

“A path of shadow and suspicion”

The portrayal of the 2020 American election
in German and British news

Master Thesis in Communication Science (MSc)

Mareike Flaschka, 1964399

Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences

First supervisor: Dr. Sikke R. Jansma

Second supervisor: Dr. Jordy F. Gosselt

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Abstract

Aim: Communication about American elections increased over the years and the topic is of great interest in the international discourse. Media play a crucial role in providing information and shaping opinions of people. As framing, journalistic writing style, frames, used tone of voice, partisan bias and applying emotions are used in media reporting, the study at hand investigates the portrayal of the 2020 American election in German and British newspapers. Germany and Britain were chosen as countries to be studied, because of their different media characteristics, journalism culture and national interest in American elections. This comparison was made to contribute to the overarching question how European countries portray American elections in their own countries. Ultimately, theoretical implications and future research attempts are proposed in the understudied field of communication about a cross-national comparison of elections outside the own country.

Method: A 19-item coding scheme, containing five categories namely journalistic writing style, framing, tone of voice, partisan bias and emotions have been based on literature. 280 articles from two German and two British newspapers were analysed by means of a content analysis.

Findings: Results of this study show that similar patterns can be observed between German and British news reporting about the 2020 American election. The most dominantly used frames in both countries were metacoverage and human interest while a neutral tone of voice was applied most often. Partisan bias was mostly found in British news, aligning with proposed expectations. Emotions only appeared to a small amount in news articles about the election but more frequently in British news.

Conclusions: The findings of this study provide new insights into the field of political science and communication science. It is interesting how similar patterns were in German and British news reporting about the 2020 American election, which contradicts previous research that suggest that all variables differ between both countries. The only finding in line with previous research is that partisan bias was found more often in British news. A slightly higher number of emotions was also be found in British news. However, journalistic writing style, framing and tone of voice were not found to differ between the countries, suggesting a rather unexpected finding when related to other researchers. This study contributes to the understudied field of cross-national comparison about elections and suggests that German and Britain reported similar about the 2020 American election even if past research did contradict this argument. Moreover, that both media provide similar information in similar styles. Future research might be needed to further investigate the discrepancies between this study and previous studies to find more answers.

Keywords: 2020 American election, journalistic writing style, framing, tone of voice, partisan bias, emotions

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1. Introduction

American elections are not solely watched by American citizens but also by people of other countries around the globe. For instance, a study in Germany revealed that 52% of participants were interested in the 2012 election of the United States of America (USA) (Statista, 2012). In Australia, the figure was even higher, as 83% of participants interested in the 2008 election (Beazley, 2016). People outside the USA have become sensitive towards American elections as the country has a large impact on global ongoing (Beazley, 2016). The USA is one of the most influential countries in the world, having stakes in the trading business and military. The elected leader takes part in decisions leading to benefits or disadvantages for other nations. Therefore, who is being elected as president matters within and outside the country.

Focusing on the 2020 American election some notable differences from previous elections can be detected. To start with, unlike other elections before, the acting president and presidential candidate Donald Trump tried to stay in office by violent actions and by ignoring legal rules (Gienow-Hecht, 2020). Additionally, Trump claimed fraud during the postal voting process and announced winning the election before all votes were counted. Another unique element of the 2020 election was the level of misinformation spread by Internet companies like Facebook, that presented false information and only claimed after the election that some provided information was wrong (Gallup & Knight Foundation, cited in Jones, 2020).

The worldwide interest in American elections combined with the uniqueness of the last election made international media channels report more frequently about the 2020 American election. The importance of the media can be rated high during elections as the media distributes information to the public. However, the media does not only bring benefits to audiences but also certain downfalls, i.e., by providing biased information (Entman, 2010). Additionally, media have a high influence on people's perceptions because politics can be defined or redefined during elections as certain opinions may be portrayed more than others (Cushion, 2018).

To place all discussed concepts into context the question arises how the 2020 American election was portrayed by the media. While many studies (i.e., Esser & D'Angelo, 2006; Caliendo & McIlwain, 2006) addressed the influence of the American media on the elections, the question of this study is how it was portrayed outside the USA. This study compares media channels of two European countries. This is of high interest because underlying

attitudes of the international media towards America can be detected which might influence the perceptions of people outside America. In addition, to discover how ongoing in America are being perceived by Europeans and to improve the understanding of American elections in Europe (Livingstone, 2003).

Playing a crucial role in shaping perceptions of people, the agenda setting theory describes the media portraying some stories as more important than others by providing more information about those stories (Moy, Tewksbury & Rinke, 2016). Moreover, framing can be described as a technique to select information, exclude other information or emphasize elements to eventually influence people's perceptions (Gitlin, 1980). Azpíroz (2014) claimed that an increasing interest occurred over the years regarding the effects framing has on the media, while analysing the framing of politicians and in the communication field. Therein framing serves as a tool in political communication (Lakoff, cited in Azpíroz, 2014). Next to media framing, the writing style journalists apply can impact opinions. Journalism is centred around making choices about what information to incorporate in an article making the article interesting to read (Jaakkola, 2018). Also, the tone of voice used in articles may influence the perceptions of readers. Tone of voice can be positive, negative, neutral or mixed (Kioussis, 2004). Relating to tone of voice, partisan bias a technique describing that a newspaper article presents one party more favourable than another party and was already applied in past portrayals of elections in the media (Walter & Van der Eijk, 2019). Lastly, emotions play a large role in mobilizing citizens to participate in politics (Valentino, Brader, Groenendyk, Gregorowicz & Hutchings, 2011). Additionally, emotions can increase the attention of readers for specific articles in the media (Beckett & Deuze, 2016).

The focus of this research will be laid on German and British news, for the following reasons. First, the characteristics of German and British media can be differentiated. German news mostly contain rational information to inform people (Esser & Umbricht, 2013; Henkel, Thurman & Deffner, 2019). British news, however, are written in a more entertaining way (Thurman, Cornia & Kunert, 2016, p.6; Henkel, Thurman & Deffner, 2019). Second, to contribute to the question of how the media in Germany and Britain have reported about the 2020 American election, to discover similarities and differences in news reporting between both countries. Third, Germany and the UK were chosen, because German citizens are interested in the outcome of American election and for Britain, changes in policies or business relations between Boris Johnson and either Biden or Trump are of interest (i.e., Landale, 2020).

During literature search, it appeared, that no comprehensive work has been dedicated to this cross-national comparison of the German and British news reporting while portraying an election. This leads to the knowledge gap of how European countries have portrayed the 2020 American election in the media. This study shall close this gap by being one of the primary studies in the manner of the 2020 election while taking a European perspective. Therefore, differences in the reporting about the election shall be outlined by analysing differences in frames used and how journalistic writing style might be connected to framing. A specific focus shall also be laid on generic framing as no comprehensive study has been dedicated to the use of the combination of two independent frameworks while comparing German and British media. Moreover, tone of voice was chosen as a variable as it was already incorporated in media analysis about British news articles while analysing the 2008 American election and the portrayal of the election in different European countries (Vliegenthart, Boomgaarden, Van Aelst & De Vreese, 2010). However, the construct was not incorporated in a study about German news reporting when compared to British news reporting nor comparing two countries reporting about the 2020 American election. Partisan bias was also found to be an established method while reporting about elections and will be incorporated in this study. Lastly, emotions are incorporated in the study to explore if the reporting about the election was accompanied by emotional attempts as found in previous elections (Searles & Ridout, 2017) or if fewer emotions were used in the media portrayal.

In the following study, a media analysis will be conducted, including 280 news articles from Germany and the UK, reporting about the 2020 American election. The following research question can be outlined:

RQ: How did German and British news channels portray the 2020 American election?

The study will also be relevant in the scientific context to research how German and British journalists report about American elections in general and to set a new basis for research in the political communication science field. Additionally, to combine variables that have been established in past studies and to research their influence in German and British media coverage about foreign elections. Also, being a research in an understudied field about cross-national comparison of the reporting about an election and observing events from an

outsider's perspective. Ultimately, to be a basis for future about the portrayal of American elections in the international context.

2. Theoretical framework

To study media coverage in the case of the 2020 American election in German and British news, different dimensions retrieved from literature need to be considered to answer the proposed research question. Building further on the introduction, the concepts of agenda setting theory, journalistic writing style, framing and framing in the political context, tone of voice, partisan bias and emotions will be elaborated on. Eventually, individual hypotheses will be formed which will be answered in the course of this study.

2.1 Agenda setting theory

Already reaching back to nineteen twenty-two, Lippman stated that a relation can be drawn between the presentation of events in mass media and how people perceive events themselves after media consumption (Lippman, cited in McCombs & Ghanem, 2001). This assumption was further developed and put into a larger context, which was the basis for the agenda setting theory. The theory states that specific topics are being pointed out more by the media and that this is related to audiences perceiving the topics as important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Two levels of agenda setting can be distinguished: first, transmitting an object's "salience" and second, the transmission of an attribute "salience" (Reese, Gandy & Grant, 2001, p. 68). The first-level entails how much of an issue is being covered and reported about and, therewith, influences peoples' awareness of certain topics (Wu & Coleman, 2009). The second-level deals with attribute salience as well as characters of people and elements reported about in the media (McCombs & Ghanem, 2001) and how media report about the attributes (Kim, Scheufele & Shanahan, 2002). Additionally, attributes of the second-level agenda setting can be distinguished between substantive and affective attributes (Wu & Coleman, 2009). Substantive attributes entail beliefs, character and strength of a political candidate. Affective attributes entail emotions and how the substantive attributes are communicated, whether neutral, negative or positive. Moreover, three variants of agenda setting can be distinguished (Moy, Tewksbury & Rinke, 2016). First, intermedia agenda-setting describes "one news source shapes what another news source will consider important" (p. 4) which will, in turn, be incorporated. Second, agenda-building describes how agendas for news are being built up and third, second-level agenda setting is pointed out as a variant.

Placing agenda setting theory and framing next to each other some researchers argue that both theories can be somehow related. This is because framing was defined as an element of

and developed from agenda setting theory (McCombs & Ghanem, 2001). Research also shows that, while a topic is discussed in the media, framing is being applied by selecting certain attributes related to the topic and relates framing to the second-level agenda setting (McCombs, 1997). Another argument to relate framing to agenda setting is that “there are many other agendas of attributes besides issues and traits of political candidates” (p. 143) and that more frames appear in different research (Weaver, 2007). However, framing is a larger construct than agenda setting theory and incorporates even more elements. Still, framing and agenda setting theory discuss how topics are portrayed in the media, with a focus on the most important elements of the topic and incorporate a line of thinking (Weaver, 2007).

2.2 Journalistic writing style

The journalistic writing style is a result of taking certain choices about which content to portray and is assembled by words or structures of articles (Jaakkola, 2018). The question occurs if the way an article is written might influence the perception of politicians during the 2020 American election. Taking, for instance, the 2016 American election, in which some false accusations about Hilary Clinton were published and were spread to the public by an American news channel (Murray, 2016), the great impact journalists have can be agreed upon. Additionally, how journalists write determines the extent to which people are pleased with articles and influences the enjoyment of news (Broersma, 2007). Both, the writing style and the content of articles are essential parts to assure readers that issues tackled are real and writing style can rather be learned by journalists than being a personal attribute (Broersma, 2007).

Certain writing styles can be distinguished. Broersma (2007) makes a distinction between a reflective writing style and a news-writing style. First, the reflective style, is more about viewpoints and analysing, and not only about providing information but also own interpretations. Journalists are mediators between the real world and readers by providing own perceptions of the reported events (Chalaby, 1996). The reflective style incorporates more personal notions of the journalist. Second, news style entails facts and information without any personal opinions. The news style brought new journalistic topics, i.e., importance of news value or objectivity (Høyer & Pöttker, 2005). Additionally, the news style is being distinguished into the information model and the story model. The information model includes quality papers and is discursive. Stories are presented in a serious manner (Neveu, 2017). The aim of newspapers using the model to create news articles is to get across

objective and neutral information. This style “does not reach for the hearts of their readers but tries to appeal to their minds” (Broersma, 2007, p. 17). The story model, on the other hand, includes more popular papers and is rather narrative. In addition, the writing style is more constructed around emotions, presents events in an exaggerated way to incorporate readers even more (Schudson, cited in Broersma, 2007) and rises events to an entertainment level (Neveu, 2017). In this paper, the story model is referred to as the storytelling model to make the concept more concise.

Furthermore, literature shows that certain news channels in different countries apply different journalistic writing styles. Henkel, Thurman and Deffner (2019) provided some knowledge about German and British newspapers. To start with, German news channels are more reflective while observing events and journalists incorporate more context-based content while acting in professional ways. German news’ content and writing style aim at supporting people to make choices for a candidate during elections. Resulting from this, a more informative writing style within German news channels while reporting about the 2020 American election is expected for the study at hand. Contradicting, British journalists position themselves morally and confront powerful parties as well as politicians more. Thus, journalists are rather active than passive. The authors also suggest that during elections, British news channels even state their favour for one party, claiming moral or political opinions. Based on these arguments, for British news channels, a storytelling style might be more likely being used than the informative style while reporting about the 2020 American election. However, the writing style also depends on the kind of newspaper one is perceiving because different news channels might portray different viewpoints (Marks, 2004; Turner, 2007). Some facts might also be portrayed differently depending on the news channel a person consults (Manjoo & Johnston, 2008). Therefore, news channels and types of newspapers will be carefully picked before analysing the content of this study.

To place the retrieved knowledge into the study at hand and as journalistic writing styles can have a big impact on how people perceive the news and articles, the variable acts as a control variable while analysing news media about the 2020 American election. Eventually, to detect which style can be distinguished between German and British news reporting. The researcher expects that the information model can be predominantly found in German news reporting while British news reporting applies more storytelling elements.

2.3 Framing

The media can be a highly influential source of information for people because people consume mass media more than ever by watching the news via television, reading news articles on mobile applications or listening to radio broadcasts. People's opinions can be shaped drastically by presenting certain ongoing and events in specific ways (De Vreese, 2005). A technique often used in this relation of events presented in the media is called framing. In explanation, framing incorporates a selection of elements of reality and puts more importance on them to, for instance, make objects stand out and increase the element's positive perception. Framing is assembled by the two elements salience and selection and also characterises problems, points out possible reasons why something happened and provides solutions (Entman, 1993). Additionally, frames distinguish one concept from other concepts and attract the attentions of people to specific details and away from other details (Gamson, cited in Hänggli & Kriesi, 2010). Gitlin (1980), stated that frames can be defined as cognitive patterns and presentations of emphasis, salience and exclusion through which discussions are being established. An example of exclusion would be that some relevant information would be held back from the public which might change people's perceptions about politicians. Furthermore, knowledge may be created as well as values being activated by using frames (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). News can even influence the focus and direction of the focus which presents the strong evolving nature and impact of the media (O'Malley, Brandenburg, Flynn, McMenemy & Rafter, 2012). A centric point of frames are processes in communication that involve the emerging of frames and relation between frames used in media and receptivity of people (De Vreese, 2005). Furthermore, framing is not always intentional but can also happen unintentionally (Strömbäck & Luengo, 2006). For instance, when a journalist unintentionally leaves out important information about one candidate during an election but without following the goal of improving the reputation of the contradictor but rather because the journalist missed a source of information. Consequently, slightly changing some elements of the presented issue or topic may lead to large attitudinal or perceptual changes of the audience (Zaller, 1992).

Certain stages of framing can be distinguished: (1) building a frame, (2) setting a frame and (3) consequences resulting from a frame for an individual person or the collective (D'Angelo, 2002). The first stage incorporates factors that influence how media frames are structured (De Vreese, 2005). Those factors can be either internal, for instance, how topics are framed by publishers or reporters (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996) or external, within the interplay of reporters and high society (Tuchman, 1978). Building a frame can be essential for having

further impacts on society. The second stage, setting the frame, describes how frames can influence people by tackling established knowledge (De Vreese, 2005). In addition, to ultimately find out when and how people review frames to influence people. After a frame was presented, people may form certain attitudes towards issues or make certain decisions on a social level, which is the last stage in the framing process.

Next to stages of framing, two tactics to identify frames within the news can be outlined. First, the inductive way in which frames appear while analysing the news can be determined (Neuman, Just & Crigler, 1992). With this tactic, no frames are formulated before but during the analysis and only vaguely predefined assumptions are formed (Gamson, 1992). Second, a deductive way of analysing entails that frames are clarified and engaged before the news analysis (De Vreese, 2005). Frames in the deductive approach can be categorized into issue-specific frames or generic frames (De Vreese, 2005). First, issue-specific frames consider information about a certain impending topic or issue (Kozman, 2017). In addition, the type of frame provides specific details (Kozman, 2017) while only focusing on one topic. Second, generic frames offer the ability to compare topics and frames (De Vreese, Peter & Semetko, 2001). Five frames have been outlined by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) as generic frames, namely “conflict”, “economic”, human interest”, “responsibility” and “morality”. According to the authors, the frames can be described as follows. The conflict frame points out conflicts between opposing parties while the economic frame is centred around financial consequences of countries or organisations. The economic frame is often used in crisis (An & Gower, 2009). The human interest frame is often used to dramatize a story and news articles with such applied frames are following the goal of entertaining rather than informing (Jebril, De Vreese, Van Dalen & Albaek, 2013). The morality frame discusses moral outcomes and social regulations. Lastly, the responsibility frame outlines topics in a way the reader understands the person responsible for an event or solving a problem. Some knowledge about frames needs to be established before applying issue-specific frames because, therewith, no important frames are missed out (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

Having established over the years as a technique, framing can be found in different fields of interest. Rising interest in framing has been found in sociology, political science and studies in the field of media (Hertog & McLeod, cited in Reese, Gandy & Grant, 2001). The three fields can also be determined as the largest fields to be studied where framing plays a role. Further fields in which framing plays a role are the environmental context, for instance, in the context of climate change. However, as the study is centred around a political election and belongs to the field of political science, a focus shall be laid on framing in the political

field. Frames need to be perceived as guidelines to present and comprehend news and media frames can be placed into political discussions (Kinder & Sanders, 1990). For instance, framing one political candidate as being more competent may change the perception of individual persons' preferences of a candidate (Bartels, 1988) or the likelihood of supporting certain parties (Joslyn, 1997). The political field is one of the most studied fields and research shows that applying frames in the political field has a large impact as perceptions about political topics and opinions about those can be changed (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). The five generic frames outlined before by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) were all found in Dutch media and, therewith, already applied to framing in the political field. The question appears if those frames might also be successful when applied in German and British news while reporting about an America election, to uncover reliability and applicability to other countries of the frames.

Four more specific framing types especially relevant in the political field can be pointed out (Schuck et al., 2013). First, the *conflict frame* can also be found in the list of generic frames by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) and overlaps with the frame. Therefore, shall be treated equally in this study. This frame, specifically in the political context, entails the presentation of conflicts about politics in the news (McManus, cited in Schuck et al., 2013). Hence, news about opposite politicians and specific conflicts are of high value (Price, 1989) because the concept is essential for decision-making of the public (Sartori, 1987) and part of general political argumentations (Lupia, McCubbins & Popkin, 2000). Presenting conflicts about meaningful and consequential topics can have positive effects on the motivation to vote whereas conflictual topics about certain politicians result in negative effects (Min, 2004). Second, the *strategy frame* can be pointed out as a way of mediating knowledge about strategically planned doings of politicians especially during campaigns (Schuck et al., 2013). A strategic frame is applied when news put attention to the way politicians describe specific topics and the way of the presentation. Additionally, emphasising doings of certain politicians to improve the public reputation and position (Schuck et al., 2013). Research also shows that strategy framing was already applied in news media during elections in Germany (Esser & Hemmer, 2008) or the UK (Scammell & Semetko, cited in Schuck et al., 2013). Third, *horse-race framing* can be pointed out as another framing strategy presenting the game played by politicians and the public reputation of politicians as well as their party (Schuck et al., 2013). Additionally, emphasising the win or loss within popular opinion votes. Lastly, *metacoverage* was defined as a last frame (Schuck et al., 2013). The frame outlines the cooperation of politicians and journalists and politicians using the news to

build an image and spread messages. Oller Alonso (2014) contributed that metacoverage describes opinions of journalists while, for instance, reporting about a campaign. The concept also defines individual roles of journalists in processes in politics and not only their reporting about topics and strategical doings (De Vreese & Elenbaas, 2008). Also, reports entailing metacoverage include information about campaigns, the role of the media and the role of political processes (Esser, 2008). The media can be determined as one of the most important parties during a campaign (Schuck et al., 2013).

The frames introduced before (Schuck et al., 2013; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000) shall be used as a theoretical background and be related to the case study. Some frames were found to be sufficiently used during studies about elections and serve the purpose of this study. First, for German news two specific frames are being expected to be used in news articles about the 2020 American election. Research shows that strategy framing has already been applied during elections in Germany (Esser & Hemmer, 2008) and was determined as a dominant frame (Semetko & Schoenbach, 2003). Based on a study conducted by Esser and D'Angelo (2006), it is expected that metacoverage framing is most dominantly applied in German news coverage about the American election. The authors found that metacoverage can be found to a large extent in German news about elections compared to British news. The two frames can also be connected to the journalistic writing style as described above. Hence, for German an information model is being expected to be found most dominantly because the frames entail elements to inform people about ongoings. Second, for British news articles also two main frames are being expected to be used in news coverage of the 2020 American election. The expectation that the strategic frame is applied is high. In explanation, research shows that during past elections the strategy frame was already applied (Scammell & Semetko, cited in Schuck et al., 2013; Strömbäck & Shehata, 2007). Moreover, as British journalists tend to favour one party (Henkel, Thurman & Deffner, 2019) this may lead to favourable perceptions of a politician (Schuck et al., 2013) presenting elements relating to strategy frames. Articles about a general British election somewhat applied the horse-race frame (Strömbäck & Shehata, 2007). Thus, horse-race framing is being expected to be found to a small amount in British news coverage. The two expected frames for British news can be placed into the storytelling model, a model used to describe journalistic writing style. This is because both frames are used to spread messages and tell stories so readers will read further articles of the journalist. Journalistic writing style and framing can also be connected in general. This is because framing is seen as a technique that incorporates the selection and emphasis of certain information while reporting about events. Building frames in the

journalistic field can be explained by journalists taking information from different sources and build news stories upon them (Scheufele, 1999).

Taking all arguments into account the following hypotheses have been formulated (see Table 1):

H1: Strategy framing and metacoverage can be dominantly found in German news articles while reporting about the 2020 American election.

H2: Strategy framing and horse-race framing can be dominantly found in British news articles while reporting about the 2020 American election.

Table 1

Expected Framing Type per Country

Country	Framing type
Germany	Strategy framing
	Metacoverage
United Kingdom	Strategy framing
	Horse-race framing

2.4 Tone of voice

Tone of voice describes how something is being presented in the news by writing a text applying a certain tone that influences how people perceive a story. Tone of voice also influences media framing by influencing people’s perceptions and responses while discussing an issue (Barcelos, Dantas & Sénécal, 2018). The concept can, additionally, be related to politics and media framing. Voice use of journalists is more based on interpretation, putting more emphasis on the significance of news rather than facts and information provided by interviewed people (Salgado & Strömbäck, 2012). This gives journalists more power over content and the way they present opinions and information as well as replacing “norms of objectivity (...) by journalists own judgements” (Cushion, 2018, p. 642). Contributing to this, partisan bias can be detected in news coverage during elections (Schiffer, 2006). In explanation, if a candidate gets a more positive evaluation and is being portrayed more

favourable than a contradictor during an election this is described as partisan bias. To relate this to the 2020 American election, if a journalist would write more favourable about Biden than Trump, the former one would be treated favourable rather than equal to his contradictor. Preferences and beliefs of journalists can also be noticed by analysing in how far sources of information are being presented, for instance, by presenting opinions of experts rather than politicians (Cunha, 2015). Additionally, four different types of tone of voice can be detected namely negative, positive, neutral and mixed-orientation (Kioussis, 2004). However, the mixed-orientation was left out in many past analyses as the other categories are more important and of more value (Huang, Peng, Li & Lee, 2013). Referring to the 2020 US election, a positive or negative tone of voice would be applied to the one party or the other, thus either towards Donald Trump or Joe Biden. A neutral tone of voice rather stresses out objective information. Lastly, a mixed tone of voice would entail negative as well as positive attitudes and information (Xiao, Hudders, Claeys & Cauberghe, 2018) towards both politicians.

Some notions can already be found in literature about which tone of voice can be found in which country and the use of partisan bias. As German media is more an information provider, presenting news backed up with facts (Henkel, Thurman & Deffner, 2019) it might be that a neutral tone of voice will be detected. A negative tone of voice was more often used in certain British newspaper articles while reporting about a certain topic (Vossen & Schulpen, 2019). The information model which can be detected as a journalistic writing style can be referred to while discussing tone of voice in German news. As British news is described as more offensive and challenging (Henkel, Thurman & Deffner, 2019) a negative tone might be applied. Additionally, the tone of voice in British newspapers can be connected to the storytelling model and journalistic writing style. Moreover, partisan bias is being expected to be found more dominantly in British news because of the following reasons. First, a study found that partisan bias was found in the general election of 2015 in England influencing peoples' judgments and perceptions (Walter & Van der Eijk, 2019). Aitken (2020) even refers to American politics by mentioning that a large British news channel applied partisan bias while covering news about Trump after being elected. Resulting from that the following hypothesis shall be answered by the study:

H3: Partisan bias can be more dominantly found in British news channels while reporting about the 2020 American election compared to German news channels.

2.5 Emotions

Before discussing the incorporation of emotions into the news reporting of elections, first, a short, introduction will be given about emotions. To start with, emotions have been categorized into responses towards emotions (Plutchik, 1980). For positive and negative emotions, high-arousal and low-arousal emotions can be determined (Valentino, Hutchings, Banks & Davis, 2008). For instance, positive emotions in the high-arousal cluster entail happiness and hope while negative emotions of low-arousal present fear and anger. One might perceive emotions and tone of voice as the same construct. In this paper, both shall be set apart from each other and treated as own standing attributes, to present in-depth knowledge about how emotions are being applied while reporting about elections.

In the political field, emotions play a large role due to the ability to quickly evaluate circumstances in today's world and the ability to encode past experiences with historical developments (Marcus, 2000). It was even found that researchers more often include emotions in a research paper showing how current and present the construct is. Searles and Ridout (2017), claimed that emotions are central attributes to make people participate in politics, leading to the formation of opinions (Brader, 2006) and tolerance for politics (Small, Lerner & Fischhoff, 2006). The election of 2016 in America was accompanied by fear, anxiety or anger as irrational emotional attempts were made by journalists (Searles & Ridout, 2017). Additionally, it was found that political messages entailing a negative notion end in better emotional responses of audiences (Lang 1991). Next to negative emotions, positive emotions may play a role in responses about elections. Enthusiasm was found to increase consciousness and seeking information (Marcus, Neuman & MacKuen, 2000).

To connect emotions to the journalistic context, literature suggests that emotions are, nowadays, a central point of creating news by organisations and absorbed by people (Beckett & Deuze, 2016). The concept has changes the conceptualization of journalism and news itself, as objectivity is being decreased while emotions increase in importance. However, claims have been made which state that news reports have always been emotional but that in today's world different styles of using emotions appear making the concept a more important one (Peters, 2011). Research found that people are more likely to keep in mind information and more engaged when emotions are being focused on (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020).

Beckett and Deuze (2016), provided three reasons why more emotional appeals are being used in the news. First, the economic reason, states that more competitors are available and that emotions can be a good element to raise attention and make people engage with

newspapers. Second, the technological reason entails that news needs to be spread over several networks incorporating technology to match the “readers’ sense of personal identity, ideologies, and behaviours” (p. 3) to eventually increase exchanges. Third, behaviour is given as a reason because emotions appear more than facts to people and with emotions, it can be analysed how people might behave before news can be provided to them.

As already mentioned, German news reports are more rational in reporting events and are more supportive to people to form opinions (Henkel, Thurman & Deffner, 2019). It is expected that fewer emotional attempts are being made while reporting about the 2020 American election by using more objective wording without emotional meaning. This, again, refers to the information model. Second, as British journalists have been found to sometimes taking moral positions (Henkel, Thurman & Deffner, 2019) and dramatizing news about political contents (Graber, 1994), a more emotional way of reporting is expected in the case of the 2020 American election while British journalists report about the event in news articles. This can also be related to the storytelling model.

The following hypothesis shall serve as the last one to be answered by the study:

H4: British news channels use emotions in articles about the 2020 American election more dominantly than German news channels.

2.6 Conceptualizing the research

Table 2 presents an overview of the constructs incorporated in this study based on relevant pre-reviewed literature which was outlined in the theoretical framework. The visualization serves as an overview of expected results while analysing German and British news in the portrayal of the 2020 American election.

Table 2

Overview of Constructs

Country	Journalistic writing style	Framing	Tone of voice: Partisan bias	Emotions
Germany	Information model	Strategy framing Metacoverage	Less partisan biased	Less emotional
United Kingdom	Story telling model	Strategy framing Horse-race framing	More partisan biased	More emotional

3. Methods

3.1 Design and Instruments

To answer the research question, a qualitative research design was chosen for the study. The qualitative attempt was made because the method is mostly applied when analysing media. In this study, newspaper contents in the media were analysed to study which factors influenced the portrayal of the American election, which was analysed qualitatively. A content analysis was applied to the case to conclude about two German news channels and two British news channels and the attempts made about pre-defined dependent variables. In addition, inferences were made on differences in German and British news coverage about the election. Using a content analysis for the research question was the most sufficient model of analysis. A content analysis is effective because the method is often used to analyse qualitative data like newspaper articles (Elo et al., 2014) and is one well-established method in the field of social science (Krippendorff, 2018). A deductive coding process was applied in the present study and codes were formulated before analysis (Elo et al., 2014). A range of 280 articles was included in the analysis while 19 codes retrieved from the concepts of framing, journalistic writing style, tone of voice, partisan bias and emotions were applied.

3.2 Corpus

Several criteria for news articles to be included in the study were pre-defined to establish a relevant corpus. Firstly, the focus lay on two newspapers of Germany and two newspapers of the UK. First, the Sueddeutsche Zeitung was included in the study because the newspaper is one of the most read newspapers in Germany and therefore affects many people. With the reach the newspaper has, a lot of information is spread about American elections making it important to incorporate in this study. The newspaper is also positioned as center-left, portraying justice and opportunities for everyone involved and the responsibility of certain parties (Woshinsky, 2008). Second, the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung was included, because it positions itself as strong about topics and applies a unique, independent journalistic writing style while holding liberal-conservative political alignment. This unique writing style sets the newspaper apart from the other included newspapers, making it interesting to analyse. For British news media, The Independent was chosen, holding a liberal position, but leaning towards the left. The Independent can be seen as the British counterpart of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, because both newspapers hold liberal political positions. Resulting from

this relation, the newspaper is worth analysing in this study. Being a competitor, second, the newspaper The Guardian was selected as it holds a center-left position and is a well-known news channel. Because of the positions, it can be somehow analysed as a British counterpart of the German newspaper Sueddeutsche Zeitung. Also, as the newspaper is one of the biggest in the UK, the news reporting may influence people's perceptions about American elections and, therefore, interesting to analyse. In conclusion, the two German newspapers can be each related to one of the British newspapers while the two German and two British newspapers can also be set apart from each other in the own country, because of the political positions. This constellation makes incorporating the four chosen newspapers interesting.

Second, news articles were retrieved focusing only on the 2020 American election to not include invalid data. News articles in the period between August 2020 and January 20, 2021 were included. August 2020 was chosen as a starting point, because in that month, the presidential candidates Trump and Biden were officially determined. The period ended with the 20 January 2021, which was the inauguration ceremony of Biden as the new president. Only written texts were included in the analysis, excluding video materials, social media content, and articles containing TV interviews. Topic-specific keywords like "2020 American election" and "2020 US election" for British news articles and "Amerikanische Wahl 2020" or "US Wahl 2020" for German news articles were used to select the articles from the database NexisUni. To largen the scope, other keywords including the names of presidential candidates ("Trump" and "Biden"), other important persons (i.e., "Kamila Harris") and events concerning the election (i.e., "election polls") were also incorporated to filter out even more articles about the election. Originally an amount of 80 articles per newspaper were included into the corpus. Of these 320 articles, a final corpus of 280 articles was formed by filtering out articles from another source that was found irrelevant and not matched the chosen newspapers. Eventually, 70 articles per newspaper were included in the study and were retrieved from the four mentioned news outlets (see Table 3).

Table 3

Corpus

Country	News channel	Number of articles
Germany	Frankfurter Allgemeine	70
	Sueddeutsche Zeitung	70
United Kingdom	The Independent	70
	The Guardian	70

3.3 Codebook

Before analysing the corpus, a codebook was created. The codebook (see Table 4) entails variables based on literature, codes, description of the code and examples retrieved from news articles. Additionally, all codes have been related to the research question formulated before. Eventually, five coding categories can be found in the codebook, including 19 individual codes. The researcher coded the articles manually by using the program Atlas.ti 9. Ngalande and Mkwinda (2014) state that Atlas.ti guides users by creating certain codes leading to time efficiency and data management making the program suitable in the context at hand.

Table 4

Codebook

Variable	Code	Description	Example
Frame (Schuck et al., 2013; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000)	(1) Conflict	Points out conflicts between opposing parties	<i>“(…) claimed his doubts during an interview about the final decision about Biden’s real success against the incumbent Donald Trump”</i>

Frame (Schuck et al., 2013)	(2) Strategy	Present information about strategic behaviour of candidates to win an election	<i>“The visit should not only being dedicated to the world war commemorate but had also the purpose of diplomatic businesses”</i>
	(3) Horse-race	Present information about who wins/loses in opinion polls or surveys	<i>“If Biden maintains his lead in Georgia, his final electoral vote count will be 306”</i>
	(4) Metacoverage	Presenting information about political processes, the role of the media or opinions of individual journalists; use of informative quotes	<i>“Joe Biden also said that he wouldn’t “use the Justice Department as my vehicle” to investigate Donald Trump and his allies.”</i>
	(5) Economic	Presenting financial consequences resulting from elections	<i>”If the resident of the white house changes the economic stimulus program might even be stopped by the senate”</i>
Frame (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000)	(6) Human interest	Dramatizing a story to entertain readers and using personal tone, use of emotional quotes	<i>“Discuss the shared sacrifices Americans are making this holiday season and say that we can and will get through the current crisis together”</i>
	(7) Responsibility	Presenting a story so that reader understand person responsible for	<i>“Joe Biden introduced his new foreign policy and intelligence cabinet”</i>

event or solve a problem

(8)
Morality

Discussion of moral outcomes, social regulations in moral context; referring to good or bad behaviour/outcomes of election

“Donald Trump 's team has alleged fraud in various battleground states, without producing any evidence to back up those claims.”

Journalistic writing style (Broersma, 2007)	(9) Information model	Inform audience rationally, context-based reporting, including facts or quotes of experts	<i>“Biden wins US election”</i>
	(10) Storytelling model	Telling a story to create exciting experience and being emotional appealing.	<i>“Kamela Harris shared a video of her phone call with Joe Biden shortly after they were declared the winners of the US presidential election”</i>
Tone of voice (Kiouisis, 2004)	(11) Neutral	Neutral words, phrases and underlying attributes regarding the 2020 American election	<i>“What makes the 2020 election unique is the fact that, because of the corona pandemic, many votes are given in advance and via letter”</i>

	(12)	Negative words, phrases and underlying attributes regarding the 2020 American election	<i>“Trump thanked healthcare workers and celebrated vaccine development advances, but did not offer condolences for the families of the quarter-million who’ve died of the coronavirus”</i>
	(13)	Positive words, phrases and underlying attributes regarding the 2020 American election	<i>“Wistful Democrats remember when this state used to be in play in presidential elections, and over the course of 2020 some of those old sparks have begun once again to glow.”</i>
Partisan bias	(14)	Portraying one politician more favourable than another politician	<i>“The American people have replaced a real estate developer and reality TV star who had no political experience with a veteran of Washington who has spent more than 50 years in public life”</i>
	(15)	Not portraying one politician more favourable than another politician	<i>“The situations in which both men appear are closer than the outcomes”</i>

Emotions (Valentino, Hutchings, Banks & Davis, 2008; Plutchik, 1980)	(16) Fear	Reporting about events using words and phrases presenting underlying fear	<i>“As Biden lead in early voting - Ohio has weeks to process early ballots and is expected to report them promptly - could succumb to a Trump surge, and then everyone could end up staring at Cleveland, whose slowly reported votes could make the race look tighter and tighter”</i>
	(17) Anger	Reporting about events using words and phrases presenting underlying anger	<i>“But the word loosing seems to not appear in Trumps active vocabulary“</i>
	(18) Hope	Reporting about events using words and phrases presenting underlying hope	<i>“All eyes are on the Democrats and the candidate they will nominate to take on Trump”</i>
	(19) Happiness	Reporting about events using words and phrases presenting underlying happiness	<i>”The reactions in Berlin about the results of the election were full of happiness for Bidens victory“</i>

The first coding category *Frames* contains eight subcodes. Based on the study by Schuck et al. (2013) subcodes (1) conflict, (2) strategy, (3) horse-race and (4) metacoverage were formed as those frames were found to be applied in the political field and the German and British news in past research. Additionally, (5) economic, (6) human interest, (7)

responsibility and (8) morality were incorporated codes based on the study by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) about general, generic frames. The two frameworks of the two separate studies were combined in this study, as both were successfully applied in past studies and were not placed together in a study. Placing them together will create more knowledge about the compatibility of the two frameworks. Framing was coded per paragraph.

The second coding category *Journalistic writing style* holds two codes: (9) information model and (10) storytelling model. The codes supported analysing how and which journalistic writing styles were applied in the reporting about the 2020 American election in German and British news. Thus, to present possible differences of the appliance in different countries. As writing style was distinguished between news in different countries and not in news articles in one country, the codes were applied once per news article.

The third coding category *Tone of Voice* holds three codes and contributed to the question of what tone of voice has been used in German versus British news articles while reporting about the 2020 American election. Therefore, the three codes (11) neutral, (12) negative and (13) positive were based on Kioussis (2004). The codes were assigned to paragraphs in the articles. To determine if an article was more neutral, negative or positive, coded paragraphs were compared and the code that appeared most frequently determined the tone of voice of the whole article.

Partisan bias was determined as another category and was based on studies conducted by Walter and Van der Eijk (2019) and Aitken (2020). The code was assigned once per article as words, phrases or text sections might imply that one candidate was portrayed more favourable than the contradictor but might also be presented indirectly. The distinction was made between presence or absence of partisan bias, resulting in the following codes: (14) yes and (15) no.

The coding category *Emotions* entailed four codes to find out how much emotional reporting about the 2020 American election was found in the media of the two countries. Both, negative and positive emotions were focused on in the analysis. The sub-codes (16) fear and (17) anger were chosen as two negative emotions. For both sub-codes, a specific description presented that the codes to be applied needed to be referred to text sections entailing words and phrases presenting underlying fear or anger towards an event. The sub-codes (18) hope and (19) happiness were chosen as two positive emotions and were applied to text sections entailing words and phrases presenting underlying hope or happiness. All codes, if applicable, were used to code paragraphs of articles.

3.4 Analysis

Before the codes were applied to the entire corpus, the reliability of the codebook was tested. Therefore, intercoder reliability was assessed and approved. Intercoder reliability needed to be ensured to justify that the codes were reliable and valid to analyse a corpus. Therefore, ten percent of the corpus were coded by a second coder. By doing so the same codebook was used while the second coder coded parts of the corpus which were also coded by the main researcher. Afterwards, Cohen's Kappa was calculated for each category, resulting in five different values. By calculating a Cohen's Kappa, the reliability of the used method of analyse can be ensured (Blackman & Koval, 2000). The value needs to be at least 0.6 to be sufficient. All codes have achieved a sufficient Cohen's Kappa which verifies the reliability of the coding procedure and the validity of the codebook (see Table 5). Journalistic writing style, tone of voice and partisan bias were even assigned with a perfect value. Emotions got the lowest value, however, is still in the significance range as well as framing. An elaborative overview of Cohen's Kappa per code can be retrieved from Appendix A.

Table 5

Intercoder Reliability

Category	Number of codes	Cohen's Kappa
Journalistic writing style	2	1.00
Framing	8	0.69
Tone of Voice	3	1.00
Partisan bias	2	1.00
Emotions	4	0.60

4. Results

The frequencies of applied codes can be reported to determine which variables were most frequently found in German or British news articles while reporting about the 2020 American election. First, general findings about journalistic writing style will be outlined. Second, findings about framing will be presented, followed by results of used tone of voice. Fourth, results of partisan bias as well as fifth, emotional appeals will be outlined. An overview of the hypotheses will conclude the results part.

4.1 Journalistic writing style

The journalistic writing style was only coded based on the whole article. Comparing the journalistic writing style in the reporting of the 2020 American election in German and British news, some results can be presented (see Table 6). First, for German news the information model (n=85) was predominantly applied. This was also the case in British news, however, with a slightly lower frequency (n=72). The code was applied to articles that included facts or quotes of politicians, experts like political scientists and reported about processes in the election to rationally inform the reader. For example, quite a number of articles presented the number of votes each candidate got. These were written based on the information model.

Furthermore, results show that both German and British news applied the storytelling model to an almost equal amount: For German news the frequency was 58 and for British news 65. This model was applied to articles that were written to entertain readers and be emotionally appealing. For example, some articles included information about the bad discussion skills of Trump during a speech or negative Twitter entries of him presenting his opinions about Biden. This was done by presenting background information not important in the election but more about the candidates themselves, while writing it more as a story than a newspaper report. These articles were written based on the storytelling model.

In conclusion, the information model was applied more frequently than the storytelling model in both countries, holding a slightly higher number in German news while reporting about the election. It appears that, in the case of the 2020 American election, journalists from Germany and Britain focused more on informing readers about processes of the election in America and the outcome, than entertaining readers and engage them emotionally. This also means, that the assumption made before by the researcher, that German and British news apply different journalistic writing styles, can be rejected.

Additionally, the frequency of the information model and the storytelling model was almost equally distributed among the four newspapers incorporated in this study. In this research, the journalistic writing style was incorporated as a control variable to detect which writing styles can be found in both countries to observe similarities or differences. Additionally, to make assumptions about the influence the journalistic writing style has in German and British news while reporting about the election and to discover how different newspapers reported the election. The information model was applied to the same amount in The Guardian and The Independent (n=36). The British newspapers only differed slightly in these frequencies with the Sueddeutsche Zeitung (n=40) and the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (n=45). The storytelling model was coded to almost an equal amount for the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (n=28) and the Sueddeutsche Zeitung (n=30). In the Independent, the code was only observed two times more (n=32) and in The Guardian only one time more (n=33).

Table 6

Frequencies of Journalistic Writing Style

Journalistic writing styles	German news	British news
(9) Information model	85	72
(10) Storytelling model	58	65
Totals	143	137

4.2 Framing

Various frames were found in German and British news while reporting about the 2020 American election (see Table 7). In general, framing was 1607 times used in German news compared to 2024 times in British news in the selected articles reporting about the 2020 American election. An explanation for this finding is, that British articles were on average longer. For German news, the metacoverage frame (n=889) was found to be most frequently used compared to other frames. This was also observed in British news with an even larger frequency (n=1059). Also, the frequency of the human interest frame was high in German news (n=489) reporting about the 2020 American election, however, in British news the frequency was even higher (n=816). Furthermore, the horse-race frame was more often applied in British news (n=77) compared to German news (n=36) while reporting about the

election. In German news also the conflict frame was detected with a higher frequency (n=69) compared to British news (n=23) in which the conflict frame was only observed by half of the frequency of German news. Additionally, the frequency of the economic frame in German news (n=47) was also larger compared to the British counterpart (n=9). A similar case was found for the responsibility frame which was more frequently observed in German news (n=42) while reporting about the election compared to British news (n=18). The strategy and morality frames were rather less frequently used in both countries, however, in German news strategy framing was used more frequently (n=27) than in British news (n=11). In conclusion, the pattern of frames applied in both countries is similarly balanced.

Table 7

Frequencies of Frames

Frames	German news	British news
(1) conflict	69	23
(2) strategy	27	11
(3) horse-race	36	77
(4) metacoverage	889	1059
(5) economic	47	9
(6) human interest	489	816
(7) responsibility	42	18
(8) morality	9	12
Totals	1608	2136

With regards to the first hypothesis assuming that the strategy frame and metacoverage can dominantly be found in German news articles about the 2020 American election, the hypothesis can only partly be supported. In explanation, metacoverage was dominantly observed in German news while reporting about the election. However, strategy framing was less frequently applied than expected and was not observed as one of the most frequently used frames in German news. The hypothesis would be supported if instead of strategy framing the human interest frame would have been outlined. Moreover, considering the second hypothesis stating that the strategy frame and horse-race frame were dominantly found in British news while reporting about the 2020 American election, the hypothesis can be rejected. This is because neither of the two frames was applied most frequently in British news articles.

Next to the quantitative results, some aspects regarding qualitative content of the frames can be pointed out. Comparing German and British news while portraying the election, similar attempts about how information was framed can be detected. Specifically, metacoverage and human interest were identified as the most dominant frames applied in both countries. Therefore, first, paragraphs or statements coded as metacoverage mostly contained information about political processes during the election or proposed consequences after one of the candidates was elected. In addition, opinions of individual journalists and quotes of experts or other politicians informing about, for instance, politician events were framed with metacoverage. Information was often framed in a way that people understood processes important for the 2020 American election, i.e., the procedure of the election or how Biden took the presidential position. Also, experts like political scientists, law professors and senators involved in the election were referred to. Quotes of those experts were placed in the articles containing explanations why certain behaviours of candidates occurred, perceptions of Trump and Biden or some predictions for the future of American depending on which candidate wins the election. For instance, one journalist wrote: “Michael McDonald, a professor at the University of Florida and the man behind the United States Election Project, has projected that a record-breaking 150 million people will vote in 2020's elections.” (The Independent, Article 169).

Second, statements coded with the human interest frame, entailed emotional quotes and personal tone to dramatize events which appeared during the election. Also, paragraphs containing the human interest frame contained information that was aimed at entertaining readers by, for instance, exaggerations or metaphors to portray the democratic values of America. One example of an exaggeration is the following sentence: “America will remain the lighthouse of democracy in the world” (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Article 13). Information was often framed by presenting stories of the lives of people after Trump won the previous election in 2016 or how the decision of voting for him in that election impacted the lives of those people. During data analysis it was observed that especially people with less income and living in poorer areas voted for Trump. A quote in an article about one person underlines the argument: “As a lifelong Republican I was willing to give him a chance and was hoping he would be humbled by the position, but that didn't happen [...]” (The Guardian, Article 331). Information was also framed by dramatizing events or topics listing negative outcomes of decision made by the presidential candidates or other people involved in the election, like Kamala Harris. Additionally, listing positive achievements planned by Trump or Biden so that US citizens got rewarded after electing one of the candidates.

However, some differences in framing were detected between German and British news while portraying the 2020 American election. First, German news framed information by presenting text sections about conflicts between opposing parties. Hence, the conflict frame was applied almost as twice as in British news. Conflicts between Trump and Biden were mostly being presented. Specifically, information was portrayed about the two politicians accusing each other of negative consequences of made decisions, like blocking the Covid-19 financial support package or the refusal of Trump to leave the office. Also, information was presented portraying the conflict of Trump and his own Republican party or the conflict between the Democrats and Republicans. Furthermore, in British news information was framed by horse race framing in a way that people understood who won or lost in opinion polls or surveys about the 2020 American election. A specific focus was laid on voting rates during the election that presented how many people voted for either Trump or Biden. The figures were accompanied by listing the states in which the votes were counted. Nevertheless, also some comparisons were drawn by journalists or experts referred to in the articles between the expected outcomes and the actual outcomes of the election. For instance, in one article it was stated, underlying this observation: “This time, it appears Mr Trump is having a tougher challenge from Joe Biden. An average of polls collated by RealClearPolitics gives the Democrat a lead of 6.5 points.” (The Independent, Article 180).

4.3 Tone of voice

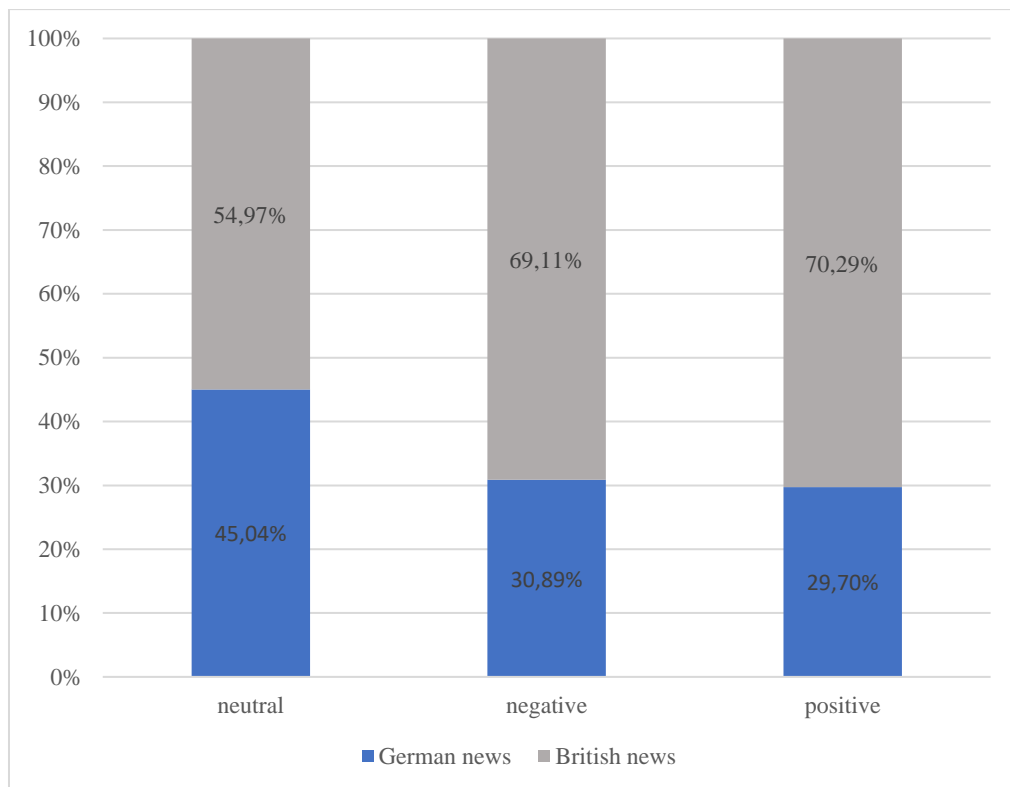
Besides framing, the study at hand focuses on how different statements were made about the 2020 American election in German and British news. Therefore, the distinction between neutral, negative and positive tone of voice was made (see Figure 1). Tone of voice was coded per paragraph. Findings suggest that tone of voice was more often coded for British articles (n=1978) than for German articles (n= 1389) which may have resulted from the length of articles that were on average longer in British newspapers. Results show that neutral tone of voice was, in general, most frequently observed (n= 2476) while negative (n=790) and positive tone of voice (n=101) were used less often.

In British news, the neutral tone of voice was used more frequently (n=54,97%) compared to German news (n=45,04%). The analysis also shows that the figure of negative tone of voice in British news (n=69,11%) was also higher compared to German news (n=30,89). Lastly, positive tone of voice in British news (n=70,29%) was found to be used more often compared German news (n=29,70%). In conclusion, neutral tone of voice was

applied most frequent among both countries which means that a similar pattern can be found in the usage of tone of voice in German and British news while reporting about the 2020 American election.

Figure 1

Frequencies of Tone of Voice



The tone of voice of articles was determined by neutral, negative or positive types of words and phrases and the underlying attitudes towards the election or candidates. Negative tone of voice was mostly applied by journalists in Germany and Britain while either reporting about Donald Trump or the outcomes of his decisions or his character. For instance, German news articles reported about who will pay for the Mexican border, which Trump planned to build or that Trump decided to resign from the World Health Organisation. In British news, discussions were made about the involvement of Trump in the storming of the capitol or that Trump did not accept the loss of the presidential position. Results also show that specifically in German news articles Trump was portrayed as acting unqualified as a president. A lot of statements were made that ridiculed Trump's plans which he, eventually, did not achieve. In British news, also the problems Biden must cope with when acting as president were discussed, for instance, handling the pandemic. In addition, expert's opinions and opinions of individual voters were incorporated in British news reporting while using negative statements

or words. Negative tone of voice was also found in the portrayal of relations between Germany or Europe and America, in both German and British news. However, in some articles also relations of America and countries like Iran or Russia were portrayed, presenting negotiations of politicians in a negative light.

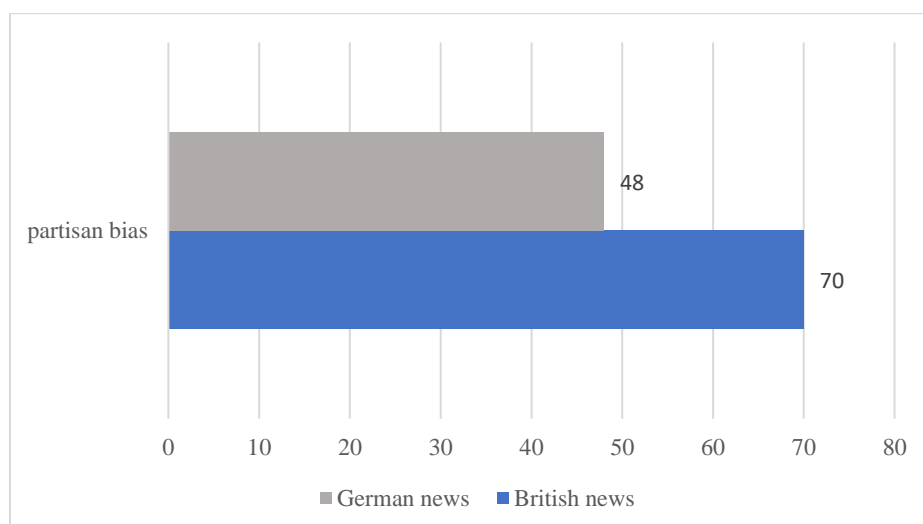
Lastly, positive tone of voice was mostly found in British news, quoting Biden, Kamala Harris or presenting reactions of international politicians about the result of the 2020 American election. In German news, positive tone of voice was used to present that Biden won the election and Trump left the office. In conclusion, positive tone of voice was often applied while reporting about Bidens victory or while reporting about statements made by him.

4.4 Partisan bias

Portraying a person more favourable than another or not was detected by observing the frequency of partisan bias in articles about the 2020 American election in German and British news (see Figure 2). Partisan bias was only coded once per article. Results show that in British news more partisan bias (n=70) was observed than in German news (n=48). The results have consequences for the third hypothesis, stating that more partisan bias can be found in British news compared to German news. In conclusions, the hypothesis is supported, because partisan bias was more frequently found in British news compared to German news while reporting about the election.

Figure 2

Frequencies Partisan bias



While analysing the data it appeared that specifically Donald Trump was presented as less favourable compared to Joe Biden. Articles in both countries portrayed Trump using negative statements making him appear less favourable for readers of the articles. For instance, this was done by presenting evaluations of bad management of crisis situations or conflicts with other parties by Trump. Furthermore, some articles clearly stated that Biden would handle the presidential position more qualified and better than Trump. In general, while reporting about Joe Biden, more positive and encouraging statements were presented by journalists. For instance, Biden's general, professional appearance was rated positive as well as his political ambitions: "Should the democrat Biden be elected, he should try to counteract the internal division and to place the unifying over the dividing. That is not to expected from Trump" (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Article 24). However, some of the analysed articles did not apply partisan bias. Those articles oftentimes compared both politicians and stated that Trump and Biden's qualities can be equally rated. The following quote retrieved from the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung is one example for this: "Biden and his left-wing Democrats are just as protectionist as Trump" (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Article 380).

4.5 Emotions

Lastly, the use of emotions in news reporting about the 2020 American election were analysed (see Table 8). Emotions were coded per paragraph. In general, the frequencies of emotions were rather low in both countries but for British news the frequency of emotions was slightly higher (n=206,96%) than in German news (n=193,05%), after all percentages of applied emotions in each countries' news articles were added up. Despite previous expectations of the study, the results show that almost no difference can be found in the incorporation of emotions while portraying the election in German and British news.

For Germany, the most frequently used emotion was anger (n=59,77%). In the news articles, anger was observed to be oftentimes used while presenting information about Trump. For instance, one article states: "None of the allegations, accusations and conspiracy whispers that Trump [...] has any significant relation to reality" (SZ, Article 142). Predominantly German news presented information using anger and, while analysing the data, some German news articles included almost hateful statements about Trump. In British news, anger was found less frequent (n=40,23%) compared to German news. Angry sections in the British articles mostly contained opinions of people involved in the election or experts. In both countries, anger was also portrayed by opinions of the journalist writing the article or of

experts or people involved in the election and were quoted in articles. Additionally, the contradictors Biden and Trump were referred to while angry quotes of them were presented which oftentimes entailed negative accusations about the other politician.

Moreover, fear was applied while portraying the 2020 American election. In British news, fear was observed more often (n=58,73%) than in German news (n=41,26%). In German news, fear was portrayed, for example, by providing information about bad relations of America and Europe or the dangerous accusation of Trump that fraud appeared while counting the votes. In British news, also violence played a role. One example for that is the following statement: “[...] I’m concerned that people will show up who have a right to carry a gun, and will be out there [...]” (The Independent, Article 180). In addition, a more general view of who wins the election and what consequences that might have for the country were presented in British news.

Next to negative emotions also positive emotions were researched concerning the news portrayal of the election. For British news, hope was found more frequently (n=60,38%) than in German news (n=39,63%). Parts showing underlying hope were found in German and British news, mostly focusing on the voting outcome and that Biden might change American politics. For instance, by outlining statements of Biden after winning the election that presents that the politician aims at reuniting America and not drive it further apart. Also, some insights from outside the USA were presented, showing opinions of other world leaders like Germany.

Lastly, happiness was found to be presented by statements in newspaper articles, however, only to a small extend. Happiness was used more frequent in German news (n=52,39%) compared to British news (n=47,62%). Text sections assigned with happiness in German as well as British news either presented quotes of involved parties, like Biden or national leaders like Angela Merkel. Or indirectly by presenting information about positive ongoings in the political field, i.e., strong allies between America and other countries. Text sections including or portraying relief of parties also were marked with happiness or opinions of journalists. One example to clarify this: “The majority of the American voters has voted for a decent man, who beliefs in our democratic system, in science and in American allies like Germany” (FAZ, Article 397).

Table 8

Frequencies of Emotions

Emotions	German news	British news
(16) fear	41.26%	58.73%
(17) anger	59.77%	40.23%
(18) hope	39.63%	60.38%
(19) happiness	52.39%	47.62%
Totals	193,05%	206,96%

4.6 Overview of hypotheses

After portraying all results and making assumptions about outcomes relevant for the hypotheses, Table 9 provides an overview of the proposed hypotheses of the study at hand and indicates if the hypotheses are supported or can be rejected.

Table 9

Significance of Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Results
H1: Strategy framing and metacoverage can be dominantly found in German news articles while reporting about the 2020 American election.	Rejected
H2: Strategy framing and horse-race framing can be dominantly found in British news articles while reporting about the 2020 American election.	Rejected
H3: Partisan bias can be more dominantly found in British news channels while reporting about the 2020 American election compared to German news channels.	Supported
H4: British news channels use emotions in articles about the 2020 American election more dominantly than German news channels.	Supported

5. Discussion

5.1 Main findings

The aim of this study was to analyse how the 2020 American election was presented in German news and British news and what differences can be detected of the portrayal. Therefore, the research question “*How did German and British news channels portray the 2020 American election?*” was created. Four different newspapers were analysed by a media analysis. Based on literature it was expected that differences would occur between German and British news while reporting about the election because both countries differ in their journalism models and in providing information (Esser & Umbricht, 2013; Thurman, Cornia & Kunert, 2016).

After analysing the data, the uniqueness of the 2020 American election was pointed out in the German and British media. Many articles informed about Trumps’ efforts to doubt the accuracy and reliability of the postal voting. Additionally, the violent actions, like storming the capitol by Trump followers, were reported about in the media. As the level of misinformation provided by Internet companies like Facebook was higher than in other elections, German and British media seemed to counteract the fake news by portraying correct information about the election in a neutral and non-perceptive way.

The main finding of this study is that newspaper articles in Germany and Britain portray similar and almost identical patterns while reporting about the 2020 American election. This finding does not match the assumptions formulated beforehand and a detailed discussion is needed to clarify the discrepancies of the study.

Referring, first, to the journalistic writing style it was expected that, for German news, the information model would be observed while for British news the storytelling model would be detected (Henkel, Thurman & Deffner, 2019). Previous research suggests that in German news more context-based content is presented and journalists take the role of an observer. For British news, research suggests that journalists are more confrontative while reporting about elections or claim own political opinions. Findings of the study at hand, however, show that this was not the case for the British reporting about the 2020 American election and that the information model and not the storytelling model was found in British news articles. First, this discrepancy might be partly explained by the perception journalists have about their own ethical values and role in society which can influence the writing style (Dornsbach, 1983). It was found that British journalists value the information based reporting. This might explain

why an information model rather than the storytelling model in British news articles was detected. Second, in literature contradicting suggestions can be found about the writing style applied in German and British news, depending on the elections reported about (Henkel, Thurman & Deffner, 2019). On the one hand, findings showed that the writing style in Britain is neutral and passive and that German journalists report in an interpretative way (Donsbach & Patterson, 2004). On the other hand, however, findings show that the applied writing style was exactly the opposite, making British journalists more confrontative than German journalists (Esser, Reineman & Fan, 2000). These different findings might explain why the results of this study did not match expectations formulated before. Furthermore, it might be the case that instead of the countries influencing the journalistic writing style, the type of news outlets was more relevant in this study. This contradicts findings of a study conducted by Manjoo and Johnston (2008), who stated that, depending on the newspaper, information can be portrayed differently. But, as all four newspapers are categorized as quality press rather than following a tabloid style, including and presenting stories to entertain readers (i.e., De Vreese & Elenbaas, 2008) this might also explain the occurrence of similar journalistic writing styles in both media while reporting about the 2020 American election.

To answer the first hypothesis “*Strategy framing and metacoverage can be dominantly found in German news articles while reporting about the 2020 American election*” and the second hypothesis “*Strategy framing and horse-race framing can be dominantly found in British news articles while reporting about the 2020 American election*” both hypotheses can be rejected. The results contradict previous research (Vliegenthart et al., 2010) as this study shows that metacoverage and human interest framing were found predominantly in German and British news while reporting about the 2020 American election. First, metacoverage (based on Schuck et al., 2013) was already applied in the context of elections in German news (Esser & D’Angelo, 2006). In line with observations of this study, metacoverage occurred in the portrayal of the 2020 American election while framing the event in German news. However, for British news this notion was not expected but might be explained by the fact that the metacoverage frame entailed information in articles about the role of the media or political processes (Esser, 2008). And as the analysed British news articles included a rather informative writing, this might be an explanation for the finding. Second, the human interest frame (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000) was found in the newspaper The Guardian more dominantly when compared to tabloid newspapers like The Sun (Jebril, De Vreese, Van Dalen & Albaek, 2013). This finding might partly explain why the human interest frame was found in British news articles about the election as The Guardian was part of the analysed

newspapers. Additionally, the human interest frame was found to be used very often by journalists (Hendriks Vettehen, Beentjes, Nuijten & Petters, 2011) and was also found to be “one of the most commonly used generic news frames” (De Vreese, p.4, cited in Boukes, 2013). Moreover, most past studies focused on national rather than cross-national comparison of reporting about elections (i.e., Esser & Hemmer, 2008; Hänggli & Kriesi, 2010). Unlike this study, which incorporated two countries reporting about the same election, the frames might differ because of different perspectives that were taken depending on the countries incorporated in studies. In general, only little information can be retrieved from literature about metacoverage and human interest framing, being found to be the predominant frames while reporting about an election. A last explanation might be the fact that both frames were not placed together in a study about elections before. The frames were based on two studies conducted by different researchers and combined in the study at hand (Schuck et al., 2013; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

Second, both, strategy framing and horse race framing were expected to be found predominantly in analysed articles which was not the case in this study. One reason for that outcome might be that the frames were mostly found in the tabloid press rather than quality press (Jackson, 2011; Norris 2000). The strategy frame was also mostly applied in studies when reporting about national elections (Rinke, Wessler, Löb & Weinmann, 2013) rather than reporting about elections of other countries (Kaid & Strömbäck, 2008). When information is framed in a strategic way the information can be presented to enhance the reputation and position of a politician in the public eye (Schuck et al., 2013). As Germany and Britain were not involved in the voting and do not need to hold a favourable attitude towards a candidate in the American election, the strategy frame was not applied in the Germany and Britain. This was also the case for horse race framing (Strömbäck & Shehata, 2007). Another reason might be based on a study by Vliegenthart et al. (2010) who showed that both frames were prominently used in France or Spain compared to, for instance, Germany, when reporting about American elections. Furthermore, the conflict frame, economic frame, responsibility frame and morality frame hardly differed between German and British news reports about the 2020 American election, which might also be explained by the reporting that was made about an election outside the country. Lastly, as generic frames (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000), as well as frames more precisely applied in the political field (Schuck et al., 2013) were combined for the first time in a study, this might have led to the low frequencies of the frames.

Third, it was expected that in German news a neutral tone of voice was used (Henkel, Thurman & Deffner, 2019) and that British news apply a more negative tone (Vossen & Schulpen, 2019), while reporting about the 2020 American election. However, findings show an almost equal distinction between tone of voice of German and British news reporting as neutral tone of voice was applied most frequently in both countries. That result is rather surprising as it was assumed that especially Trump would be reported about using negative tone of voice because of his unpopularity in European countries (Wike, Pushter, Fetterolf & Schumacher, 2020). The finding might also be influenced by political relations because Germany and Britain share similar political ties with America (Wu, 2000). Also, for neutral tone of voice paragraphs of newspaper articles that included positive and negative tone of voice were coded with the neutral condition. This might be another reason why neutral tone of voice was rated with the highest frequency. Furthermore, positive tone of voice was found to increase the voting behaviour for a certain party (Hopmann, Vliegthart, De Vreese & Albaek, 2010) which was not relevant in Germany and Britain.

Fourth, in line with expectations, partisan bias was found most frequently in British news while reporting about the 2020 American election. Therefore, the third hypothesis “*Partisan bias can be more dominantly found in British news channels while reporting about the 2020 American election compared to German news channels*” was supported. Pre-reviewed literature supports the assumptions because specifically in British news it was found that partisan bias can be detected while reporting about elections and political ongoing (i.e., Aitken 2020; Walter & Van der Eijk, 2019). This might also be supported by the fact that the newspapers in both countries more favourably reported about political candidates (Vliegthart et al., 2010). In explanation, especially Biden appeared to be favoured over Trump in the portrayal of the election while Trump was oftentimes portrayed less favourable because of his perceived, bad management skills. Biden was portrayed as tackling political topics more professionally. Also, partisan bias was mainly related to the portrayal of candidates, political parties and processes while reporting about the 2008 American election (Vliegthart et al., 2010) which can also be related to outcomes of this study. Contributing to this, Lipsitz and Geer (2017) stated, that even experts and journalists can present information with partisan bias while reporting about events, which was found most dominantly in British newspapers in this study. Moreover, certain professional norms are set in media outlets defining the extent to which partisan bias is allowed or not (O’Malley et al., 2012). In British news incorporating partisan bias might be more common than in German news.

Lastly, the hypothesis “*British news channels use emotions in articles about the 2020 American election more dominantly than German news channels*” is supported by the study because British news used emotions to a slightly higher amount than the German counterpart. This is supported by other researchers who suggested that previous elections in America were accompanied by anger or fear (Searles & Ridout, 2017) and reporting about politics is mostly accompanied by dramatizing events (Graber, 1994) in British news. However, despite this finding, frequencies of emotions were small in both countries and only differed by a low number between Germany and Britain while reporting about the election. A study by Franklin and Richardson (2002) might explain this, as they found that, while reporting about elections, journalists are committed to present topics in an informative way and not incorporate emotions. After data analysis it appeared that also emotions like hate and relief were applied in the portrayal of the American election in German and British news. Including both emotions in the study might have influenced the general frequency of emotions in the news articles. Also, the type of newspaper plays a role in the discussion about emotions because tabloid press more often applies emotions than quality press which was incorporated (Johansson, 2007). Furthermore, while reviewing literature it appeared that a lot of research has been done about emotions used in the reporting of elections in social media (i.e., Himelboim et al., 2016) or while researching fake news (Bakir & McStay, 2018). It might be that emotions are being more often used in the portrayal of an election on social media platforms rather than newspaper articles, making the novelty of this study another reason for not applying emotions in the portrayal of the 2020 American election.

5.2 Theoretical implications

What can be retrieved from the results is that German and British news only differed in some respects and more patterns presenting similarities rather than differences can be detected while reporting about the 2020 American election. As the study aimed at the presentation of elections in a cross-national comparison between two European countries and the portrayal of an election of those countries, the study contributes to the field of political science and communication science. Therefore, it was claimed by other researchers that only little research has been done in the field of cross-national comparison (Vliegenthart, et al., 2010; De Vreese, 2005) and more research is needed to provide more information in the field of reporting about elections outside the own country. This study contributes to this gap while

taking part in the discussion and comparing a national election in America with two cross-national reporting's about that election in Germany and Britain.

Second, the study contradicts previous research, as framing and tone of voice did not differ and emotions only slightly differed between German and British news presentation about an election. As the variables were studied on a country level in past research, this study raises the suggestion that rather the newspaper source matters. For instance, if a newspaper can be placed as quality press or of tabloid style, to detect differences between news portrayal of an election.

Relating to this, the study combined two frameworks of most prominently used generic frames, which were applied before to study topics in a political discussion (Schuck et al., 2013; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000) and placed them together in a study. The study provided evidence that both frameworks are not mutually exclusive and can be placed together while researching media coverage of elections. It was shown that two frames of both frameworks were predominantly found while reporting about the 2020 American election and can be placed into future research about elections. Further research might place the frameworks into other contexts.

A last theoretical implication is the perspective of the study. To the researcher's knowledge, only little research has been done about incorporating an outsider's perspective of specific countries while reporting about topics inside another country. A lot of research has already been done about framing inside a country (Iyengar, 2005; Trimble & Sampert, 2004), for instance, framing American elections in American media. However, to study the outsider's perspective of an election inside another country, little is known. This is also of great interest to detect differences in reporting about elections depending on the perspective a researcher incorporates in the research.

5.3 Limitations and future research

Even if some new insights about the portrayal of the 2020 American election in German and British news were provided, some limitations can be pointed out. A first limitation can be the choice of incorporated newspapers. As all newspapers belong to the quality press, this might have led to the similarities that occurred between German and British news reporting about the election. The newspapers were chosen because of the large variety of newspaper articles provided on the platform the articles were retrieved from which increased the number of

collected articles for the researcher. Incorporating tabloid newspapers, a sharper differentiation occurred. Specifically, “The Sun” might have been incorporated as it was rated as the most read newspaper (Statista, 2020).

Second, another factor influencing the validity of this study might be that the category mixed tone of voice was left out based on assumptions made by Huang et al. (2013) that other categories of tone of voice are more important. However, it might be that the mixed-oriented category would have brought other interesting results. In explanation, while coding the articles it sometimes appeared that paragraphs or whole articles portrayed information with negative as well as positive information (based on Xiao et al., 2018). Those paragraphs or articles were coded with the neutral tone of voice category, which might be the cause of the high frequency of neutral tone of voice in both countries while reporting about the election. The mixed tone of voice category can be placed in future research to review the assumption made by Huang et al. (2013) and this study.

Third, no correlation between codes has been studied. For instance, while analysing the data it appeared that tone of voice and emotions were often placed together in articles. Therefore, this relation might have provided even more in-depth knowledge and can be placed into future research about elections. The relation between journalistic writing style and frames or framing and emotions might also be interesting to study. In this paper, the correlations were not studied because of time restrictions and the already extensive study.

Furthermore, some suggestions for future research on the topic at hand can be provided which serve as a basis for other researchers. To start with, more emotions might be used in future research to study in the case of the 2020 American election in German and British news. During data analysis it was found that emotions like hate or relief also appeared. The wheel of emotions by Plutchik (1980) might act as a basis to incorporate more emotions while studying the reporting of newspapers about elections. Second, another research direction might be, to focus more on the candidates in the election. In explanation, Donald Trump and Joe Biden might be focused on, for instance, to detect how the individual politicians are framed in newspaper articles or even to analyse who of the two politicians is being more frequently reported about in the media. Third, also interesting to study might be cultural differences in Germany and Britain journalism. Both countries are placed in Europe, however, still some cultural differences can be detected. In a study, it was suggested that framing in journalism is influenced by cultural differences (Guenduez, Schedler & Ciocan, 2016) making this research approach interesting. Next to cultural differences, different

newspaper types might be a basis to study. For instance, newspapers published in the tabloid press might be analysed while portraying the 2020 American election. Afterwards, the study at hand and the study including tabloid articles might be compared and similarities or differences outlined.

6. Conclusion

This study was created to investigate how the 2020 American election was portrayed in German and British news articles. By examining journalistic writing style, framing, tone of voice, partisan bias and emotions it was concluded that the portrayal of the 2020 American election between German and British news channels was rather similar than different. Two out of four hypotheses were supported by the study. Relating the outcomes of this study to previous research it can be stated that findings of the study at hand contradict findings of other studies.

The new knowledge helps to bridge the gap of understanding how the 2020 American election was portrayed in German and British news while taking an outsider's perspective of reporting about the election. Additionally, to contribute to the question how European countries reported about the 2020 American election in the media. Applying the results to the theoretical field, outcomes can be used to understand the effect of reporting about American elections when reporting about them from a European perspective. The study also contributes to the field of cross-national comparison about elections of other countries as only little research has been done in this field. Additionally, placing two frames retrieved from different frameworks formulated by independent researchers into one study, this created a novel basis for future research. As the study can be placed into the field of communication science and political science, the research and outcomes might be a basis for future research in those fields.

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Enclosures

Appendix A: Cohen's Kappa Calculations

Table 10

Cohen's Kappa Calculations for Journalistic Writing Style

Code	(9)	(10)	-
(9)	11+11	0	0
(10)	0	17+17	0
-	0	0	0

Table 11

Cohen's Kappa Calculations for Frames

Code	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	-
(1)	1+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(2)	0	4+4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(3)	0	0	6+7	0	0	0	0	0	1
(4)	0	0	0	207+207	0	0	0	0	0
(5)	0	0	0	0	12+12	0	0	0	0
(6)	0	0	0	0	0	148+147	0	0	1
(7)	0	0	0	0	0	0	4+4	0	0
(8)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4+4	0
-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 12

Cohen's Kappa Calculations for Tone of Voice

Code	(11)	(12)	(13)	-
(11)	271+271	0	0	0
(12)	0	91+91	0	0
(13)	0	0	8+8	0
-	0	0	0	0

Table 13

Cohen's Kappa Calculations for Partisan Bias

Code	(14)	(15)	-
(14)	19+19	0	0
(15)	0	9+9	0
-	0	0	0

Table 14

Cohen's Kappa Calculations for Emotions

Code	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)	-
(16)	6+6	0	0	0	0
(17)	0	6+6	0	0	0
(18)	0	0	3+3	0	0
(19)	0	0	0	4+3	1
-	0	0	0	0	0