the video, she said: "There's been **no safety data yet**, it hasn't been peer-reviewed, there is a lot of indemnity to it and the MHRA

> [Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency], who are going to be the ones that approve it or not, we have found out, well, one, they're a government body so they are paid for by the government, and two they've received nearly £1m in funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. So the likelihood that they are a **robustly independent body** like Boris Johnson said is **slim to none**.

References to the military support for mass testing and in particular the phrase "presence of the army is coercive" emphasizes a sense of urgency. The balanced perspective of the article, could also be seen as a way to evoke critical thinking in the readers. No explicitly political or policy-related messages are used in the article, but the mention of Johnson and the government-run Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), as well as the army, could be seen as a way to indirectly mention the political implications of the vaccine. Lastly, when it comes to calls of action and their framing, several direct and indirect calls are made, viz. the explicit call for safety and transparency of vaccine development, and the implicit call to combat misinformation.

> 4. ""Anti/sceptical vaccine individuals and groups are actively seeking out people who are questioning and hesitant, and they are right there, waiting to say: 'You're right, you have a good reason to be concerned, there is a problem.' We're just saying 'Don't worry' and not really saying: 'Tell me about your concern.'"

Another implicit one would be the call for constructive dialogue, which is achieved through inclusion of both sides. The article is overall very balanced in its message, but with a somewhat misleading title about what the contents of the article will be.

3.1.2 *Article 2: "Pfizer vaccine found to give strong immune response to new Covid variants"*[40]

Judging from the title, the article could have a strong pro-vax message with expert sources implied in the passive formulation of the title that would strengthen the claim. This clearly resonates with the rhetorical strategy of appeal to authority. Findings of a scientific study are

[40] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/11/pfizer-vaccine-strong-response-new-covid-variants (Last accessed on 07.09.2023)

highlighted and presented together with empirical evidence as to emphasize the importance of science. Technical language is used in conjunction with expert opinions, as not to confuse readers who might not fully understand what is being written about. The experts come from the field of virology and immunology and their quotes as well as perspectives are included in the article. A comparison of T-cell responses against various variants is made as well, which is another common rhetorical strategy and helps readers understand the complex nature of the virus. An optimistic tone can be read from the article, which aims to instil hope in the battle against Covid-19. Seen in the example given: “Morgan said: “The findings add to the growing confidence that the current vaccines will have a large impact on the course of the pandemic, whether by completely protecting from or markedly ameliorating disease.” The tone is set by giving the reader hope in the future, because no negative outcome was given. The overall pro-vaccine tone also maintains balance of its message, by mentioning the evolving nature of the virus itself. Just like Article 1, there is not explicit tailoring of the language to certain demographics, but it is very straightforward in what it is conveying. This is also where a drawback of the article is obvious, because no counterarguments are addressed. Readers, that could be vaccine hesitant or maybe fully object to vaccination, are only given information and their concerns are not really acknowledged. The article relies on the study done by William James, a professor of virology at the University of Oxford, as a source. Deborah Dunn-Walters, a professor of immunology at the University of Surrey, and Prof Paul Morgan, the director of the Systems Immunity Research Institute at Cardiff University, are also quoted in the article. While the study itself war not peer-relieved, it did serve as a primary source. Hope and optimism are prevalent in the article and language choices that contribute to these emotions are phrases like; “strong T-cell responses” "protect most people from becoming infected" and "boosted by the second Pfizer jab" which all emphasize the positive outcomes of vaccination. Since the primary focus of the article is scientific research, no actual political or policy-related messages are conveyed. There is a brief mention of the decision to delay second doses for more rapid immunization, but it is presented in the context of vaccine efficacy rather than conveying a specific political or policy-related message. In contrast to that. the calls to action in the article are very prominent. The importance of getting vaccinated, especially with a second dose is highly emphasised. Vaccination even after one had Covid-19 is highlighted as well to ensure a comprehensive protection of the public. Overall, the calls to action in the article are framed within a context of scientific evidence and recommendations from experts. The article is definitely more on the side of the pro-vax crowd with the tone being hopeful and optimistic of the vaccine.

3.1.3 *Article 3: "Vaccine hesitancy in some health workers in England 'may undermine rollout'"*[41]

Because vaccine hesitancy is mentioned in the title, it can be assumed that the article itself will address concerns of people that still are not sure about the vaccine. The article actually highlights the disparities that exist in vaccine uptake, which draws attention to inequalities in vaccine access. An appeal to authority is achieved in the headline itself and carried through in the article by citing Professor Kamlesh Khunti, a scientific adviser to the government and a member of Sage. He lends credibility to what the article is trying to convey. A lot of data and statistics are also used to support the claims made by the article. This is the rhetorical strategy of appealing to quantity and with this data-driven approach also adds an element of objectivity to the article overall. The article also appeals to empathy by mentioning the risk that exists not only to healthcare workers but also to patients, by citing Jonathan Van-Tam, the deputy chief medical officer for England, who dismisses claims about vaccination and fertility: ""Blatant misinformation" is adding to the problem, Khunti said, by fuelling unfounded worries about the impact of vaccination on fertility. Jonathan Van-Tam, […] described the claim as "a nasty, pernicious scare story"." The rhetorical strategy of appealing to negative consequences is used here. Demographics play an important role in the article, but not in the way that it was tailored for a certain demographic. Instead, it highlights the following points:

5. Disparities in vaccine uptake among various demographic groups, including black and South Asian staff, workers under 30, and those living in deprived areas exist.
6. Nearly a third of unvaccinated staff are under 30, and it suggests that younger healthcare workers may not appreciate the importance of vaccination or they might be hesitant.

It also tries to address readers concerns by giving possible reasons for disparities in vaccine uptake. These being longstanding discrimination, misinformation and low levels of trust. This helps address some of the concerns within minority communities. Some of the expert sources

[41] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/14/vaccine-rollout-caution-some-health-workers-england (Last accessed on 07.09.2023)

have already been mentioned, but the article also references documents from Sage (Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies) to anticipate the possible vaccine hesitancy among minority ethnic groups and younger people. With the inclusion of these well-balanced sources the credibility, or ethos, of the article is significantly impacted. It helps readers make informed decisions based on the information given. Concern has already been mentioned, but it is not the only emotion the article is trying to evoke. Urgency is evoked through phrases like "must be acted upon urgently" and "serious implications" but also through the declining vaccination rates. Empathy is also shown by discussing the reasons behind vaccine hesitancy. This is also the first article from The Guardian that does include language that conveys political or policy related messages. The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage) is actually a government organisation, so in a sense everything that it proposes is directly related to politics or policy. It shows the role of scientific advisory in shaping government policies and the decisions the government makes. The article also implies that the government is or should be responsible for changing the minds of the vaccine hesitant people, especially vaccine hesitant healthcare workers:

> 7. As well as all the other public health interventions, such as social distancing, hand hygiene, face coverings, and test and trace, vaccination is crucial if we're going to get out of this pandemic, and this risk is not only to themselves and their families but to patients as well. It's crucial we get uptake in healthcare workers as high as possible.

This is also the first article where public health interventions such as social distancing, hand hygiene, face coverings and test and trace are mentioned. All which are government policies. Some things that the article mentions can also be seen as implicit calls to action in certain cases. The mention of disparities implicitly urges policymakers to take immediate steps to address them. With the mention of longstanding discrimination, misinformation and low levels of trust as reasons for possible vaccine hesitancy, an implicit call to action is made to build trust, combat misinformation and provide accurate information to healthcare workers and the broader community. The article comes across as pro-vax overall, but unlike Article 1, it addresses concerns that a vaccine hesitant person might have, which might help in persuasion.

3.1.4 *Article 4: "Vaccine confidence fears as under-30s in UK offered AstraZeneca alternative"*[42]

The title of the article might hint towards a similar topic of vaccine hesitancy, just like Article 3, because of the phrase "vaccine confidence fears". Just like the previous three articles from The Guardian, this fourth one also uses the rhetorical strategy of appealing to authority. The article quotes experts, government officials, and regulatory agencies such as the Joint Committee on Vaccines and Immunisation (JCVI), Prof Jonathan Van-Tam, Boris Johnson, the European Medicines Agency (EMA), and others. Statistics about the number of rare blood clot cases, deaths, and vaccine doses administered are also given in the article, which is another case of an appeal to quantity. An appeal to positive consequences is also made, by discussing how the benefits of the vaccine outweigh the risks for older age groups. This is where demographics come into play, and the way that the article is tailored to certain a certain demographic. The article mentions that 10 million adults under 30 have been offered an alternative to the AstraZeneca vaccine, which is directly relevant to the younger demographic of The Guardian's readers. Pregnant women are also mentioned in the article, since they are also at risk of blood clots. Concerns about the blood clots in relation to the AstraZeneca vaccine are addressed and are mitigated with the mention of the European Medicines Agency (EMA). The fact that EMA is examining similar cases with other vaccines, could put the readers concerns at ease, as to show that the issue is not unique only to the AstraZeneca vaccine. The mention of EMA is the first instance of a somewhat global context added to the sources, which shows that The Guardian also considers global developments in their research. Along with concern and caution, because of the possible side effects of the vaccine, the article also evokes or tries to evoke reassurance in the readers. This is done by quoting Boris Johnson and with the mention of benefits outweighing the risks. A form of scepticism is also evident from the quote by Prof Martin Hibberd: "[…] I would like to see the evidence that the other vaccines are safer." This could also be seen as being more cautious than sceptic. The political and policy-related message is quite obvious in the article. It discusses the decision made by the government's Joint Committee on Vaccines and Immunisation (JCVI) and their offer of alternative vaccines to adults under 30 due to blood clots being associated with the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine. This is a clear policy-related change. Statements made by political leaders, including England's

[42] https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/apr/07/under-30s-in-uk-should-be-offered-alternative-covid-vaccine-to-astrazeneca-jab-says-regulator (Last accessed on 07.09.2023)

deputy chief medical officer, Prof Jonathan Van-Tam and Prime Minister Boris Johnson are also quite obviously policy-related. By pointing out differences in vaccination policies between the UK and some European countries, variations in policy approaches across different regions are shown as well. The main call to action in the article is also obvious from the title, it is to ensure that people under 30 have the option of getting an alternative vaccine if they want. The public is also implicitly called to action about education and enabling them to make an informed decision. The article could be seen as pro-vax overall, but with the topic of side effects in vaccines it could also be used by the anti-vax side to further their beliefs. An example of such a thing would be the rhetorical strategy "Mountains and Molehills", as mentioned by Hughes et al. (2021).

3.1.5 *Article 5: "Inspiring confidence: Liverpool GPs tackle the vaccine race gap"*[43]

The title of this article is in direct contrast to the title of Article 4, it shows a glimmer of hope in regards to vaccination. The article immediately highlights the disparity in Covid-19 vaccination, and draws attention to the inequality that led to it. The rhetorical strategy of appealing to authority is also very prominent in this article. Experts such as Sheikh Abdul Kareem and Dr. Cait Taylor, are mentioned as figures who are taking action to solve the problem. The involvement of community volunteers like Rahima Farah, who mobilized local networks to spread the word about vaccination efforts, is also mentioned. This could give people a certain push to get vaccinated. An appeal to blameworthiness is used as well, when talking about the older community who rely on word of mouth and platforms like WhatsApp to get their information, meaning that information from such sources cannot always be trusted. The language of the article is also focused on the Central Liverpool primary care network. The effort to address the disparities among Black, Asian and minority (BAME) ethnic communities is also mentioned in the article. This is specifically tied to that demographic of people, as well as people who speak Urdu and Arabic. The recruitment of medical students who speak those language is also mentioned in the article. Phrases like "come to us" and "we'd love to take the vaccine" also showcase the willingness of local communities to receive vaccines. This shows that there are people out there who want to get vaccinated, which could encourage other people to get vaccinated as well. While the article does not explicitly address counterarguments or present opposing viewpoints, it does acknowledge the challenges and concerns related to these

[43] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/04/inspiring-confidence-liverpool-gps-tackle-the-vaccine-race-gap (Last accessed on 07.09.2023)

specific demographics. A wide range of different sources is used to give a diverse background to the topic of the article. Along with healthcare professionals and community leaders, the article utilizes community members to maybe put certain hesitant or mistrusting people at ease. Their inclusion could make a certain point more persuasive, even for the most hesitant members of the community. Through the narrative of healthcare professionals, a sense of urgency is conveyed and that is achieved in the opening sentence: "GPs […] had been vaccinating for about a month when they realized they had a major problem," which immediately set the tone of urgency. The opening of a pop-up clinic in Toxteth and the recruitment of medical students from BAME backgrounds to administer vaccines offers some hope to the readers. Policy-related language and topics are also included in the article. The ad hoc distribution of vaccines is seen as exacerbating the disparities, which offers a possible change of policy to using vaccines with longer shelf-life. The pop-up clinic can also be seen as a policy-related event, because of the significance it had in bringing the vaccines closer to those who need them, which could be utilized in other parts of the country. The article also references policies of NHS England, including the requirements for vaccination clinics to be open from 8 am to 8 pm seven days a week. All of these policies or policy-related things connect with the main call to action in this article, which is the establishment of community-based vaccination clinics as a way to make vaccine more accessible to minority communities. By mentioning the importance of community, the call to action to involve community leaders in vaccination efforts is implied. The article is overall pro-vax with a similar topic to Article 4, but it focuses more on solving the disparity in vaccine distribution than the vaccine itself.

The articles from The Guardian did use balance in their reporting, with most articles not actually taking a stance, but rather reporting on what experts are saying. The main points of the articles being that a vaccine is coming and what the readers need to know about it. The only clear outlier here is article 1, which serves as a somewhat direct attack on anti-vax rhetoric, but still not doing anything to persuade vaccine-hesitant people. This did send more of a pro-vax message by The Guardian, but without it being explicit, a definitive answer if the articles were persuasive cannot be given. It is also important to note that all five articles were written during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. This context also explains the inclusion of mostly scientific facts, because at the time the second wave came, the vaccines were fully in development and had been already tested. The fact that all the articles from the first wave were discarded could mean that The Guardian did not really focus on addressing vaccine concerns before it became relevant. This is an assumption based on the methodology used, but a more extensive corpus

could also offer a different view on this matter. What should also be mentioned is the fact that even tough The Guardian does use the tabloid format of journalism, these articles are quite tame in that sense. Most articles come across serious and use very few or almost no pictures to convey a message. This is a clear contrast to The Daily Mail, as it will be shown in the next section of the paper

3.2 The Daily Mail

The articles from The Daily Mail are textbook tabloid, with giant titles, lots of pictures and unclear messages at times. Sensationalism is the main driving force behind these articles.

3.2.1 *Article 1: "Antivaxxers spread false claim a vaccine has been in production for years after Pfizer announcement as they share wild conspiracy theories and vow to refuse to allow their children to be vaccinated"*[44]

This will be the case for most Daily Mail articles after this, but we can see that the title really does not leave anything to imagination. We immediately get a whole summary of what the article will be about. Conspiracy theories are addressed in the article, and some pictures of Twitter and Facebook posts, together with quotes from anti-vaxxers are given. The posts themselves all rely on some rhetorical strategies from the codebook by Hughes et al. (2021), most notably "Health Freedom", but also "Epic Significance" as well. Some are even describing the vaccine as a "mass sterilisation program". An appeal to authority is made, but only at the end of the article as a kind of article within the original article, with a video of a scientist that is optimistic about the vaccine at the end. Almost all of the quotes in the article stem from anti-vaxxers, which makes sense when looking at the title, but I personally would not really call an article like this "journalism". This is just a case of sensationalism and really nothing else. It can be argued that the approach is somewhat balanced with both sides being shown, but even the quotes coming from the scientists or experts are in a grey zone. Here is a direct quote from the article as an example: "Professor Tracy Hussell, an immunologist from the University of Manchester, previously warned that as people get older their immune systems become less responsive - meaning a vaccine may not trigger the required response to provide immunity." This kind of quote only plays into the hand of anti-vaxxers, because they can use it out of context to downplay the efficacy of the vaccine and dismiss the need for the vaccine. This is also a form of the rhetorical strategy "Mountains and Molehills" from the codebook by Hughes et al. (2021).

Boris Johnson is also mentioned, and his emphasis on following rules and not relying solely on vaccines, which can be considered somewhat policy-related. There is no instance of the language being tailored to a certain demographic, but the inclusion of that many anti-vaxxers

[44] https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8934447/Antivaxxers-share-conspiracy-theories-Pfizer-announcement.html (Last accessed on 07.09.2023)

or sceptics makes it seem like they were the intended demographic for this article. This could be attributed to the fact that The Daily Mail is seen as more right-wing newspaper. Since we know from previous research (e.g., Featherstone et al., (2019) that conservative people are more likely to believe in conspiracy theories, such readers could then get some sort of affirmation of their beliefs from this article. They already believe that they are right and that scientists are wrong, so an article that just points out their "wrongness", is not really a threat to them. The article also does not make any counterarguments to the theories and claims made by these anti-vaxxers. Some caution or concern is shown in the title of the article inside the article, with the name "What We Still Need to Know". It actively shows concern about the safety of the vaccine and its effectiveness. This is most obvious in the following quotes.

8. "This remains tantalisingly unclear, and can only be revealed by continuing to monitor those that have received the jab."
9. "Professor Eleanor Riley, an immunologist at the University of Edinburgh, said that without further information it remained unclear whether the vaccine reduced symptoms or stopped infection."

Terms like "tantalisingly unclear" and "without further information" contribute to the sense of uncertainty surrounding the vaccine. No explicit or implicit calls to action are made in the article, but some form of calls to action are only mentioned. One such call to action is from Boris Johnson with his emphasis on following rules, while another is given through the quote" "We all need to stand up and the sheep need to take there (sic) masks off and say no'.". The call to action here is clear, to stop wearing a mask and to not get vaccinated, even if it was not directly written by the author of the article. The article is all over the place with messaging being muddy on both sides, the balance in reporting is achieved by giving us a sub-article completely focused on questions about the vaccine. This sub-article does give some information on the vaccines and also addresses possible concerns readers might have, but it stays balanced by immediately juxtaposing information that clashes with what was said. An example of this can be seen in following quotes:

10. "Preliminary results from the trial say that out of the 94 people that have tested positive for the virus no more than eight received the vaccine."
11. "But scant information has been released on how these infections were identified."

12. “If tests were only carried out after someone developed symptoms, it may be that asymptomatic infections were missed - meaning the vaccine does not prevent infection.”
13. “On the other hand, if all the trials 43,500 volunteers were tested repeatedly this would reveal the vaccine conferred immunity against the virus.”

The article does utilize more pictures to show the implied “wild” anti-vax side, but a clear absence of real counterarguments to the anti-vax claims, puts the article more on the anti-vax side. This can also be seen in the comments under the article, but it is not the focus of this paper.

3.2.2 *Article 2: “Matt Hancock slams NHS 'anti-vaxxer' group that compares Pfizer jab to 'poison' and is opposed to wearing masks and testing in hospitals after more than 300 workers sign up”*[45]

The title of the article serves to give a small summary of what the article will talk about, just like with Article 1, but the message here could be taken as more pro-vax. This is because of the word “slam”, with it also used in context of “harsh criticism”. This sets the stage for the reader to interpret the piece of news in a certain way and also create expectations as to what the article is about and how it stands with respect to it. The article also makes an appeal to authority with references from government officials, health experts as well as a survey to support the claims it makes. Bill Gates is also mentioned as the main culprit for the anti-vaxxers, which is another instance of the rhetorical strategy “Corrupt Elites” from the Hughes et al.’s (2021) codebook. An appeal to quantity is also made, with the quote “four out of five Britons want those who spread fake news about vaccines to face prosecution”, which shows a clear side in the vaccine debate, and at the same time distances the anti-vax crowd from the general public. The anti-vax crowd is also described as “dangerous” and “conspiracy theorists” to paint them in a negative light, which is the rhetorical strategy of ad hominem. Anecdotes from anti-vax individuals are also given in the article, from people such as Julie Coffey and Kate Shemirani. Images are also used in the article, either of people who are quoted or being mentioned, or of certain information about the vaccine. An appeal to fear is also made with the mention of the possible impact of

[45] https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8952939/NHS-workers-join-anti-vaxxer-group-compares-Pfizer-jab-poison-opposed-masks.html (Last accessed on 07.09.2023)

anti-vaccine belief and a failure to achieve herd immunity. This can be seen in the following quote: “Heidi Larson, director of the charity, said a small knock-on effect caused by conspiracy posts hinder the ability to achieve herd immunity through a vaccine, warning of 'a tipping point'.” This article, just like Article 1, also is not tailored for any specific demographic, but, in my view, gives a perspective of both sides of the vaccine debate. On the anti-vax side is the perspective of NHS workers and care home staff who have joined an 'anti-vaxxer' group and on the pro-vax side are responses from Health Secretary Matt Hancock, who criticizes the group and emphasizes the need for vaccinations. The sources used in the article come from every side; we have government officials, such as Matt Hancock, the then Health Secretary of the UK; scientific data is given, but without any real experts being cited. Other sources include social media like Facebook and public opinion that comes from a survey done by ORB International. The inclusion of different perspectives and sides makes the article balanced in its reporting, while also giving it some credibility. Balanced reporting is a tendency for most Daily Mail articles, but they are all nuanced in the way they “balance” information. The articles coverage also evokes certain emotions. The most prominent being concern and disapproval or criticism. These are achieved by phrases like “slammed more than 300 NHS workers”, “compare the Pfizer jab to 'poison'” “entirely inappropriate” and “wouldn't advise it for anybody.” Hope is also achieved through certain phrases like “successful jab” “breakthrough vaccine” and “back to normal.” Caution about the spread of misinformation is prominent throughout the article as well, with phrases like “running rampant on social media sites” “tech giants promised to halt their spread” and “exposure to misleading online posts could hinder efforts” being used. Since the NHS and their workers have an important place in the article, it is also obvious that these messages are also somewhat policy-related, with the NHS being a government agency. The quotes from Matt Hancock only help this claim. Calls to action are also prevalent in the article, with the primary one being to encourage people to get vaccinated once a vaccine become available. This is framed in the context of “going back to normal”. An implicit call to action could also be made to rely on credible sources for information about the pandemic. The article is very balanced in its reporting, with the pro-vax side being a little more prevalent. Every anti-vax claim is either presented in some kind of negative light, or it is refuted by pro-vax information given in the article.

3.2.3 *Article 3: "Deranged, deluded and deadly: How Jeremy Corbyn's brother Piers leads an anti-vaxxer movement that thinks jabs are a 'New World Order' conspiracy and chanted 'Covid is a hoax' outside a beleaguered hospital"*[46]

The title is a long one just like previous Daily Mail articles, with the implied message that anti-vaxxers are "deranged, deluded and deadly", which is the rhetorical strategy of ad hominem. An appeal to authority is achieved by citing an Oxford University study about vaccine hesitant people and by quoting healthcare professionals. Metaphors are used in the article, but they mainly refer to things Piers Corbyn said. For example, he called the vaccine "satanic death shot" and described it as a "Dr. Strangelove concoction." These metaphors are intended to evoke fear of the vaccine. The conspiracy "New World Order" is also mentioned, which can be sorted into the rhetorical strategy of "Corrupt Elites". An appeal to public opinion is made by highlighting the disruptions and protests outside of hospitals. The implication here is, that these actions are disrespectful to healthcare workers and overall hinder the fight against the pandemic. This is also the overall "feel" of the article, with its language being tailored for readers that generally support measures put up in place to combat Covid-19. The article does not seem to offer counterarguments to the anti-vax views they report about, but instead the main rhetorical strategy it uses is ad hominem. The anti-vax side tends to be portrayed as radical and as conspiracy theorists. We also get an eyewitness account from Matthew Lee, a junior doctor at St Thomas' Hospital in London, where Corbyn led the protest at. Some videos and tweets are referenced as well in the article. A paraphrase of a quote from Mayor Sadiq Khan is given, along with a full quote from Sir Simon Stevens (who was at that time the chief executive of NHS England). Fear IS the main emotion the article is trying to evoke. This is achieved by highlighting the fact that the anti-vax protesters do not take the pandemic seriously, which is also shown by a picture and video of Piers Corbyn spitting flammable liquid into the air. Which could be connected with the rhetorical strategy "Panic Button" from the codebook by Hughes et al. (2021). Frustration is also conveyed, most notably through the following quote from Sir Simon Stevens: "'You are not only responsible for potentially changing behaviour that will kill people, but it is an insult to the nurse coming home from 12 hours in critical care, having worked their guts out under the most demanding circumstances', he warned." The article also uses political language, the best example being the comparison of Piers and his brother Jeremy

[46] https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9152751/Covid-UK-Piers-Corbyn-leads-anti-vaxxer-movement-thinks-jabs-conspiracy.html (Last accessed on 07.09.2023)

Corbyn. Jeremy, being a self-described socialist, could also be the reason why he is brought up in relation to his brother, as to also make him look bad. Piers Corbyn's manifesto that includes the promise to "reverse all Covid-19 discrimination against people who don't wear masks, won't get tested and won't take the vaccines" and to "end the fraudulent rules which are destroying jobs, the economy, culture and London life" is quoted as well. The article mentions that Jeremy comes across as "Churchillian" in comparison to Piers, which does not convey any particular stance. It instead shows that although Jeremy is "bad" in the eyes of the author, Piers is even worse. A quote by Boris Johnson is given, but only as a support to the statement from Sir Simon Stevens. The last sentence of the article is also the main call to action in the article: "If so, then now is surely the time to take these groups on by confronting more aggressively the lies and misinformation they peddle. Because left unchallenged, the vaccine roll-out — our only hope of beating the scourge of coronavirus — is threatened." The message is clear, combating these groups and the misinformation they spout is of utmost importance. The article has an overall pro-vaccine message, with the story about Piers Corbyn being used to ridicule his views and thus the anti-vax movement in a way. Since The Daily Mail is also seen as more right-wing, it also makes sense that they would take the chance to slander Piers's brother Jeremy in some capacity. This is confirmed in the comments where both brothers are vilified.

3.2.4 *Article 4: "BBC weather presenter, 49, leaves job and brands broadcaster 'the DEVIL' - weeks after attending Piers Corbyn anti-vaxxer march and being banned from road for drink-driving"*[47]

We can see from the title that the article is about a BBC weather presenter, but instead of being named, the article uses the name of Piers Corbyn. This could be a way of getting people to engage with the article, because people are probably more familiar with Corbyn, instead of Jemma Cooper, the person the article is about. The drink-driving mentioned in the title is also an implicit ad hominem rhetorical strategy. The whole article is a profile story, to make the former weather presenter look bad in the eyes of public. This is done by mentioning her drunken driving and the fact she was seen at anti-vax rallies led by Piers Corbyn. An appeal to authority is achieved by emphasizing the BBC's guidelines and the importance of adhering to them.

[47] https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9474129/BBC-weather-presenter-leaves-job-attending-anti-vaxxer-march-drink-driving-conviction.html (Last accessed on 07.09.2023)

Quotes from a whistle-blower are also given, showing what people from the BBC thought of her. The article's language is not really tailored to any demographic, and since no arguments for either side of the vaccine debate are given, there also are no counterarguments. The main thing is the controversy surrounding Jemma Cooper, and since most information is mainly speculation, the article itself is not really credible. With phrases like "It is not clear whether her departure […] was a result of her quitting, or her contract being terminated" and "alleged she had attended at least two anti-lockdown marches" some kind of caution in reporting is shown, as to not jump to conclusions. The mention of the "devil" in relation to the BBC, could also serve as a way to get readers interested in the article, if they, for example, do not like the BBC or even share the same sentiment. Anti-lockdown marches led by Piers Corbyn are the only instance of somewhat policy-related language being used in the article. There are also no calls to action made in the article. The article could be seen as a pro-vax article, since the term "anti-vaxxer" is used to slander Jemma Cooper. This could also be the opinion of people that are pro-vax, but for an anti-vax person, this article could serve as inspiration. Jemma Cooper losing her job, because of the fact she is an anti-vaxxer, only plays into the hand of the anti-vax community. For them she comes across as a "Brave Truthteller", which is also a rhetorical strategy from the codebook by Hughes et al. (2021). The comments on the article are also overwhelmingly anti-vax, with most people voicing support for Jemma.

3.2.5 *Article 5: "Police scuffle with anti-lockdown and anti-vaxxer protestors and make dozens of arrests - including Piers Corbyn - after thousands march through Bristol and Liverpool"*[48]

It is immediately clear from the title that policy-related language will be used in the article, which is clear from the mention of the police scuffle. The mention of Piers Corbyn is once again probably used to get more engagement from the readers. The article is written, but a great percentage of the article is just pictures from these anti-lockdown protests. An appeal to quantity is used by citing statistics, such as the number of protestors, the number of arrests as well as the fines for gathering in such large groups. The chief Inspector Mark Runacres and his views about the protests are quoted in the article: "Runacres stressed the health risks, saying he was 'disappointed' the protest was still set to go ahead". The main quotes come from protesters either in form of the signs they use in the pictures or by direct quotes. One such sign is "I want

[48] https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8948767/Police-haul-away-anti-lockdown-protestors-march-Bristol-without-masks.html (Last accessed on 07.09.2023)

to hug my nanny" being held by a child in a picture. Quotes from the protesters focus overall on the lockdown restrictions and the virus itself. There is also one picture where a person is holding a sign that utilizes quite a few of the rhetorical strategies from the codebook by Hughes et al. (2021). The language is not tailored for any specific demographic, but the article is instead only a report of what happened during the protests, which might be interesting for certain demographics. The reporting is neutral in tone, with mainly facts being presented. While it may look balanced, by not taking a stance, the article may come across as a boost to the anti-vax community, by showing that there are people out there fighting for them. Some pictures from a protest in Frankfurt are shown as well. The rhetorical strategy of "Health Freedom" is mainly being shown in the pictures from the protest, the signs from the protesters expressing some form of this strategy. Tension and discontent are evoked through phrases "tensions bubbled over," "heavy police presence," and "disappointed", with words like "scuffled" and "assaulted" used in relation to arrests, to further show tension. There is also a sense of optimism, but for the protesters and people that agree with them, with phrases like "Christmas on our terms" and "We've had enough" suggesting a desire for a better outcome for them. There is also clear use of politics-related language, with Priti Patel's ban on demonstrations being mentioned. Another instance of political language is used when taking about Piers Corbyn: "Jeremy Corbyn's brother Piers was seen being spoken to by a police officer during the Bristol protests. The 73-year-old […] is a well known climate change denier and also claims the coronavirus pandemic is a hoax." Piers is once again mentioned only in relation to his brother, this time also being called a climate change denier. The call to action is implicit in the article, with it mainly coming from the police urging the protesters to go home, and people being fined for gathering in bigger groups. This is framed in the context of public safety and adherence to lockdown rules. This article is another example of a neutral article actually being an anti-vax article. The article only adds fuel to the fire, by showing the resistance of anti-vaxxers to the current government. It could serve as inspiration for anti-vaxxers, or just as an inspiration for people who want the lockdown to be over. The comments once again show support for the anti-vax side.

3.2.6 *Article 6: "Is this the most dangerous woman in Britain? Suspended nurse Kate Shemirani doesn't believe Covid exists, says its symptoms are linked to 5G mobile phone technology... and claims a vaccine is a plot to change our DNA, writes BARBARA DAVIES"*[49]

Judging from the title, this article is yet another profile story about an anti-vaxxer, with some 5G conspiracies being sprinkled on top. By describing Kate Shemirani as a "suspended nurse" and "anti-vaxxer" she is framed as a controversial figure, but it is also a way to show her non-conformity. An appeal to ridicule is achieved through the use of phrases like "outlandish claims" and by countering her arguments by facts. Her every opinion is countered with well-documented information. For example, Shemirani claims "There are no studies in oncology that tell you that you are going to die if you don't do the (chemotherapy) treatment.", which is countered by the fact that survival rates are higher if the patients do have the treatment. The mention of the Nursing and Midwifery Council and their suspension of Shemirani could be seen as an appeal to authority, since they did remove her registration because of her views. The article comes across as ironic in a way, because it juxtaposes Shemirani's views with the fact that she is a former nurse. Shemirani's quotes are mostly direct quotes, as not to twist her words. The language of the article is tailored as a kind of study, of the type of people Kate Shemirani belongs to. The target demographic could be people who are interested in seeing how "conspiracy theorists" think, or maybe people who are just interested in Shemirani herself. The article indirectly counters Shemirani's claims, with information facts, but no sources given for them. Some form of policy-related language can be seen at the mention of her broadcast on Uckfield FM, and them having to issue and apology by order of Ofcom (Office of communication) for letting her promote her "conspiracy theories" live. Shemirani also mentions a lot of conspiracy theories all that can be connected with the codebook from Hughes et al. (2021). These most notably relate to the rhetorical strategies of: "Health Freedom", "Corrupt Elites", "Do Your Own Research", "Brave Truthteller" as well as the use of the narrative "Chinese Virus". Shemirani by herself could be an interesting topic for research of such theories, since it seems like she believes in all of them. This is also highlighted by the author Barbara Davies at the end of the article, with her expressing that the most terrifying prospect of Shemirani is the outlandish world she believes in. Which could be construed as a call to action

[49] https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8748859/Is-suspended-nurse-anti-vaxxer-Kate-Shemirani-dangerous-woman-Britain.html (Last accessed on 07.09.2023)

to fight against these conspiracy theories and misinformation all together. The article is overall neutral in regards to Covid-19 vaccination, although the author mentions the efficacy of the polio vaccine, which is in this case pro-vaccine. The main goal of the article is to show how ridiculous the views of people like Kate Shemirani are, which would also indirectly make the anti-vax views seem ridiculous as well. The comments under this article are supportive of Shemirani, which shows that that a certain demographic is prevalent on The Daily Mail.

3.2.7 *Article 7: "Shamed anti-vaxxer nurse sparks violent clashes at mass rally of virus deniers in Trafalgar Square after she calls police officers 'dirty dogs'"*[50]

The title reveals that the person of interest probably will be, Kate Shemirani, once more, probably in a negative light, according to the title. The topic is another protest of "coronavirus-deniers", as they are called in the article. "Yobs" and "conspiracy theorists", are also used to refer to the protesters. These labels carry a negative connotation, which shows that the article is not on the same side as them. Nothing is said about the vaccine, but instead the protesters and their clash with the polices, which was in part started by Shermirani, is the main focus of the article. We get a statement from Superintendent Emma Richards, a law enforcement official, which is an appeal to authority and adds some credibility to the article. Some use of sensationalist language can be seen in phrases like "violent clashes" "ugly scenes" and "absurd rants" which help in creating a dramatic narrative. Andrew Wakefield is also mentioned, as to further discredit the protesters. The use of visuals is also prevalent in the article, with pictures of police, and protesters being shown. In one of the photos a sign from a protester can be seen using the phrase "My body, my choice, no to mandatory masks", which directly relates to the rhetorical strategy "Appropriating Feminism and/or Womanhood" from the codebook by Hughes et al. (2021). There is no tailored language in the article, but it only presents a narrative, just like previous Daily Mail articles, and as such no counterarguments or readers concerns are addressed. The sources used in the article are mostly eyewitness accounts or pictures from the protest itself. Shemirani is also extensively quoted in the article, since she is central to the article, with pictures offering enough credibility, to not need more sources. The coverage of the article is meant to evoke fear in the reader, with phrases like "violence broke out" "screaming protesters" "bottles and beer cans were thrown" and "two officers suffered minor injuries" being used in the article. The article uses policy-related language, since the main reason for the

[50] https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8751653/Shamed-anti-vaxxer-nurse-sparks-violent-clashes-mass-rally-virus-deniers.html (Last accessed on 07.09.2023)

protest was to “Resist and Act” against the government. It shows that the opposition exits, and that it is vocal. No explicit or implicit calls to action were made in the article, with the overall message being that one should not clash with the police. This article is another instance of balanced reporting, which can serve both sides of the vaccine debate, just like the previous article. Without a clear message, the reader could always come to a conclusion that they like. It should also be mentioned that this article had the comments sectioned turned off.

4. Discussion

The results of the qualitative analysis were somewhat expected, with The Guardian overall showing a better approach to presenting information but still being dedicated to a balanced report. These expectations were based on the fact that The Guardian is seen as a more left-wing newspaper, with the pro-vax stance being considered more left-wing. The same can be said about The Daily Mail with the presumption that it would be more anti-vax, which is also based on the fact that the overall public considers it more right-wing. This difference was not explicit, but it was clear in not only rhetorical strategy use, but the overall tone and direction of the articles. The Daily Mail did use sources but they were in most cases either eyewitness accounts or statements from people important to the article. Even when they did use scientists, or scientific data, it was superficial, as to make it seem like they are neutral in the debate. This is in stark contrast to The Guardian, where most of the articles examined, fully relied on data with it being presented in detail, even when it would hurt the pro-vax narrative.

Both newspapers used emotional appeals, or certain phrases to bring out certain emotion in their readers, with The Guardian being somewhat more positive in their pathos. The Guardian also had a few instances of tailoring its language to certain demographics which could suggest that they actively did try to persuade certain people to the pro-vax side. This was never the case in The Daily Mail, but what could be argued is that by constantly reporting on anti-vax events in these ways they could slowly gather a demographic of anti-vaxxers, if we judge by the comments under the articles. When it comes to the political or policy-related messages, the corpus showed that both newspapers had articles that conveyed messages of such kind. This can also be attributed to the fact that Covid-19, even though it is a medical problem, was made a political issue by it halting the world in its tracks. Calls to action were spotted in both newspapers, with the difference being that The Guardian had more explicit calls to action along with implicit ones, while The Daily Mail mostly had implicit calls to action. Overall, the findings of this limited study suggest that the two newspapers did differ in the way they used rhetoric concerning COVID-19, with The Guardian being much more detailed and precise with

every part of rhetoric, while The Daily Mail stayed simple in its reporting, two of the seven analysed articles even being more of a slideshow, than an article. The results showing an overall balanced reporting on the Covid-19 pandemic also match up with the study "Balanced Reporting and Boomerang Effect: An Analysis of Croatian Online News Sites Vaccination Coverage and User Comments during the COVID-19 Pandemic" by Pavić et al. (2022), with the British region showing similar tendencies. The analysis of the two newspapers showed that, even balanced reporting could be nuanced in the way it is trying to bring a message across, sometimes not giving enough information about the topic they are reporting on. According to the study by Gerken (2019:3138), balanced reporting will not clear up issues that "arise from motivated cognition", and the data in our study indicate that even when balanced, reporting can still be nuanced in the way it chooses to address, present or talk about a certain issue. These results also have a practical use, they could be used to promote a more "regulated" style of journalism – stricter control of what content is being published, the deplatforming of misinformation promoters or a fully factual approach to presenting information without the use of sensationalism. This "regulated" style could be put in place when reporting on certain issues, such as Covid-19, where wrong information could mean the difference between life or death. This also brings up the morality of such a style of journalism and opens up different questions about freedom of speech:

- Can facts be imposed on people?
- Could a more "regulated" approach to reporting be seen as a way of silencing the other side, even in the case of stopping misinformation?
- Who decides what is right and what is wrong?
- Would such a system give too much power to the government and would it even work in stopping the spread of misinformation?
- Is it worth giving up certain freedoms, for the common good?

These are all legitimate questions, which probably have been asked many times before and they cannot be decided on just from this paper alone, but the paper could be used when discussing such questions.

5. Conclusion

Reports of new cases of Covid-19 are once again in the news, the First Lady Jill Biden being the most prominent of such cases. This shows that the threat of Covid-19, although not a global emergency anymore, still exists. A complete return of the Covid-19 pandemic is highly unlikely, but it does not mean that something similar could not happen. With all the research and studies that have been done on this topic, the data for a successful fight against misinformation is freely available everywhere. The misinformation was, this time, spread by anti-vaxxers, but maybe some other group will take their place next time. No matter what happens, we can and should be prepared if that were to ever happen again. There still will be people with a distrust of certain information and this is exactly where analysis of specific rhetoric would be useful again. By knowing what rhetorical strategies work in such cases, one could start the fight against misinformation much earlier and with a clear goal in mind. This time, with the results of this paper showing the importance of rhetoric and the overall nuance in balanced reporting, a different approach to reporting should also be done. The results also open up the possibility of similar follow-up studies. Most notably a follow-up study with broadsheet newspapers (if there are any traditionally- defined ones left) could be done, to possibly explore if there are differences in those kinds of newspapers. In addition, it is recommended to repeat the results, with a much larger sample and with a different timeframe.

WORKS CITED

1840 Act to Extend the Practice of Vaccination | Policy Navigator. (n.d.). Policy Navigator. Available at: https://navigator.health.org.uk/theme/1840-act-extend-practice-vaccination#:~:text=The%201840%20Act%20to%20Extend,service%20for%20the%20individual%20concerned Last accessed: 7th September, 2023.

Armitage, R. (2021). Online 'anti-vax' campaigns and COVID-19: censorship is not the solution. *Public Health*, *190*, e29–e30. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2020.12.005

Baumgaertner, B., Carlisle, J. E., & Justwan, F. (2018). The influence of political ideology and trust on willingness to vaccinate. *PLOS ONE*, *13*(1), e0191728. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0191728

Carpiano, R. M., Callaghan, T., DiResta, R., Brewer, N. T., Clinton, C., Galvani, A. P., Lakshmanan, R., Parmet, W. E., Omer, S. B., Buttenheim, A. M., Benjamin, R. M., Caplan, A. L., Elharake, J. A., Flowers, L., Maldonado, Y., Mello, M. M., Opel, D. J., Salmon, D. A., Schwartz, J. L., . . . Hotez, P. J. (2023). Confronting the evolution and expansion of anti-vaccine activism in the USA in the COVID-19 era. *The Lancet*, *401*(10380), 967–970. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(23)00136-8

Cicero, M. T. (2018). *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero: Volume 4*. BoD – Books on Demand.

Conis, E. (2019). Measles and the modern history of vaccination. *Public Health Reports*, *134*(2), 118–125. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033354919826558

Corbett, E. P. J., & Connors, R. J. (1999). *Classical rhetoric for the modern student*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Delong, E. S. J. H. a. P. (2021). Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey technical article - Office for National Statistics. *www.ons.gov.uk*. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/articles/coronaviruscovid19infectionsurveytechnicalarticle/wavesandlagsofcovid19inenglandjune2021

Dickson, E. (2020, October 12). Rolling Stone. *Rolling Stone*. Available at: https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/celebrities-anti-vaxxers-jessica-biel-847779/ Last accessed: 7th September, 2023.

Dubé, E., Ward, J. K., Verger, P., & MacDonald, N. E. (2021). Vaccine Hesitancy, Acceptance, and Anti-Vaccination: Trends and Future Prospects for Public Health. *Annual Review of Public Health*, *42*(1), 175–191. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-090419-102240

Eggertson, L. (2010). Lancet retracts 12-year-old article linking autism to MMR vaccines. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, *182*(4), E199–E200. https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.109-3179

Featherstone, J. D., Bell, R. A., & Ruiz, J. B. (2019). Relationship of people's sources of health information and political ideology with acceptance of conspiratorial beliefs about vaccines. *Vaccine*, *37*(23), 2993–2997. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.vaccine.2019.04.063

Gerken, M. (2019). How to balance Balanced Reporting and Reliable Reporting. *Philosophical Studies*, *177*(10), 3117–3142. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-019-01362-5

GNM press office. (2018, January 22). Guardian and Observer launch new tabloid format and digital redesign. *The Guardian*. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/gnm-press-office/2018/jan/14/guardian-and-observer-launch-new-tabloid-format-and-digital-redesign Last accessed: 7th September, 2023.

Honcharov, V., Li, J., Sierra, M., Rivadeneira, N. A., Olazo, K., Nguyen, T. T., Mackey, T. K., & Sarkar, U. (2023). Public figure Vaccination rhetoric and vaccine hesitancy: Retrospective Twitter analysis. *JMIR Infodemiology*, *3*, e40575. https://doi.org/10.2196/40575

Hughes, B., Miller-Idriss, C., Piltch-Loeb, R., Goldberg, B., White, K., Criezis, M., & Savoia, E. (2021). Development of a codebook of online Anti-Vaccination rhetoric to manage COVID-19 vaccine misinformation. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(14), 7556. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18147556

Iannelli, V., MD. (2021). History of the Anti-Vaccine movement. *Verywell Health*. https://www.verywellhealth.com/history-anti-vaccine-movement-4054321

Kulenkampff, M., Schwartzman, J., & Wilson, J. C. (1974). Neurological complications of pertussis inoculation. *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, *49*(1), 46–49. https://doi.org/10.1136/adc.49.1.46

Ludvigsson, J. F. (2022). How Sweden approached the COVID -19 pandemic: Summary and commentary on the National Commission Inquiry. *Acta Paediatrica*, *112*(1), 19–33. https://doi.org/10.1111/apa.16535

Mathieu, E. (2020, March 5). *Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19)*. Our World in Data. Available at: https://ourworldindata.org/policy-responses-covid Last accessed: 7th September, 2023.

Merkley, E., & Loewen, P. J. (2021). Anti-intellectualism and the mass public's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. *Nature Human Behaviour*, *5*(6), 706–715. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-021-01112-w

Mohamadi, E., Olyaeemanesh, A., Takian, A., Yaftian, F., Kiani, M. M., & Larijani, B. (2022). Short and long-term Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic on health Equity: A Comprehensive review. *Medical Journal of the Islamic Republic of Iran*. https://doi.org/10.47176/mjiri.36.179

Pavić, Ž., Šuljok, A., & Jurlina, J. (2022). Balanced Reporting and Boomerang Effect: An Analysis of Croatian Online News Sites Vaccination Coverage and User Comments during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Vaccines*, *10*(12), 2085. https://doi.org/10.3390/vaccines10122085

Perelman, C. (1979). *The New Rhetoric and the Humanities: Essays on Rhetoric and its Applications*. http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA03290829

Riedel, S. (2005). Edward Jenner and the history of smallpox and vaccination. *Baylor University Medical Center Proceedings*, *18*(1), 21–25. https://doi.org/10.1080/08998280.2005.11928028

Rusch, T., Han, Y., Liang, D., Hopkins, A. H., Lawrence, C., Maoz, U., Paul, L. K., Stanley, D., Adolphs, R., Álvarez, R., Camplisson, I., Harrison, L., Hien, D. A., Tian, L., Lin, C., Lopez-Castro, T., Nizzic, M., Golden, A. R., Wahle, I., & Yaffe, G. (2023). COVID-Dynamic: A large-scale longitudinal study of socioemotional and behavioral change across the pandemic. *Scientific Data*, *10*(1). https://doi.org/10.1038/s41597-022-01901-6

Samples. (2021). A history of the Daily Mail. *Historic Newspapers*. Available at: https://www.historic-newspapers.co.uk/blog/daily-mail-history/ Last accessed: 7th September, 2023.

Savolainen, R. (2022). Defending and refuting information sources rhetorically: The case of COVID-19 vaccination. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 096100062211111. https://doi.org/10.1177/09610006221111196

Shaw, G. (1902). Mr. Bernard Shaw on Vaccination. *BMJ*, *2*(2181), 1283. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.2.2181.1283

Smith, M. (2017). How left or right-wing are the UK's newspapers? *YouGov*. Available at: https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2017/03/07/how-left-or-right-wing-are-uks-newspapers Last accessed: 7th September, 2023.

Timeline: WHO's COVID-19 response. (n.d.). Available at: https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/interactive-timeline#event-1 Last accessed: 7th September, 2023.

WHO chief declares end to COVID-19 as a global health emergency. (2023, May 6). UN News. Available at: https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/05/1136367#:~:text=WHO%20chief%20declares%20end%20to%20COVID-19%20as%20a%20global%20health%20emergency,-5%20May%202023&text=The%20head%20of%20the%20UN,no%20longer%20a%20global%20threat Last accessed: 7th September, 2023.

World Bank Open Data. (n.d.). World Bank Open Data. Available at: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS?most_recent_value_desc=true Last accessed: 7th September, 2023.