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UNIVERSIDAD PONTIFICIA

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Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Bachelor's Degree in Translation and Interpreting

Final Year Dissertation

How culture shapes emotional reactions in the United Kingdom

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Madrid. April 10, 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Words cannot express my gratitude to my mother for her constant support and patience, and to my teacher Susan, who once said, I was meant for these studies and these studies were meant for me, and I have not forgotten that statement ever since.

Abstract

Emotional awareness is a useful tool to communicate successfully with individuals, since interactions are underpinned by immediate and conscious emotional reactions. Intercultural communicators and interpreters require a deep understanding of how a particular culture influences the emotions that individuals experience and exhibit in everyday life, so that they can decode their speech, avoid misunderstandings, and thus communicate effectively. We observed British culture from a holistic prism by studying the behavioural and emotional patterns of British subjects in the six cultural dimensions identified by the Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism vs Collectivism, Indulgence vs Restraint, Short-Term vs Long-Term Orientation, and Masculinity vs Femininity. These dimensions were linked to the contemporary fields of British Education System, British leisure activities, response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the British political system. A survey was administered to a sample who identified with the British culture and a score for each cultural dimension was calculated from the results, which suggested that subjects prefer high-arousal emotions, but repress them regardless of their valence, and exhibit a strong uncertainty avoidance, high power distance and indulgent and collectivistic traits.

Key-words

Emotions, culture, cultural dimensions, communication, valence, arousal, United Kingdom

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Theoretical Framework.....	4
2.1 Introduction to Culture.....	4
2.2 Introduction to Emotions	5
2.3 Categorisation of Emotions: Valence and Arousal.....	6
2.4 Impact of Unwritten Social Norms	7
3. Applying Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory to the United Kingdom	9
3.1 Introduction to the Cultural Dimensions Theory	9
3.2 Masculinity vs Femininity.....	11
3.3 Short vs Long-Term Orientation	11
3.4 Individualism vs Collectivism (with focus on the British Education System)	12
3.4.1 School Meritocratic Ideology	13
3.4.2 Setting and Streaming.....	14
3.4.3 House Systems and Teamwork.....	14
3.5 Indulgence vs Restraint (with focus on British leisure activities)	15
3.6 Uncertainty Avoidance (with focus on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic)	17
3.6.1 Government’s Response	18
3.6.2 Society’s Response	20
3.7 Power Distance (with focus on the British political system).....	21
4. Materials and Methods	23
4.1 Objectives, Questions, and Hypotheses	23
4.2 Methodology	24
5. Analysis of Results	27
5.1 Main Patterns of Results	28
5.2 Discussion of Results	34
5.2.1 Individualism Dimension	34
5.2.2 Indulgence Dimension.....	35
5.2.3 Uncertainty Avoidance Dimension	35
5.2.4 Power Distance Dimension	36

6. Conclusion.....	37
7. Annexes	38
Annex 1: Questionnaire “Culture & Emotions in the UK”.....	38
Annex 2: List of Graphs “Culture & Emotions in the UK”	41
Annex 3: Timeline of UK Government.....	49
8. References	50

List of Graphs

Graph 1: Values over 100 for the six dimensions of British Culture.....	10
Graph 2: High and Low Arousal Emotions	28
Graph 3: Individualism at Work	30
Graph 4: Uncertainty Avoidance in the Event of a New Pandemic.....	31
Graph 5: Balance of Professional and Personal Life.....	32
Graph 6: Perceived Gender Equality in Political Leadership.....	33

List of Tables

Table 1: Emotional Reactions.....	29
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Glossary of Specialised Terms

Term	Definition
Arousal	Level of energy stimulation by an emotion. (Trampe et al., 2015)
Binge-watching	To watch many or all episodes (of a TV series) in rapid succession. (Merriam-Webster, 2023)
Cultural dimension	Independent preferences for one state of affairs over another that distinguish countries from each other. (Van Rheenen, 2020)
Cultural trauma	An event experienced by a collective that has left indelible marks upon their consciousness, changing their future identity. (Alexander et al., 2004)
Culture	The collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others. (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010)
Emotion	A complex experience of consciousness, bodily sensation, and behaviour that reflects the personal significance of a thing, an event, or a state of affairs. (Solomon, 2022)
Ethnocentrism	A tendency to view alien groups or cultures from the perspective of one's own. (Collins Online Dictionary, 2023)
Generation Z	The generation of people born in the late 1990s and early 2000s. (Merriam-Webster, 2023)
Hwabyung	Chronic disease with both psychological and physiological consequences, such as stress, chest pain and an accelerated heartbeat. (Lee et al., 2014)

Term	Definition
Individualism vs Collectivism dimension	The extent to which individuals rely on society members and the level of integration of individuals into primary groups. (Hofstede Insights, 2017)
Indulgence vs Restraint dimension	The degree of control of basic human desires related to the enjoyment of life and having fun. (Hofstede Insights, 2017)
Masculinity vs Femininity dimension	The distribution of emotional roles between women and men within a society. (Hofstede, 2011)
Power Distance dimension	The acceptance of a collective towards human inequality in terms of power, money and control by one person or institution over others. (Hofstede Insights, 2017)
Short-term vs Long-term Orientation dimension	The focus of people's efforts, either towards the future or towards the past and the present. (Hofstede, 2011)
Stiff upper-lip	A steady and determined attitude or manner in the face of trouble. (Merriam-Webster, 2023)
Uncertainty Avoidance dimension	The levels of stress a collective experiences when dealing with a new, unexpected and ambiguous situation that has no clear outcome in the future. (Hofstede Insights, 2017)
Valence	How pleasurable an emotion is, whether it is a positive or a negative emotion. (Trampe et al., 2015)

1. Introduction

Our world is more globalised than ever, people from different cultural backgrounds are constantly interacting with each other, and therefore require the assistance of translators and interpreters to overcome cultural and linguistic barriers. In a dialogue, it is important for interpreters to reproduce the main ideas, nuances, tone and implicit meaning of a message as faithfully as possible. Interpreters moreover engage in cultural mediation; they are familiar enough with the cultures of both speakers to anticipate possible misunderstandings and prevent conflict that might result from cultural differences.

In a conversation between two people, a continuous exchange of reactions is established where one speaker makes a statement and the other speaker reacts to it, generating another statement which in turn will be addressed by the first speaker. These reactions are heavily influenced by the values and beliefs of a person's culture, therefore if speakers are unfamiliar with each other's culture and are not assisted by a cultural mediator, they will be taken aback by an unexpected or irrational emotional reaction and find it hard to decode each other's attitude, thus inhibiting effective communication. This is why it is important for communication specialists, and society in general, to be aware and open-minded towards other cultures, and get to know people of a given culture to understand their core values and beliefs better. As the 19th-century Irish theatre critic George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) once observed, "The English and Americans are two peoples divided by a common language," which means that even though both cultures share English as their mother tongue, there are far too many cultural differences that set them apart. Although this is not the purpose of the present investigation, much research of this phenomenon has been carried out in the field of Linguistic Relativity, which is the study of how differences in language that stem from culture modify the perception of reality between collectives. Since greater intercultural exchange has taking place in recent years, Linguistic Relativity is tending towards universality.

Languages are adopting everyday words and expressions from other languages, and retain their meaning, thus creating universal comprehensive markers, for example, phone and taxi.

On a personal level, I have been exposed to the Spanish and British cultures from an early age, therefore it is fair to say that my identity is configured by both of these very different cultures. As a child, I witnessed my fair share of unsuccessful, yet somewhat comical, intercultural exchanges between Spanish and British pupils, and between Spanish parents and British teachers in the playground. The conversation might have begun excellently, after all, both cultures are accustomed to breaking the ice with small chat before addressing the main topic of discussion. However, after some time, there was an eventual argument between both sides. Even though they might have spoken in the same language to avoid misunderstandings, they both failed to recognise that they were thinking with different cultural mind-sets and were constantly trespassing each other's cultural boundaries, hence the conversation became aggressive. When both cultures collide, Spanish people will adopt an accusatory attitude, pay little attention to what British people are saying and gesticulate wildly. British people are at once taken aback and counterattack by employing a sarcastic and defensive tone, attempting to convince their opponent at all costs that they are being unreasonable and will keep a stiff upper lip to hide their anger, concern, or disappointment.

It is indeed fascinating to study in detail the cross-cultural differences and similarities between the Spanish and British culture, or between any two cultures for that matter. During my exchange year in Geneva, I conducted a cross-cultural study to investigate the cultural identity of bicultural university students born and raised in Switzerland to non-Swiss parents, and found that the differentiating culture, which is the culture learnt from their family life at home, could interact with, and be even more predominant than, the shared culture, in this case the Swiss culture. This depended on factors such as a parent's role in the subject's education and time spent overseas. Although useful for biculturalism studies, comparing a foreign culture to another culture would not be helpful for a communication specialist who intends to gain insight into the core values and attitudes of a culture. To explain why this is the case, we will use the analogy of the Venn diagram:

If the overlapping circles of a 2-way Venn diagram represented two distinct cultures, the small area at the intersection would identify the characteristics they both share. This sameness is misleading, since the outer portions that portray their distinct characteristics are much larger. It

would therefore be an oversimplification to only study two cultures based on the traits they have in common, which might not even be identical or equally widespread. Additionally, it would not be feasible to study their distinct characteristics through a cross-cultural study unless a given characteristic of one culture can be linked to a completely opposite characteristic of the other culture. Moreover, a cross-cultural study could lead to ethnocentrism, thus making a biased and subjective observation.

As a result, this dissertation will study British culture holistically, instead of just observing British culture from the lens of another culture, by focusing on several contemporary areas that underpin life in the United Kingdom such as the educational and political systems, and the degree to which culture shapes emotional reactions that pervade discourse. The objective of this study is therefore to shed some light on three main aspects: what factors, such as recent historical events and economic shifts, have made an impression on British culture, how culture influences emotions and emotional reactions, and what emotional reactions could be expected from a British person in a particular situation. It is hoped that this study will provide a useful tool for translators and interpreters, as well as other professionals outside the field of cultural studies, to gain a better understanding and empathy towards British customs and behaviours.

Firstly, the theoretical framework will be discussed, which introduces the terms *culture*, emotions, valence and arousal, and portrays how culture configures emotional reactions. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory will be then introduced, and four cultural dimensions will be aligned with four current fields in the United Kingdom that have an impact on culture: Power Distance dimension with the British political system; Individualism dimension with the British Education System; Uncertainty Avoidance dimension with the COVID-19 pandemic; Indulgence dimension with British leisure activities. Subsequently, the methodology section will describe in detail the questions and subject responses which form part of our quantitative study. Finally, the main patterns from the quantitative study will be outlined, and our final conclusions will be given.

2. Theoretical Framework

In this section we will have a closer look at what is meant by culture in communication studies, and what associations can be made with emotions and emotional reactions, which are classified by psychologists into four main groups, according to their arousal and valence. An overview of the main findings of cross-cultural investigation into emotions will be presented, as well as the impact of culture on the emotional and mental well-being of Western societies in contrast with Eastern societies.

2.1 Introduction to Culture

Culture, from Latin *cultura*, which means to cultivate, is an umbrella term used by academics to refer to the patterns of behaviour within a collective. (Boston University, 2016) There are several definitions of culture in the fields of sociology, political science, anthropology, and psychology. For this thesis, we will focus on the definition of culture given by the Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede (1928-2020) as a collective programming that members of a group have in common.

Culture encompasses a set of social unwritten norms, guidelines, and expectations that are learnt at a young age by individuals belonging to a social group. These cultural norms do not have a genetic component and are solely transferred through communication: individuals will witness interactions and social habits within their group, and they will be admonished for what is believed to be wrong. Social norms can also be established through literature, for example, fairy tales read at a young age.

These norms therefore dictate how a person must behave within a society, and they are internalised at a young age, to an extent that they configure the identity of an individual. The expression collective programming highlights the fact that all individuals will exhibit similar behavioural patterns when exposed to the same situation, regardless of their personality. (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010, pp. 4–6)

In research from Hofstede and Minkov (2010, p. 6), the human being's identity has been found to be configured by three factors:

- Personality: it is unique to an individual, and is both inherited and acquired.
- Culture: unique to a specific social group, it is not inherited, but learned/acquired.
- Human nature: universal and inherited, all human beings have the same human genome.

Some aspects of our identity can be traced back to more than one factor. For instance, emotions are inherent to human nature, but emotional reactions depend both on culture and personality. We will address this distinction in the following section.

2.2 Introduction to Emotions

Emotions are a mental state triggered by a situation, with psychological and physiological sensations. Individuals can experience a single emotion or a cluster of emotions at the same time, and reflect them consciously and unconsciously in their verbal and nonverbal communication.

Many scientists, dating as far back as Charles Darwin, have investigated how unconscious facial expressions vary in distinct cultures and found that they were consistently the same. This leads us to believe that all human beings, regardless of their culture, experience the same emotions. Research by Dalglish and Powell (1999, pp. 301–302) concludes that emotions are inherent to the human genome, and are therefore universal.

Moreover, psychology professor David Matsumoto studied the emotional reactions of athletes in the 2004 Olympic Games and discovered that for a given emotion, an individual will display two types of reactions, one belonging to their human nature and one belonging to their culture (Dingfelder, 2006):

- Immediate emotional reaction relates to human nature: when athletes learned they had lost, they unconsciously engaged the same facial muscles which gave away the genuine emotion they felt.

Facial expressions when winning and losing were consistent for all athletes, regardless of their culture.

- Conscious emotional reaction relates to culture: athletes conveyed different expressions after their immediate emotional reaction, depending on what is approved according to their cultural values, for example, an empty stare or a coy smile, therefore repressing or exaggerating their underlying emotions.

As a result, it could be considered necessary to be familiar with the cultural values of the collective an individual identifies with to decode the facial expression of their conscious emotional reaction, identify the inner emotional state and emotion or group of emotions that lie underneath and be empathetic towards them.

2.3 Categorisation of Emotions: Valence and Arousal

As seen in the Theoretical Framework, valence and arousal are the primary dimensions that categorise emotions. Emotions fall into four quadrants, depending on how energy stimulating they are, and how pleasurable: negative high-arousal, positive high-arousal, negative low-arousal and positive low-arousal emotions. (Trampe et al., 2015)

Cross-cultural researchers such as Nangyeon Lim have found that “culture constrains how emotions are felt and expressed in a given cultural context.” (Lim, 2016) This means that an individual will repress or exaggerate the genuine emotion that they are feeling, to align their emotional state with the ideal emotions according to their culture. For example, Western cultures are highly individualistic, meaning that they focus on the wellbeing and uniqueness of an individual, and therefore consider high arousal emotions ideal. (Turner & Stets, 2005) We will be referring later to Individualism when addressing Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory.

High arousal emotions, those that generate a considerable amount of energy, such as elation, enthusiasm, fear, hostility, and nervousness are regarded more positively in the British culture than low arousal emotions, such as calm, peacefulness and sleepiness. (Tsai, 2007) Eastern cultures are collectivist, which means that their focus is on the society as a whole. Whereas Western cultures

believe that emotions exist within an individual, Eastern cultures consider that emotions exist between people, therefore social cohesion and harmony are preserved by exhibiting low arousal emotions, since they will not disrupt the ambience (Lim, 2016, p. 106). Furthermore, as mentioned previously, cultural-emotional norms are taught in storybooks, and in the Western world they tend to promote and generate high arousal emotions such as excitement. (Lim, 2016)

2.4 Impact of Unwritten Social Norms

From a psychological view, emotional norms can have a negative impact on mental health. Repressing emotions or trying to control them generates stress, which is externalised through violent behaviour toward others, or internalised through self-harm, for example, drug or alcohol abuse (Umberson et al., 2002, p. 189). In Korean culture, similarly to other Eastern cultures, people are expected to repress anger because it is a high arousal emotion and individuals cannot express their rage even in the most dire, unfair and stressful circumstances, and this restraint of emotions results in *Hwabyung*, a chronic disease with a psychological and physiological impact. (Lee et al., 2014)

Likewise, some strata of British society are still taught to repress their emotions. In research from Brewer and Sparkes (2011), young British people bereaved of a parent feel discouraged to express emotions such as sadness and grief at the passing of their parent, and consequently they have a hard time coping with these emotions and seek psychological assistance. Moreover, according to new research (Emerson-Smith, 2021), many students who attended boarding schools in the United Kingdom at a young age also require psychotherapy to come to terms with their emotions. Being separated from their caregivers very early, they had to endure the loss of identity and intimacy and face the strict obedience that characterises British boarding schools. As a result, children brought up in these educational institutions are discouraged from communicating their emotions to such an extent that they lose perception of what they feel, and this mental disorder is often referred to as boarding school syndrome. They also suppress their emotions and lack emotional reactions because they are brought up considering emotions as dangerous and time-consuming, since they hinder the obedient and submissive attitude that is expected of them.

As we have mentioned previously, one of the components that configure the identity of human beings is culture. When this component damages the mental health and wellbeing of

individuals within a collective, it is said that they suffer from cultural trauma. An example of cultural trauma is the patriarchal system, which has been anchored in many Western societies for centuries and is responsible for gender inequality. People are brought up falsely believing that the biological gender they were assigned at birth, whether male or female, is pivotal in the configuration of their identity and the role and behaviour they shall have within society. As a result, women are pressurised to repress high arousal emotions such as love, empowerment and anger, and are expected instead to generate low arousal emotions such as passivity and numbness. Men in turn repress low arousal emotions and exhibit high arousal emotional reactions to a greater extent. This binary way of thinking becomes a reality for many women who are objectified and prevented from satisfying their core human feelings, such as the need for love, security, autonomy, and identity (Baradaran & Roshanzamir, 2017). We will refer to this phenomenon later when addressing Hofstede's Masculinity versus Femininity cultural dimension.

At the date of writing, little research had been carried out on the emotions felt by people in everyday life. According to recent research in France (Trampe et al., 2015), emotions are evenly distributed throughout the day and the most frequent emotions experienced by individuals are high arousal emotions (joy, love, and anxiety are felt 30% of the day). Positive emotions are more prevalent than negative emotions in the French culture, although women tend to experience more negative emotions than men, such as fear, offence, and anger. Moreover, it is also frequent for some emotions to occur simultaneously. They are triggered by a stimuli and result in a particular behaviour that influences decision-making, such as taking a greater action, in the case of joy and anger or avoiding risk, in the case of fear.

Finally, we have stated that individuals from different cultures have the same immediate emotional reactions towards a social situation because emotions are universal. However, there are some situations that are more subjective than winning and losing and can therefore be interpreted as positive or negative in terms of the emotional valence that individuals experience. For example, it is appropriate and polite to be strictly punctual in the United Kingdom, whereas people who arrive on time in Mexico cause anger and frustration (Lewis, 2018, p. 82). This is because the cultural values of these two countries are opposite, consequently the emotions felt will be opposite too.

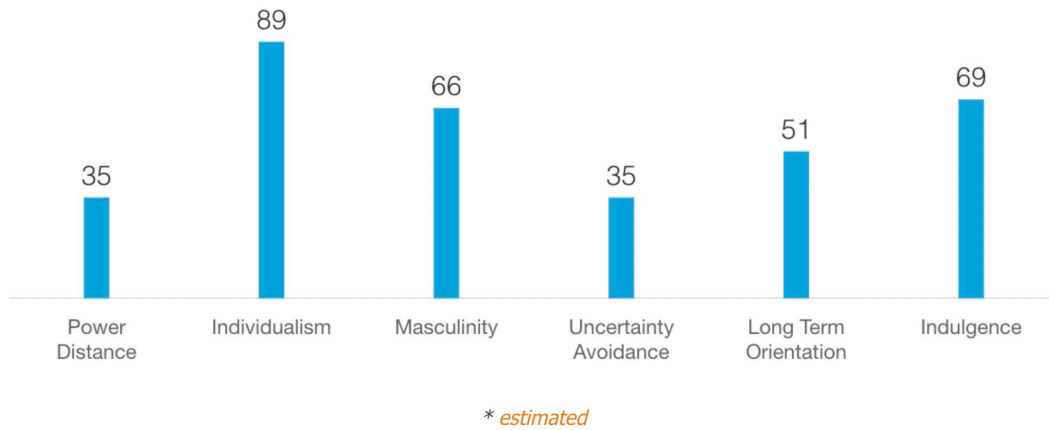
3. Applying Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory to the United Kingdom

In this section, we will be applying the foundational review above on culture, categorisation of emotions and the impact of emotional reactions in society to study the case of the United Kingdom. The recent events that have influenced British culture will be investigated, as well as how British culture influences the unwritten emotional norms that determine the behaviour and conscious emotional reactions that British people display. Culture and emotions are abstract concepts, which makes them hard to assess, and consequently we will be applying Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory to investigate them. This theory portrays how culture affects the values of a collective, which in turn condition behaviour and emotional regulation.

3.1 Introduction to the Cultural Dimensions Theory

In the 70s, the Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede was working at the enterprise IBM Europe. He organised a cross-cultural study by conducting employee opinion surveys in the IBM headquarters of various countries and compiled the results in an international database. The researcher then analysed the patterns of responses that were consistent for each country and found that they pointed towards basic cultural values and attitudes that were shared by individuals from the same nation. In 1980, he established four cultural dimensions present in all countries, which he named Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism versus Collectivism, and Masculinity versus Femininity. The dimensions Long-term Orientation versus Short-term Orientation and Indulgence versus Restraint were subsequently added to this theory, and each country was attributed a score for each dimension. (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010) Graph 1 below indicates the scores calculated by Hofstede for the United Kingdom:

Graph 1: Values over 100 for the six dimensions of British Culture



Source: (Hofstede Insights, 2017)

The cultural dimensions theory does have certain limitations. Hofstede makes an oversimplification by considering that one nation equates to one culture, such as the United Kingdom, which is composed of Scotland, England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, equating to the British culture. However, the social psychologist recognises that culture differs according to the age group, gender, ethnicity, region, organisation and level of education of a collective, which means that there are many co-existing cultures within one country (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010, p. 11). Moreover, given that we live in a “rapidly globalising world with Internet electronic proximity and politico-economic associations,” (Lewis, 2018, p. 27) cultures are evolving rapidly, there is a greater cultural exchange and cultures borrow traits from others. We are therefore evolving, albeit slowly, towards a more universal culture, and we cannot expect a culture to be the same as it was a decade ago, therefore we could predict that the scores Hofstede calculated in the late 80s, as seen in Graph 1, have slightly changed.

For the purpose of this research, we will focus on the dimensions of Individualism versus Collectivism, Indulgence versus Restraint, Uncertainty Avoidance and Power Distance. Each

cultural dimension will be observed in terms of the scores for the British culture provided by Hofstede, and the dimensions will be aligned with a current event or field in the United Kingdom: the British education system, leisure in the United Kingdom, the British response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the British political system. The two remaining dimensions of the Hofstede model, Short/Long-Term Orientation and Masculinity-Femininity will be only briefly addressed as they are less pertinent to this dissertation.

3.2 Masculinity vs Femininity

This dimension indicates the distribution of emotional roles between women and men within a society, for example, stereotypes such as boys do not cry and girls do not fight, that are assimilated by people from a particular culture. (Hofstede, 2011)

Even though we could investigate which low and high arousal emotions are favoured by British culture according to the gender an individual identifies with, it is a complicated task since respondents are often unaware of their immediate emotional reaction and that their conscious emotional reaction, that is, exaggerating or repressing an underlying emotion, relates to culture. (Lim, 2016) As a result, the only possible way of investigating gender inequality in the distribution of emotional roles between women and men is finding patterns of behaviour that diverge between them when facing the same social situation.

3.3 Short vs Long-Term Orientation

This dimension indicates the focus of people's efforts, either towards the future or towards the past and the present. For example, giving importance to preserving the environment and improving education for future generations could be considered Long-Term Orientation. (Hofstede, 2011) This dimension is also correlated to economic growth and traditions such as thrift, therefore it is debatable to what extent it could have a similar impact on emotions as the rest of the cultural dimensions do. Moreover, the Short/Long-Term Orientation dimension stems from the Uncertainty

Avoidance dimension, which investigates the emotional investment of a collective in future events and the worth they allocate to past events.

Finally, as we can see in Graph 1, the United Kingdom scores 66 in Masculinity and 51 in Long-term Orientation, which are very intermediate scores, therefore the dominant preference of the British culture for these two dimensions cannot be established.

3.4 Individualism vs Collectivism (with focus on the British Education System)

The Individualism-Collectivism dimension focuses on an individual's interaction with primary groups and society in general. As we can see in Graph 1, p. 10, the United Kingdom scores 89 in this dimension: it is a highly individualistic society, in which British people focus on their isolated contribution to society and put their immediate family first. (Hofstede Insights, 2017) Children are taught this behaviour from a young age at school, therefore we can find numerous individualistic traits in the British Education System.

There are many significant events in the history of the United Kingdom that have altered the values and beliefs of its society. The Individualism-Collectivism dimension has been mostly impacted by the Industrial Revolution, which was the transition to machine manufacturing in the 18th century, and that inspired the core values and practices of today's British Education System (Guiton, 2017). Children are taught to be individualistic from a young age at school, which is why the British Education System is a relevant field to study this dimension.

Education is a cultural activity; therefore, schools encourage children to develop the skills and values aligned with what society deems necessary for them to have a bright future. The Industrial Revolution focused on economic growth and profit, which is why British schools instil capitalist values (Guiton, 2017):

3.4.1 School Meritocratic Ideology

British schools teach students that success can only be achieved through their hard work and willpower, and that this will make them praiseworthy, happy and personally fulfilled individuals. (Wiederkehr et al., 2015) This norm is established through practices such as school prize-giving ceremonies and by issuing learning points, house points, awards, medals and trophies, to reward the most successful students that beat their classmates in exams.

As Stuart White, Vice-Principal of The British International School Shanghai explains in an article to non-British parents (2022), the prize-giving ceremony is important to publicise students' success as much as possible, and should be held since learning is the "ultimate pursuit of the virtuous and happy person." Indeed, individualistic societies believe that the purpose of education is more about learning how to learn, than how to do (Hofstede, 2011), in other words, education is important because it provides people with power and self-realisation, and the contribution to society or common good is perceived as a direct consequence, but not the main purpose for gaining knowledge. Moreover, according to the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), upper-class individuals within capitalist societies obtain higher economic, cultural and social capital through education, and this is seen as a way of being happier and distancing themselves from the underprivileged who have fewer education possibilities, since cultivated people's complex knowledge is only for their enjoyment. (Bourdieu & Nice, 1984, p. 229)

As a result, students reflect deeply on how their success in school compares with that of their peers and believe that this success reflects how well they will do in the future and their future socioeconomic status, (Wiederkehr et al., 2015) potentially creating an unhealthy competition between students, where we could expect them to feel upset, angry, unworthy or frustrated when they over-perform, yet it is their friend who claims the prize instead of them. It is debatable to what extent students will portray these negative emotions, since they could be perceived as a sore loser. Therefore, the British educational system stimulates negative low and high arousal emotions for all students that do not win a prize, and high arousal emotions for those that succeed. The immediate emotional reaction of frustration will be masked, whereas the winner's immediate emotional reaction of joy and excitement will be exaggerated.

3.4.2 Setting and Streaming

In research from Guiton (2017), similarly to how social mobility and status work, students are separated into groups in school according to their academic ability, so that the elite, high achievers' progress will not be hindered by their less capable peers. This system, referred to as setting or streaming, could lead to a lack of confidence and self-esteem for those in the lower groups and a feeling of detachment, guilt, and embarrassment for students in the higher groups.

Schools are also categorised according to the academic performance of their students. The Department for Education, which is responsible for organising education at all levels in the United Kingdom, creates league tables each year to make direct comparisons between schools. This system could incentivise schools to improve as a collective. However, it might also signify that students are further pressurised to over-perform so that their school reaches a higher position in the ranking. Even though data on the performance of underprivileged students is taken into account (Department for Education, 2018), it still reflects how schools justify the social dominance of high-status groups in the current educational system, since regions with a high poverty rate have more students from low-income families that will underperform in comparison to wealthier students, and therefore the schools in impoverished areas will typically be lower down in the league tables. Disadvantaged people will arguably feel discouraged from a young age about climbing the social ladder through their education. (Wiederkehr et al., 2015)

3.4.3 House Systems and Teamwork

It is debatable to what extent house systems constitute a collectivist approach to education. Students develop skills of camaraderie and team spirit by being sorted into four teams known as houses, and they will compete as a group to be more successful than the rest (Dierenfeld, 1976). This is similar to how companies build employee loyalty to gain a competitive edge, with the sole objective of obtaining profit.

According to teacher forums available online, the sorting process of students into houses is done randomly. Some teachers may divide students according to criteria such as grades and the subjects they take, whereas others let students pick which house they want to be in. (Staake, 2018)

In my British school, students were sorted in alphabetical order and traditionally placed in the house their elder siblings had been in.

Children are therefore being prepared to work competitively in a team, such as an organisation, enterprise or institution. They are encouraged to go the extra mile to earn house points and to win the House Cup, these equating to a future professional life where the individual would be expected to go the extra mile on behalf of the company or organisation they work for to make more profit or to reach the number one spot in the market. When their house or team does not come up at the top, students feel disappointment or guilt. (Guiton, 2017)

We have focused on education to address this dimension; however, Individualism can be extrapolated to other areas, such as how close British people are to their immediate and non-immediate family and whether they would place their work and education before their social life and relationships. (Hofstede, 2011)

3.5 Indulgence vs Restraint (with focus on British leisure activities)

The Indulgence versus Restraint dimension indicates the degree of control of basic human desires related to the enjoyment of life and having fun. As we can see in Graph 1, the United Kingdom scores 69 in this dimension: it is a fairly indulgent society in which British people prioritise to a slightly greater extent their personal life than their professional life. (Hofstede Insights, 2017) This attitude can be observed by how British individuals divide their day and how they spend their leisure time.

In research from Haworth & Lewis (2005), a balance between work and leisure has been found to be key in preserving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of society, as well as the quality of life of professionals. Given the increasingly individualistic and competitive global working patterns, this balance is tipping towards larger periods of work. This creates time pressure and work overload, which generate excitement, as well as unpleasant and negative high arousal emotions such as psychological stress, anxiety, and guilt due to not spending time with family and friends. This emotional exhaustion can be alleviated through leisure activities that generate opposite

feelings: positive low arousal emotions such as relaxation and feeling good, as well as positive high arousal emotions such as feeling happy. (Haworth & Lewis, 2005, p.67)

However, longer hours of paid work, and not work overload, have also been positively correlated to job satisfaction, to a greater extent in white-collar than blue-collar occupations. This suggests that British people freely choose their work nowadays based on what they feel passionate and vocational about, and therefore do not realise the passing of time and experience an “emotional commitment to their professional occupation.” (Haworth & Lewis, 2005, p.74)

The Office for National Statistics published a report in 2015 on leisure time in the UK (Payne, 2017), which identified nine main leisure categories in the United Kingdom: participatory activities, socialising, cultural activities, resting and taking time out, sport or outdoor pursuits, hobbies, mass-media, eating out and travelling. The average weekly working hours for full-time workers (37 hrs) was very close to the weekly leisure time (34 hours), it could therefore be argued that British people allocate a maximum of spare time to leisure activities because they prioritise their basic human desires. The time spent in leisure activities varies according to age, area and income, for example, residents of Southern England spent up to one more hour a day on leisure in 2015 than residents of Northern Ireland, and low-income workers have less time for leisure activities as well as limited access to expensive leisure activities. (Leaker, 2022)

Despite there being many leisure categories to choose from, during the last decade, British people’s leisure time has been mostly occupied by watching television or online videos over extended periods of time, otherwise known as binge-watching. This activity is not constricted to television, as it also includes watching videos in video streaming platforms such as Netflix and HBO, that have gained a lot of popularity in recent years. The most popular broadcasts each year are consistently TV series, reality shows and sport tournaments (TV licensing, 2011), which have a similar emotional impact on viewers given that they generate high arousal emotions. These findings apply to all British viewers regardless of age, income or social group.

Binge-watching has become a habit among younger generations such as millennial and college students, who limit social interactions and lead a sedentary life by spending most of their leisure time watching series and documentaries, as a form of relaxation or entertainment. This activity has been found to yield more high-arousal negative emotions such as regret, guilt, loss of

control, disappointment, depression, anxiety and dependency, than positive emotions such as enthusiasm, anticipation pleasure, enjoyment, gratification and satisfaction, therefore it is considered to be a harmful practice. (Anozie, 2020)

In research from Flayelle et al. (2020), the authors talk about urges and rewards with binge-watching being a highly addictive practice where people feel an urge to excessively watch a series and experience a reward when watching for an extended period. This gratification makes them identify binge-watching as an emotion-regulation strategy, in other words, a way of coping with the emotional distress they experience at work and of managing negative pre-binge emotions such as stress, boredom, and procrastination. We could therefore expect a positive emotional reaction before and during binge-watching, but a negative emotional reaction when the series ends or when individuals undertake another activity.

Finally, individuals experience a release of three hormones when watching broadcasts: dopamine, linked to addiction; cortisol, linked to stress, and oxytocin, linked to empathy. Because series and films are based on emotionally charged stories, viewers empathise with the emotions of characters on screen, a phenomenon known as cognitive empathy. (Celeste, 2020) As a result, individuals will mimic the emotions of their favourite character, therefore it would be suitable to research what emotions are depicted and stimulated by the most popular broadcasts and characters nowadays.

3.6 Uncertainty Avoidance (with focus on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic)

As we can see in Graph 1, p. 10, The United Kingdom scores 35 in the Uncertainty Avoidance dimension, therefore British people exhibit a fairly weak Uncertainty Avoidance. (Hofstede Insights, 2017) They will experience low arousal emotions in an ambiguous, new and unexpected situation which has no clear outcomes such as ease, low stress, self-control, and low anxiety, accept life as it comes, and easily change jobs, rules, and even ideas to survive. (Hofstede, 2011)

The COVID-19 pandemic seems to be a fitting case study for the Uncertainty Avoidance dimension, since it caught the United Kingdom, as well as other countries, unprepared. On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global pandemic due to the rapid spread of the virus COVID-19. At the time, the virus was new to researchers, it had an unknown aetiology, an incomplete clinical course and was reaching unprecedented death rates around the world for our modern era (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). This led to a continuous recession crisis for which the social and economic outcomes such as unemployment rates, psychological impact and public health capacity could not be quantified early on. (Pak et al., 2020) Moreover, it could not be ascertained when the pandemic would end.

To study whether the United Kingdom exhibited a weak or strong Uncertainty Avoidance, we will observe how quickly and firmly the Government of the United Kingdom responded with sanitary measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, and how positively the British society reacted to these measures in the short- and long-term by discussing official statements from government websites, as well as opinion surveys issued during the crisis.

3.6.1 Government's Response

The Government exhibited from the beginning of the pandemic a dislike for written and unwritten rules (Hofstede, 2011). Former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and also a product of the British elite public boarding school system, declared during his first COVID-related speech on 23 March 2020: “No Prime Minister wants to enact measures like this,” when referring to the first national lockdown of the UK, which became legally enforceable on March 26 (Institute for Government, 2021). This was approximately two weeks after the WHO had remonstrated with governments for their “alarming lack of action” (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020), therefore the Government reacted much too slowly, displaying low arousal emotional reactions such as ease, lower stress, self-control, and low anxiety, (Hofstede, 2011) despite the urgency of the situation. Furthermore, there were extended periods of inaction between the COVID-19 alarms and the enforcement of preventive measures, as can be seen in the Timeline of UK government coronavirus lockdowns and restrictions, published by the think tank Institute for Government, as can be seen in Annex 3.

Boris Johnson further declared in his speech that uncertainty is inherent to life (Hofstede, 2011) and should be accepted: “At present there are just no easy options. The way ahead is hard, and it is still true that many lives will sadly be lost.” (Boris Johnson, 2020) He recognised the difficulty of the situation at hand and accepts that a negative outcome such as a future high death toll was unavoidable. Moreover, the Prime Minister appeared to be overly optimistic when he stated on 30 April 2020 that the United Kingdom’s infection rates were falling. (Institute for Government, 2021) By saying this, he focused on the present, the first wave of COVID-19, and did not anticipate more waves. The second wave arrived in October 2020, with 7,023 cases per day, which is a much larger number than the record of 5,146 cases per day announced on 8 April 2020 (Government of the United Kingdom, 2022b).

The British Government exhibited a high acceptance for deviant people, leaving citizens to choose whether they followed the rules or not, which leads to ambiguity and chaos. (Hofstede, 2011) Even though Johnson stated that “the police will enforce them (restrictions), including through fines and dispersing gatherings,” in reality citizens were felt and seen as competent towards authorities and no policies were enforced to control the population. The initial contact tracing was abandoned in March 2020 (British Medical Association, 2022), that is, right from the beginning of the pandemic. This lax enforcement of social restrictions resulted in thousands of breaches. As of September 2021, an estimated number of 300,000 travellers were suspected of breaking the quarantine rules when arriving to the United Kingdom (Wilkinson, 2021). Moreover, according to reports of the British Medical Association (BMA), public health notices were ambiguous during summer 2020, since there was a focus on ending restrictions rather than asking citizens to be cautious (British Medical Association, 2022).

In conclusion, the British Government displayed a very weak Uncertainty Avoidance. It did not plan thoroughly or coherently and had large periods of inaction, which contributed to the accelerated rates of infection. Because of this, as of December 2021, the UK was the European country with the worst economic production and COVID-related fatalities (Wright et al., 2022). This led to a general loss of confidence of the British public opinion and British doctors towards the Government. (British Medical Association, 2022)

3.6.2 Society's Response

In this section, we will align the findings of a report on the views of public opinion about the UK government during COVID-19 (Wright et al., 2022) with several societal characteristics of weak and strong Uncertainty Avoidance (Hofstede, 2011). The report establishes patterns of responses of over 70,000 British adults who were surveyed during the first six months of the pandemic by the COVID-19 Social Study.

The report's findings suggest that the Uncertainty Avoidance of the British society fluctuated considerably during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the first months, public opinion accepted the newness of the situation and were comfortable with the lack of information and data available. However, as the situation aggravated over the following months, the public opinion shifted towards a stronger Uncertainty Avoidance.

As the COVID-19 infection rates rose and the economic, social and health consequences worsened, public opinion shifted towards a need for clarity and structure, and expected the Government to have all the answers, which points towards strong Uncertainty Avoidance. Most citizens believed that the Government had not foreseen the negative consequences and was therefore unplanned and unprepared for the future, which raised many concerns. Moreover, according to the report, many British people claim to have experienced high arousal emotions such as anger towards the Government for their inefficiency and lack of action, as well as anxiety and sadness because they could not plan ahead. The largest topics discussed by respondents in the survey were worries and hopes for the future, as well as lack of openness, transparency, and planning. Both indicate that the uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic was increasingly perceived as a threat.

Once the Government was in the spotlight, the wider public responded with a negative low arousal emotional reaction in protest, showing apathy towards the official statements and ignoring preventive measures. This suggests a dislike for rules, which is a characteristic of weak Uncertainty Avoidance. As a result, even though individuals experienced negative high arousal emotions linked to strong Uncertainty Avoidance, their conscious emotional reaction was weak Uncertainty Avoidance. They were also experiencing a greater anxiety towards the current situation than towards a future rise of infection rates because of their behaviour. Moreover, there were no

significant complaints about having to adapt to a new working environment or changing jobs, which further indicates weak Uncertainty Avoidance. However, there were also responsible citizens who followed the sanitary measures, became intolerant towards deviant people and urged the Government to impose tighter regulations to hinder non-compliance of preventive measures. As a result, British society became polarised between weak and strong Uncertainty Avoidance.

In conclusion, although Hofstede calculated that the United Kingdom exhibited a low Uncertainty Avoidance, this dimension depends on the circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic was an emergency that created extreme uncertainty and generated contradicting strong and weak uncertainty responses, without a clear trend in either direction.

3.7 Power Distance (with focus on the British political system)

The Power Distance dimension focuses on human inequality. As we can see in Graph 1, the United Kingdom scores 35 in this dimension, therefore it has a fairly small Power Distance, British citizens will display a low acceptance for differences in power and wealth among members of society. (Hofstede Insights, 2017)

The United Kingdom is constituted by England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It has a parliamentary democracy and a constitutional monarchy, where the Prime Minister and Cabinet, controlled by the House of Commons, hold the executive power and the monarch has a ceremonial and diplomatic role. The division of power in the United Kingdom allows for a more even distribution of the same, and reduces the chances of corruption. (The Government of the United Kingdom, 2022a)

According to the 2020 European Social Survey (ESS), public opinion in the United Kingdom is quite pessimistic about the fairness, justice, and distribution of wealth and power in the country. This seems to contradict their general satisfaction for how democracy works. (Curtice et al., 2020)

This is because British people, in general, have a strong sense of righteousness. When they feel strongly about an unfair situation within their society, they are very pessimistic (negative low

arousal emotion) about it and immediately act and become politically engaged because they trust that by pressuring the social, political and judicial institutions, they will solve the issue at hand (conscious high arousal emotional reaction). This attitude contributes to building a more democratic society. Indeed, the United Kingdom scored 93 in democracy in 2021 (this score considers political rights and civil liberties). (Freedom House, 2021) However, this attitude depends on individual's life circumstances, since people with low income and education have a lower political participation. (Curtice et al.)

Over the last decade, many British people have been very active fighting for human rights and participating in social movements such as:

- The LGBTQ+ movement aims to respect human rights of the LGBTQ+ community and supports same-sex marriage. According to research, 85% of British people are supportive of family members who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual (Nolsoe, 2021)
- The #MeToo movement raises awareness against sexual abuse and harassment. More than 10 000 British school students have shared and reported their experience of sexual harassment. (Makoni, 2021)
- The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement fights to eradicate white supremacy and racism. Tens of thousands participated in BLM marches across the UK. (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2022)
- The Party-gate scandal was a massive protest regarding the irresponsible behaviour of politicians during the COVID-19 pandemic. Members of Parliament suspected of such behaviour and the Prime Minister were pressured to resign for not respecting COVID-19 restrictions like everybody else. (Amos, 2022) This is a clear example of small Power Distance, given that scandals terminate political careers and government members were substituted under peaceful circumstances. (Hofstede, 2011)
- The March of the Mummies demanded more support for disadvantaged families, and 15,000 citizens participated. (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2022)

In conclusion, British people are very much aware that people regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation and other characteristics should be equal under the law. We can expect negative emotions such as dissatisfaction, distrust, and scepticism from British people regarding power inequality and a very active and energetic (high arousal) emotional response.

We have focused on politics to address this dimension; however, it can be extrapolated to other areas such as school and family. With a low acceptance of power inequality, we would expect the parent-child and teacher-student relationships to be founded on respect more than fear, where parents and teachers educate children, but at the same time provide them with freedom to make their own choices. (Hofstede, 2011)

4. Materials and Methods

Based on the theoretical framework above, this section will describe the objectives and hypotheses that will shape the collection of data through a quantitative survey. We will then try to establish the research procedures and data analysis methods implemented in order to collect data that might shed light on the theories and premises on culture, conscious emotional reactions and cultural dimensions with regard to the British culture that have been elucidated.

4.1 Objectives, Questions, and Hypotheses

The primary aim of this dissertation is to explain how British culture shapes emotional reactions in the United Kingdom, in other words, how this culture influences the way in which British people display their emotions. To establish this, Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory will be applied, and the behaviour and decision-making of British people will be investigated within four cultural dimensions: Power Distance, Individualism, Uncertainty Avoidance and Indulgence.

This dissertation also seeks to determine to what degree culture has evolved over the last few years through globalisation and whether it is as rigid as Hofstede claims, by contrasting the

cultural dimension scores provided by Hofstede in the late 1980s and shown in Graph 1, p. 10, with the current cultural dimension scores in the United Kingdom that we will calculate in the present dissertation. Moreover, this paper intends to establish what conscious emotional reactions are governed by cultural gender roles and emotional norms of society.

It is hoped that this study will convey the complexity of culture, thus generating a greater understanding and empathy towards a foreign culture, given the plethora of circumstances and situations that could engender an emotional reaction, in contrast with the limited number of situations that will be addressed in the present investigation. By choosing the author Geert Hofstede, culture is being observed from a holistic prism, since the Cultural Dimensions Theory observes culture from many angles and is open to the possibility of including more cultural dimensions as investigation continues. Similarly, emotions in everyday life are complex and hard to pinpoint, and consequently they will be discussed in terms of arousal and valence. Given that there is little research into the causes and consequences of emotions in everyday life, this is intended to be a pilot-study to fill the experimental void and suggest future research.

Based on the current state of research discussed in the Theoretical Framework, it is hypothesised that British people will exhibit highly individualistic and quite indulgent traits, as well as a low Power Distance and a weak Uncertainty Avoidance. It is expected that over the last few decades culture will have evolved due to rapid globalisation and a greater cultural exchange, which could have mitigated the cultural dimensional traits since individuals seek to adapt to new behavioural patterns, for example by being less independent and indulgent. As a result, the scores for each dimension would be expected to be milder, tending towards 50 in Hofstede's graph for the cultural dimensions of the United Kingdom, as shown on Graph 1, p. 10.

4.2 Methodology

The present section outlines the method taken to collect and analyse data.

A Google-form survey of 22 questions was created online. It was composed of four questions to determine cultural and gender identity of subjects, three questions on the Power Distance dimension, four questions on the Individualism dimension, four questions on the Uncertainty Avoidance dimension, five questions on the Indulgence dimension and two questions

focused solely on emotions. A pilot study was conducted with an eligible respondent, who recommended discarding a question on religion as it was deemed too personal, even though it is relevant for the Uncertainty Avoidance dimension.

The questions on cultural dimensions were designed using a 3-point or 5-point Likert scale to represent the level of agreement of respondents with a specific trait of a given cultural dimension, which allows the researcher to calculate an average dimensional score. The answers for both scales range from 0 to 100, rising by 50 points in the 3-point Likert scale and by 25 points in the 5-point Likert scale. The difference in the number of points on the scale will allow respondents to nuance their answer, such as the level of agreement or interest.

In total, there were eight Multiple Choice questions, five Linear questions, four Short Answer questions, four Checkbox questions and one Dropdown question. The latter was designed to prevent the survey from being too cluttered. The ends of the scale for Linear questions were customised from *Strongly agree* to *Strongly disagree*, and from *Very important* to *Not at all important* and in some cases with a scale based on the dimension, such as from *Vice-Chancellor of the university* to *Students' association* in the case of Power Distance. The data obtained were both qualitative and quantitative, and in five questions subjects were given the opportunity to elaborate further with a short answer. All questions were compulsory and shuffled so that one answer would not interfere with the next one on the same cultural dimension. The researcher left her contact information in case the respondents had any queries about the survey.

Given that culture varies according to region or country, age group and level of education, the audience targeted was English students at university level. All respondents belonged to Generation Z. Given that subjects were enrolled in higher education, adult illiteracy was not an issue, and the survey was written in plain English, without technical terms. The majority of respondents were from England, which is why the two Welsh participants and the Northern Irish participant were withdrawn from the survey, thus non-probability and convenience sampling was conducted.

The survey was self-administered, ten subjects who met the survey's criteria received a link to the survey through messaging apps such as Telegram and WhatsApp on 5 January 2023. They were then asked to share the link with ten acquaintances who were also eligible, and responses were

accepted until 12 January 2023 due to time constraints. This snow-ball method was necessary since the researcher was not based in the United Kingdom at the time, but carried risks, for example, there could be false respondents that did not meet the criteria, which is why age, ethnic origin and cultural identity were asked at the beginning of the survey. Indeed, a subject who was discarded stated: “I was born in Portugal and moved to London when I was 13. I do not identify with British culture, but with Portuguese and Indian.”

Moreover, asking respondents to disclose sensitive personal information such as gender identity could have reduced cooperation, however the question was necessary given that gender roles would be studied, and consequently it was decided that the survey would not require them to input name or email address to protect their identity. They also had the choice to self-describe or select the option *prefer not to state*. The description block stressed that the survey is completely anonymous and confidential, and also stated no answer is right or wrong, since social desirability was a further concern: individuals could answer according to what is considered appropriate or valid in their culture (conscious emotional reaction), instead of what they truly experienced (immediate emotional reaction), which is the focus of this study.

The survey yielded 40 answers, and three subjects were discarded for the reasons mentioned above. The sample was considered sufficiently large to at least initiate a study into cultural patterns and as a general indicator of how British culture might shape emotions in the United Kingdom.

Finally, a dimensional score was calculated for each question with a Likert scale by attributing each answer a numerical value from 0 to 100, multiplying each numerical value by the number of responses, and dividing by the number of respondents. The same operation was carried out separately for subjects who identified as male, female, monocultural and bicultural/multicultural. The subject that selected the answer *prefer not to state* in the cultural identity question 4, was not taken into account for the culture comparison, and the subject that also gave the same answer for gender identity was not included in the gender comparison.

To establish what emotional reactions are cultural-based or gender-based, the average score for monocultural and bicultural/multicultural subjects and for male and female subjects was contrasted. Given that personality influences responses as well as culture and gender roles, only score differences of more than 5 points were considered significant. Please note that, unless

specified otherwise, all scores and average scores mentioned in the following section have been calculated with the results of the self-administered survey, using the Likert scales method described in the Methodology section.

5. Analysis of Results

This section outlines the most significant patterns and findings, illustrated with graphs and charts from the original survey (all results are contained in Annex 2). It is important to note that the charts that asked for a number were edited after compiling the final results, since some respondents answered *zero*, *0* or *none*, which were registered as three different answers by the survey engine. A respondent mistakenly stated *no* when answering whether she repressed emotions, but then offered examples of situations where she did, therefore her answer was modified to *yes*.

As already stated in the previous section, culture depends on factors such as age group, region and level of education, therefore these were our control variables. Most of the respondents were university students, currently enrolled in a university in the United Kingdom. They were born between the years 1998 and 2004, which lie within the generation group called Generation Z. They also stated that they were born and/or raised in England. As a result, all the respondents who did not share one of these three characteristics were excluded.

Moreover, in terms of identity, 23 subjects identified as female and 13 as male, therefore it was possible to study responses separately according to gender and investigate whether the patterns diverged, which might possibly point towards a gender role. For instance, when asked about their favourite character in a movie or series, all respondents pointed towards drama or comedy movies and series and 73% towards a protagonist male character. The reason why male protagonists may appear to be more likeable or popular could lie in the gender roles they are allocated by the film industry, such as being more assertive and independent.

The majority of subjects, 20 in total, were bicultural, for example Respondent 18's identity is configured by Turkish and English culture, and 16 were monocultural, which suggests that England is a melting pot. One subject preferred not to state whether they were monocultural or

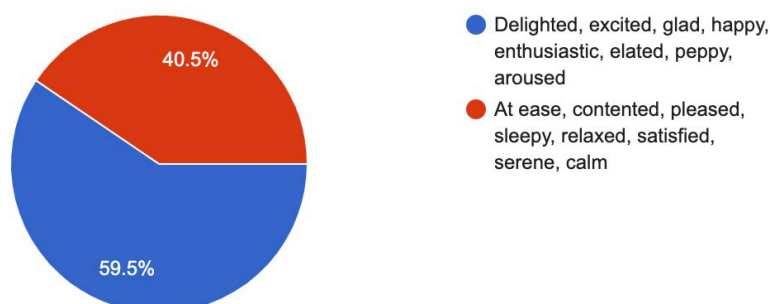
bicultural. It was therefore decided that when the patterns of bicultural and monocultural responses would be assessed, the subject that preferred not to state their cultural identity would not be taken into account.

We will now observe the responses to the survey, focusing on the five graphs with the most salient patterns, and decide how our results respond to our hypotheses and the main purpose of this dissertation, which is to investigate how culture shapes emotions in the United Kingdom.

5.1 Main Patterns of Results

As hypothesised, the emotional regulation of the subjects of this survey is influenced by British culture. It is a Western Culture; therefore, it favours high arousal emotions, and 60% of respondents preferred high arousal emotions over low arousal emotions, as can be seen in Graph 2 below. There does not seem to be a difference in answers between monocultural and bicultural people, especially in comparison with students whose identity is configured by an Eastern culture, therefore this could suggest that in terms of emotions, the British culture is predominant over other cultures. There seems to be a very marked gender difference, 85% of male subjects preferred high arousal emotions, whereas only 50% of female subjects prefer this group of emotions. This indicates a distribution of emotional roles in the United Kingdom, where the male population favours high arousal emotions, and their conscious emotional reaction will be purposefully high arousal.

Graph 2: High and Low Arousal Emotions



Source: Own survey

The majority of the students who responded (76%) are aware that they try to repress or ignore certain emotions, and several mentioned that their main concern was what others would think of them. This could be linked to the idiom keep a stiff upper lip which has been traditionally associated to British people, and implies not showing negative high arousal conscious emotional reactions.

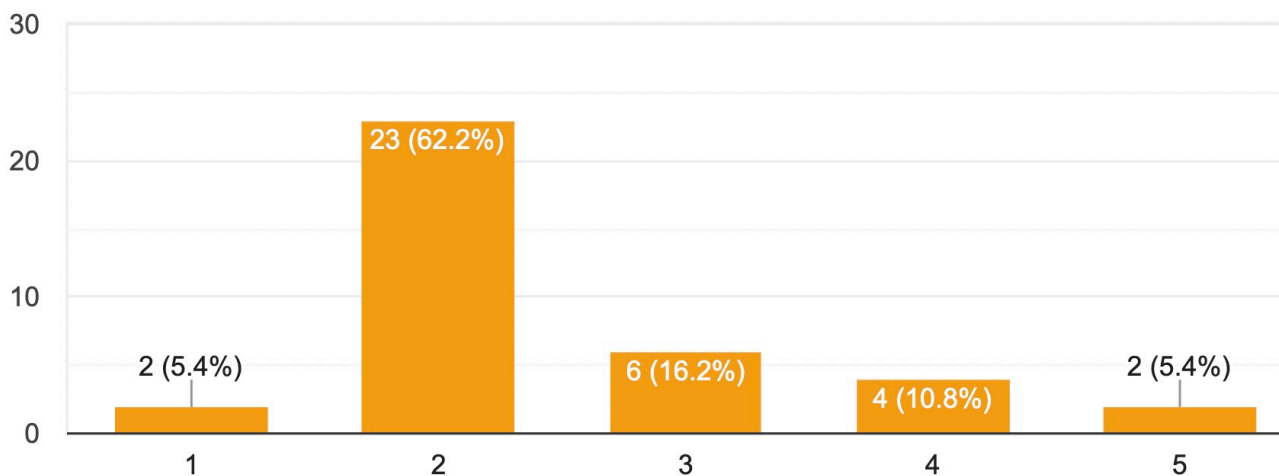
Despite the wide-spread preference for high arousal emotions, ten respondents commented that it is precisely high arousal emotional reactions that they prefer to repress or ignore, as we can see in table 1 below:

Table 1: Emotional Reactions

Happiness	Sadness	Cluster of emotions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smiling/laughing even if I do not feel like it. • Smile even though I am extremely elated • Happy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would prefer not to cry in public because I do not like the questions. • Crying in front of people • Sometimes I hide being upset because I do not like people asking me what is wrong • Crying in public • Not crying so easily • Hiding how I feel and trying not to cry in public etc, not always being fully honest about how I feel for fear of putting a 'downer' on. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You need to pick your emotions depending on who you are with and the context, e.g. I have a nervous laugh so at a funeral or something sad I have to focus on suppressing it. • Holding back emotions because of how others may think/react • Sometimes unable to feel the emotion even though I may be able to speak about it. E.g. I feel upset about this because of x. But will not fully feel the emotion. Will simply rationalise the problem. • Suppressing anger, not telling people when they have upset me.

The subjects of this survey value working for the common good, as indicated by Graph 3 below, and they had an average score of 37.61. As we saw in the methodology section, 0 represents collectivism and 100 represents individualism. There was no significant difference between monocultural and bicultural respondents, but male subjects value gave less value to their contribution to the common good, which could indicate that they are more inclined towards competition. However, when asked about how important it is for them to be among the best workers, they did not seem to be more competitive than their female counterparts, therefore the reason behind their Individualism could be that they link their professional activities to self-realisation and personal growth. This mind-set does not necessarily originate from the British Education System. Respondents were asked if competition in school (winning awards, prizes, house trophies and so forth) had motivated them to work harder, and the final result calculated, 55.41 is ambivalent since it is close to 50, but still tends towards individualism. Some students stated that they strongly agreed, whereas others replied that their British school had not exerted an influence whatsoever in their competitive spirit.

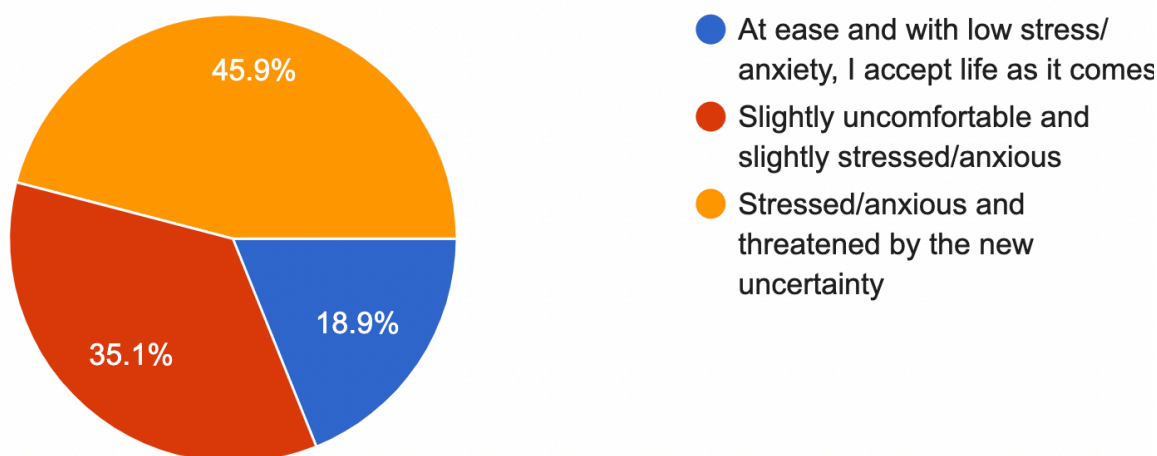
Graph 3: Individualism at Work



Source: Own survey

As we can appreciate in Graph 4 below, respondents tended towards a strong Uncertainty Avoidance, with an average score of 63.51, where 0 represents weak Uncertainty Avoidance and 100 strong Uncertainty Avoidance. Female subjects exhibit a stronger Uncertainty Avoidance than male subjects, and this could signify that women were more vulnerable during the pandemic in 2020 and therefore fear a new pandemic that might negatively impact them again.

Graph 4: Uncertainty Avoidance in the Event of a New Pandemic



Source: Own survey

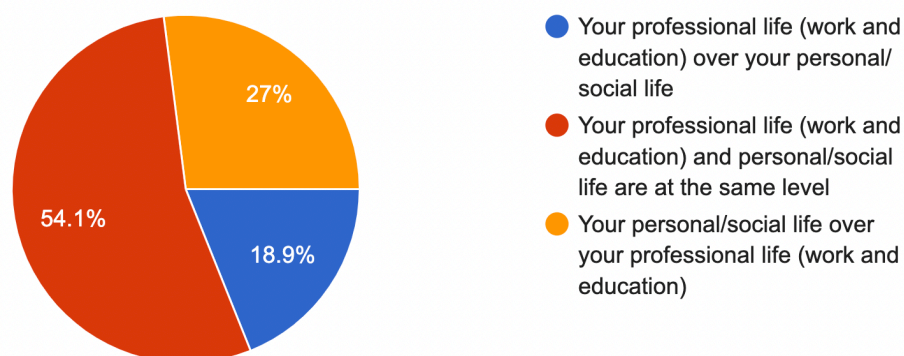
When asked about how well the British Government responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the vast majority of respondents exhibited a strong Uncertainty Avoidance and believed that the British government should have been more cautious to hinder negative or unknown economic, social and health outcomes. There was no difference between bicultural and monocultural subjects, but female subjects portrayed again a slightly greater Uncertainty Avoidance than male subjects, which further indicates that they were more vulnerable during the 2020 pandemic.

It seems however that respondents only exhibit a strong Uncertainty Avoidance when drawing from previous experience. When questioned about the importance they allocate to setting rules, 84% of respondents believed that rules are necessary, but they can be breached once in a while, which suggests a weak Uncertainty Avoidance. The responses were consistently the same,

regardless of cultural and gender identity. It could also be argued that the students who responded also exhibit a strong Uncertainty Avoidance by drawing experience from others around them, which is understood to be second-hand experience, since despite their young age, the respondents stated that they were slightly worried about death.

As we can see in graph 5, the subjects of this survey in general prioritise their personal life slightly more than their professional life, except for monocultural students and male students. The survey also highlighted that respondents not only value their personal success more than their contribution to society, but they also value their work more than their relationships with friends and family. They express their preference for working in something they are less passionate about, if they gain a high salary, as opposed to females who wish to pursue their passion at work. However, this does not mean that the male students set aside their emotional needs, since all male subjects claim that it is important for them to have fun during the day, more so than female respondents have suggested, therefore this indicated that male subjects are driven by personal fulfilment, both professional and personal.

Graph 5: Balance of Professional and Personal Life



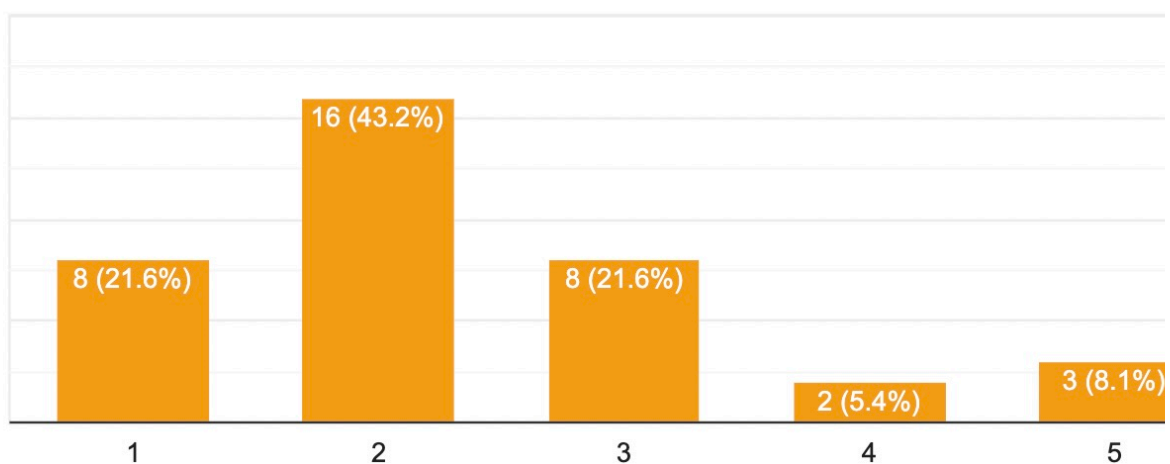
Source: Own survey

All subjects spend their leisure time in at least three activities, which are both outdoor and indoor activities, and the majority participate in social networking, socialising, taking time out and eating out. On average, subjects spend 2 hours and 42 minutes per day watching streaming services,

that is, approximately 19 hours per week, therefore they practise binge-watching regularly and are quite indulgent.

As we can see in graph 6 below, respondents are aware of discrimination based on sex or gender and believe it is tougher for women to reach occupational prestige, since the majority state that it is quite hard for a woman to become a Member of Parliament in the House of Commons of the United Kingdom. Female and bicultural respondents agree on this statement more than male respondents; therefore, they feel more discouraged about the fairness of the political system. Moreover, subjects have participated in an average of 0.89 human rights marches in their lifetime. Male subjects participated in 0.31 marches in contrast to female subjects, who are much more active and participated in 1.21 marches.

Graph 6: Perceived Gender Equality in Political Leadership



Source: Own survey

All respondents are very much aware of the hierarchy within an organisation. Most students will speak with the students' association if they have a suggestion or an improvement, therefore with someone at their hierarchical level. Some might occasionally speak to a professor or an academic advisor, therefore respondents exhibit a strong Power Distance.

5.2 Discussion of Results

England is a very international country, as we can see, most subjects are bicultural. Exposure to a multicultural environment has had a considerable impact on the emotions they repress and favour: even though Western civilisations tend towards high arousal emotions, a considerable number of students preferred low arousal emotions such as calm and ease. Moreover, even though high arousal emotions were still predominant, 76% of respondents preferred to control their immediate high arousal emotional reaction, regardless of the valence, and this further indicates that keeping a stiff upper lip is more of a reality than a stereotype of England. Subjects who repressed sadness expressed that their main concern was how others might perceive them, which suggests that negative high arousal emotions are a taboo in British culture. We can therefore conclude that the phenomenon of Hwabyung in Korea, which involves repressing high arousal emotions and that damages mental and emotional wellbeing, is also an issue in England.

We can assume from the data that English bicultural university students are fully acculturated, given that their dimensional scores are close to those of monocultural students. However, their scores are slightly higher for Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance. This suggests that these dimensions are learnt to a greater extent at home, for example, in the case of Power Distance, it could be expected that parents from another culture teach their bicultural English children a greater Power Distance by not treating them as equals, as opposed to monocultural British parents, who exhibit a low Power Distance.

5.2.1 Individualism Dimension

Competition at school is influential during school life, but only exerts a small impact on working life. Most students agree that competition at school has motivated them to work harder, and indeed they place a lot of value on being among the best workers in their organisation. Male subjects were slightly more individualistic than female subjects, they value their professional life more than their personal life and were more competitive at school, perhaps due to gender

stereotypes in the patriarchal society such as boys being expected to be the strongest in sports, the breadwinner of their family and girls to be the care-taker of children and the elderly.

Furthermore, the students who responded do exhibit several collectivist traits, such as recognising the importance of their work as a contribution to the common good, and they value their personal relationships over their work, which is important for their emotional and mental wellbeing. In conclusion, the subjects of this survey will experience positive emotions in their work if their performance is above average and their activities are valuable to society, otherwise their immediate emotional reaction will be discouragement or disappointment. As a result, the subjects of this survey are slightly less individualistic than Hofstede's scores suggest, contribution to society is important to them, but they still observe their actions from a prism of self-realisation.

5.2.2 Indulgence Dimension

The American film industry influences subjects heavily, they binge-watch American films or series regularly, and the most popular genres are drama and comedy, which encourage high arousal emotions. During the day, subjects tended to pursue the alleviation of negative high arousal emotions from work such as anxiety through a wide range of activities, both indoors and outdoors, that often involve positive high arousal emotions such as excitement, and low arousal emotions such as relaxation. Most subjects practice binge-watching, which is a harmful practice that takes an emotional toll because of its addictive nature.

Moreover, subjects seem to have a perception of control over their life, as they are inclined to choose a job they enjoy and are passionate about, rather than a job that is very well paid. Male subjects value having fun more than female subjects, and at the same time place a high salary over their passion, which reinforces our assumption that they are more individualistic. As a result, the respondents tended to exhibit highly indulgent traits, to a greater extent than Hofstede's score suggests, perhaps because they leverage their youth in comparison with their elders.

5.2.3 Uncertainty Avoidance Dimension

Despite their young age, subjects expressed negative high arousal emotions such as anxiety and stress in the event of death or a new pandemic, which indicates a very strong Uncertainty

Avoidance rather than a low one as Hofstede predicted in the late 1980s. Since subjects are drawing their concerns from experience and their general dissatisfaction with how the Government of the United Kingdom dealt with ambiguity and chaos in 2020, this suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic produced a cultural trauma that is anchored in their mind-set. Female subjects expressed a greater need to feel reassured about the future through greater clarity and structure, they experienced negative high arousal emotions to a greater extent than male subjects, which suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic had a disproportionate impact on female well-being. Finally, subjects exhibit lenient norms, even though they understand the importance of rules, they do not experience remorse in breaching rules once in a while, which further reinforces the idea that only a similar and precedented situation with chaos and disorder raises concerns about the future.

5.2.4 Power Distance Dimension

The subjects of this survey exhibit a low Power Distance, which agrees with Hofstede's score. They do, however, experience a higher Power Distance in an organisation such as university, which could be explained by their young age, since they still have a reminiscence of not questioning their superiors such as parents and teachers. The majority of subjects feel more comfortable speaking to the students' association and academic advisor and consequently people who they are close with or at the same hierarchical level.

It seems that bicultural subjects and female subjects are pessimistic about receiving an equal treatment, since they were the group that felt the most discouraged about becoming a member of Parliament, but at the same time were those who participated in marches and social movements to defend human rights. Two subjects elaborated that they participated in feminist and Black Lives Matter (BLM) movements, which are social movements for women's rights and ethnic minority rights, and that they felt compelled to stand up against unfair circumstances.

We can therefore conclude that even though the students who responded experience pessimism towards the current distribution of power in the country, a negative low arousal emotion, they feel encouraged to stand up for their rights in unfair circumstances and their conscious emotional reaction is to exhibit their dissatisfaction. As a result, they display a low Power Distance.

6. Conclusion

We embarked on this cultural research to study how emotions, culture and communication are interwoven. We considered Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory as a suitable framework, in which each cultural dimension could be linked to many contemporary fields and events to understand what impact they have on a collective mind-set, which has appeared to be considerable. It has been found that culture shapes the emotional reactions displayed by individuals, since the majority of subjects from the United Kingdom exhibited consistent patterns of behaviour and emotional reactions in a given situation, whether it was a pandemic, social injustice, or competition in the workplace. A general tendency was observed among respondents towards a strong uncertainty avoidance, high power distance, indulgence and collectivism. Subjects were aware that they preferred high arousal emotions, but they repress conscious emotional reactions since the main social norm is to not exaggerate emotions, regardless of their valence, which potentially leads to a negative impact on their emotional well-being. Male subjects attempted to regulate their inner emotional state towards high arousal emotions, whereas female counterparts satisfied their core human emotions by fighting for their rights and pursuing their vocational passion.

This investigation suggests that cultural dimensions could potentially be used to predict the emotional reactions of a collective towards an event or field, the researcher would have to link the field to a particular cultural dimension and study the position of a collective within that dimension. We can also conclude that culture is not fixed, since Hofstede's scores from the late 1980s differ to those calculated in the present dissertation. This research could be deemed as valuable to new transversal contribution across several fields of research: in psychology, to understand how culture is involved in the mental processes and behaviour of individuals; in communication studies, to seek cultural knowledge that underpins the production of messages, and lastly, translation and interpreting, to decode implicit meaning within discourse. This dissertation could eventually lead to future research questions; by investigating a plethora of contemporary fields, researchers could predict more accurately which fields are more influential on each dimension, and how emotional reactions of British people vary within several control variables such as age group, socioeconomic group, region, ethnicity, educational level, among other areas. Finally, we have focused on contemporary fields, but historical events also underpin the current mind-set of collectives, and there are overarching phenomena such as globalisation and the film industry that bring all existing cultures closer together.

7. Annexes

Annex 1: Questionnaire “Culture & Emotions in the UK”

This survey is 100% anonymous and confidential, no answer is right or wrong! Please share this link with a couple of friends to help me reach enough responses.

*(...) indicates a space for respondents to write

1. What country are you from?

(Reminder: for this survey you must include a country of the UK. It is possible to be from 2 or more countries, for example, Turkey and Wales)

2. Age

3. Gender Identity

Male/Female/Non-Binary/Prefer not to state/Prefer to self-describe: (...)

4. Besides British culture, is there another culture you identify with?

(This could be your parent/tutor’s culture or the culture of a country you have lived in for an extended period of time)

Yes, please state: (...)

No

Prefer not to state

5. If you had to live with one of these sets of emotions, which one would you ideally pick?

Option 1: Delighted, excited, glad, happy, enthusiastic, elated, peppy, aroused

Option 2: At ease, contented, pleased, sleepy, relaxed, satisfied, serene, calm

6. Do you sometimes feel the need to repress or ignore your emotions?

(For example: not crying in public, not fighting back, smiling even if you don’t feel like it...)

Yes/No/Other: (...)

7. How important is it for you to work for the “common good”?

5-point scale from “Very important” to “Not at all important”

8. Name your favourite character + the movie/series/etc. it is from

9. **How would you feel if there was another pandemic in 2023** (*also with unknown economic, social and health outcomes*)?

- A. At ease and with low stress/anxiety, I accept life as it comes
- B. Slightly uncomfortable and slightly stressed/anxious
- C. Stressed/anxious and threatened by the new uncertainty

10. **Which leisure activities do you usually spend most time on?**

- A. Mass-media (social networking, video games, Netflix, HBO, TV...)
- B. Participatory activities
- C. Socialising
- D. Cultural activities
- E. Resting and taking time out
- F. Sport or outdoor pursuits
- G. Hobbies
- H. Eating out
- I. Travelling
- J. Other: (...)

11. **How important do you think it is to set rules?**

- A. Very necessary, rules must be followed even if you don't agree with them
- B. Necessary, even though you can breach a rule once in a while
- C. Unnecessary, I might not follow rules if others don't follow them either, or if I don't agree with them

12. **Has competition in school (winning awards, prizes, house trophies, etc.) motivated you to work harder?**

5-point scale from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree"

13. **How important is it for you to have fun during the day?**

5-point scale from "Very important" to "Not at all important"

14. **What do you prioritise more?**

- A. Your professional life (work and education) over your personal/social life
- B. Your professional life (work and education) and personal/social life are at the same level
- C. Your personal/social life over your professional life (work and education)

15. **How would you rank the British Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020?**

- A. Great, there was perfect clarity and structure
- B. OK, there was ambiguity and chaos, but it was unavoidable given the circumstances

C. Poor, more could have been done and there was insufficient planning and preparation

16. You have a suggestion for improving your faculty. Who would you discuss it with?

- A. Vice-Chancellor of the University
- B. Dean / Vice-Dean of your faculty
- C. Academic advisor
- D. Professor / lecturer
- E. Students' association

17. How many marches and/or social events to defend human rights have you participated in?

(...)

18. Average hours per day you spend watching TV/streaming service (Netflix, HBO, YouTube videos)

(...)

19. Congrats, you just landed a new job! How important is it for you to be the best worker or among the top 5 workers?

5-point scale from "Very important" to "Not at all important"

20. Your friend wants to become an MP in the UK. Do you think they would be more likely to get the job if they were a man?

5-point scale from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree"

21. What kind of work would you choose?

- A. Working in what I am passionate about, with a modest but sufficient salary.
- B. Working in what I am mildly passionate about, with an average salary.
- C. Working in what I am not passionate about, with a very high salary.

22. Do you fear death?

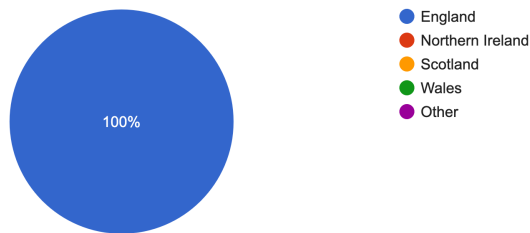
5-point scale from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree"

Annex 2: List of Graphs “Culture & Emotions in the UK”

Question 1

1. What country are you from? (Reminder: for this survey you must include a country of the UK. It is possible to be from 2 or more countries, for example, Turkey and Wales)

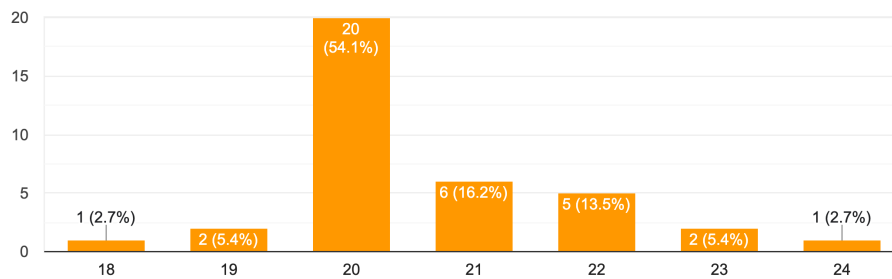
37 respuestas



Question 2

2. Age

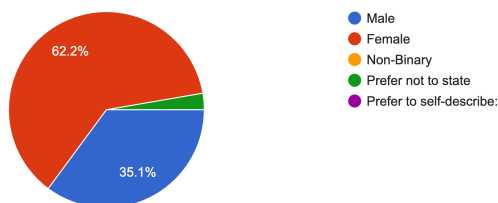
37 responses



Question 3

3. Gender identity

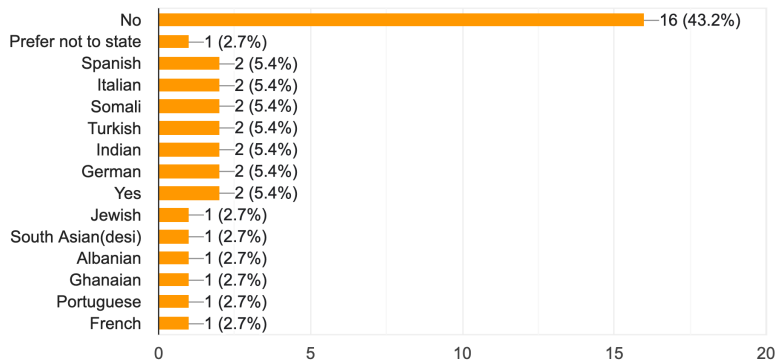
37 responses



Question 4

4. Besides British culture, is there another culture you identify with? (This could be your parent/tutor's culture or the culture of a country you have lived in for an extended period of time)

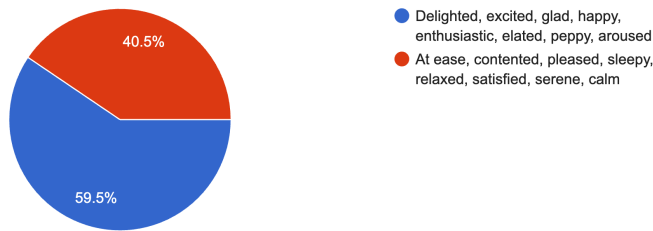
37 responses



Question 5

5. If you had to live with one of these sets of emotions, which one would you ideally pick?

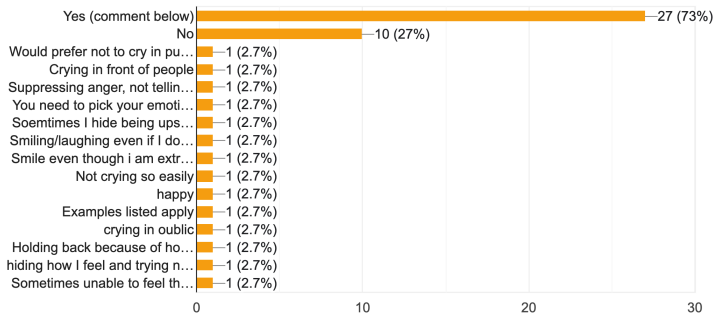
37 responses



Question 6

6. Do you sometimes feel the need to repress or ignore your emotions? (For example: not crying in public, not fighting back, smiling even if you don't feel like it...)

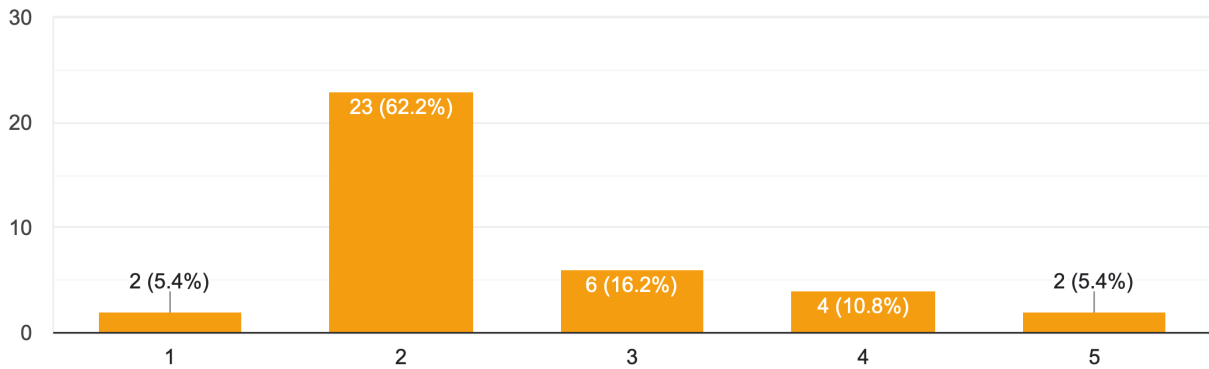
37 responses



Question 7

7. How important is it for you to work for the “common good”?

37 responses



Question 8

This question produced a list of 37 fictional characters from drama or comedy movies and series. 73% of subjects chose a male character, and only three male subjects chose a female character. 59% of movies/series were American, 27% British and 14% from another culture (Spanish, Japanese, Italian, Australian, Chinese):

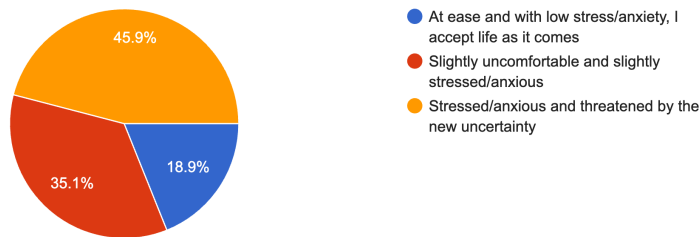
1. Rebel Wilson from *The Hustle*
2. Midnight mark- boat that rocked
3. Olivia Pope from *Scandal*
4. Harry potter
5. Elio's dad - *Call me by your name*
6. Tommy shelby
7. forrest gump
8. Daenerys Targaryen, *Game of Thrones*
9. Tommy Shelby - *Peaky Blinders*
10. Nemo from *finding nemo*
11. La marquesita *Élite*
12. Ashoka Tano - *Star Wars*
13. *The Dude (The Big Lebowski)*
14. Nya the water ninja from *Ninjaog*
15. Santana *glee*
16. Remi from *Ratatouille*
17. Michael scofield from *prison break*
18. Emily from *Emily in Paris*
19. Harvey Suits
20. Captain America in *Civil War*
21. Tommy Shelby, *Peaky Blinders*
22. Eloise from *Bridgerton*
23. *SpongeBob SquarePants + SpongeBob SquarePants*
24. Groot - *Guardians of the galaxy*

- 25. Spiderman
- 26. Too many :((Klaus Mikaelson - The Vampire Diaries / The Originals)
- 27. Eric from Sex Education
- 28. dot from eastenders
- 29. Coach carter/ coach carter
- 30. Mike - Breaking Bad
- 31. Christopher Moltisanti - The Sopranos
- 32. Anne Shirley from Anne with an E Netflix Series, Quinni from Heartbreak high on Netflix, Katniss Everdeen, Hunger Games,
- 33. Jim- the Office
- 34. Emily Dickinson - Dickinson
- 35. Hermione (Harry Potter), Aunt Polly (Peaky Blinders), Fleabag, + lots more!
- 36. Gojo Satoru, Jujutsu Kaisen
- 37. Sherlock Holmes (Benedict Cumberbatch) - Sherlock

Question 9

9. How would you feel if there was another pandemic in 2023 (also with unknown economic, social and health outcomes)?

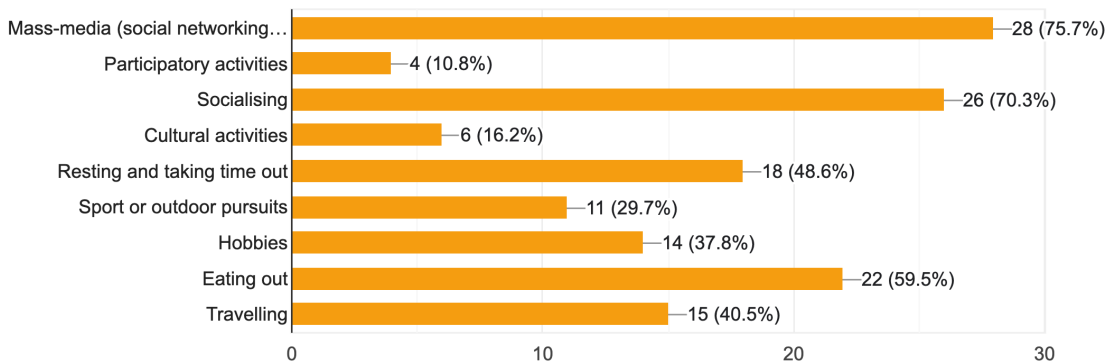
37 responses



Question 10

10. Which leisure activities do you usually spend most time on?

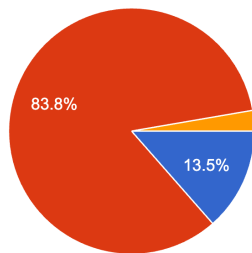
37 responses



Question 11

11. How important do you think it is to set rules?

37 responses

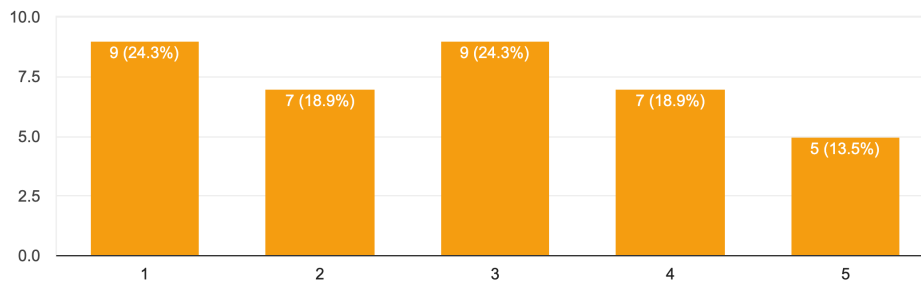


- Very necessary, rules must be followed even if you don't agree with them
- Necessary, even though you can breach a rule once in a while
- Unnecessary, I might not follow rules if others don't follow them either, or if I don't agree with them

Question 12

12. Has competition in school (winning awards, prizes, house trophies, etc.) motivated you to work harder?

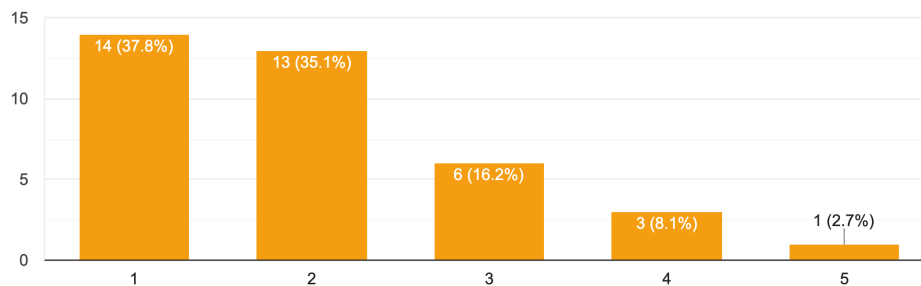
37 responses



Question 13

13. How important is it for you to have fun during the day?

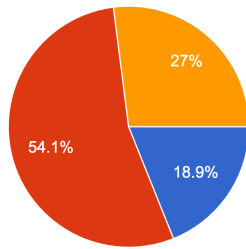
37 responses



Question 14

14. What do you prioritise more?

37 responses

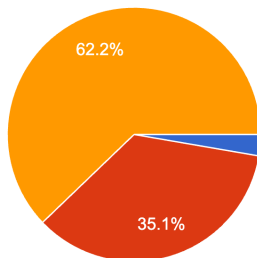


- Your professional life (work and education) over your personal/social life
- Your professional life (work and education) and personal/social life are at the same level
- Your personal/social life over your professional life (work and education)

Question 15

15. How would you rank the British Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020?

37 responses

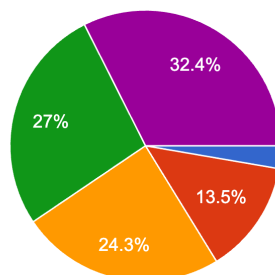


- Great, there was perfect clarity and structure
- OK, there was ambiguity and chaos, but it was unavoidable given the circumstances
- Poor, more could have been done and there was insufficient planning and preparation

Question 16

16. You have a suggestion for improving your faculty. Who would you discuss it with?

37 responses

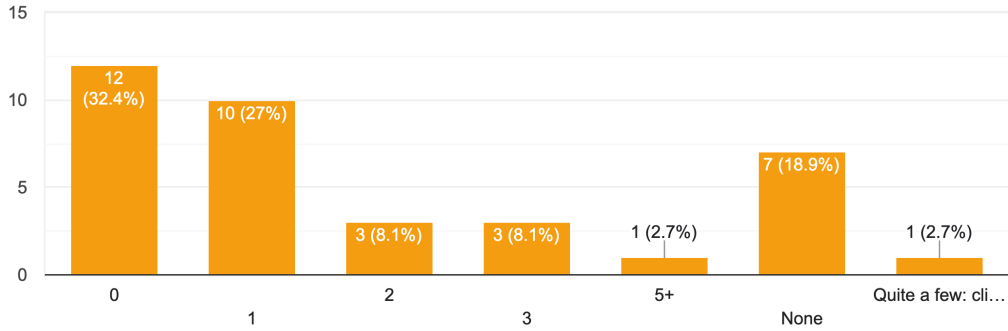


- Vice-Chancellor of the University
- Dean / Vice-Dean of your faculty
- Academic advisor
- Professor / lecturer
- Students' association

Question 17

17. How many marches and/or social events to defend human rights have you participated in?

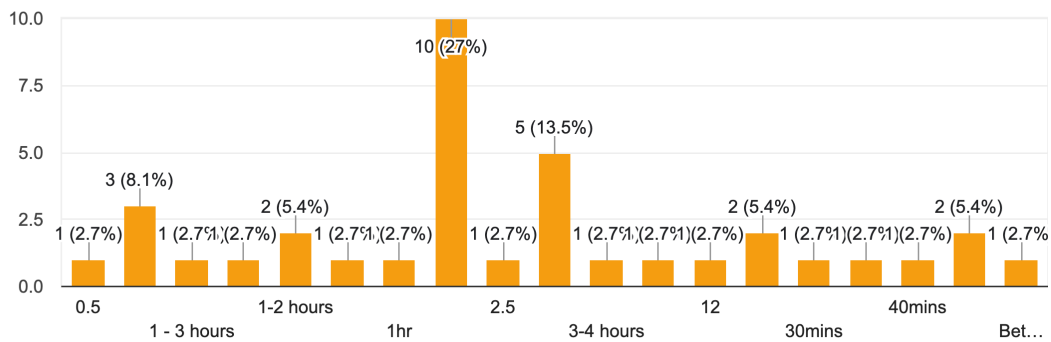
37 responses



Question 18

18. Average hours per day you spend watching TV/streaming service (Netflix, HBO, YouTube videos)

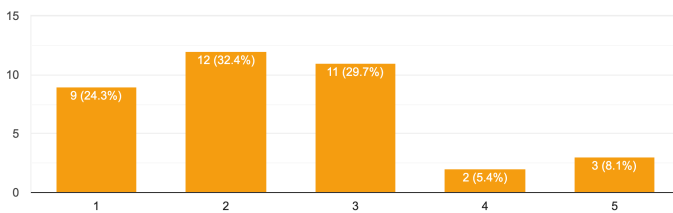
37 responses



Question 19

19. Congrats, you just landed a new job! How important is it for you to be the best worker or among the top 5 workers?

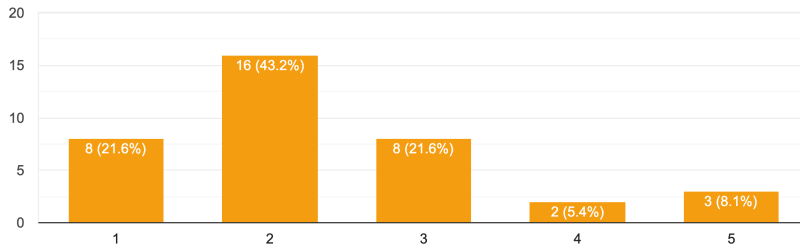
37 responses



Question 20

20. Your friend wants to become an MP in the UK. Do you think they would be more likely to get the job if they were a man?

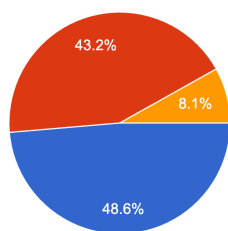
37 responses



Question 21

21. What kind of work would you choose?

37 responses

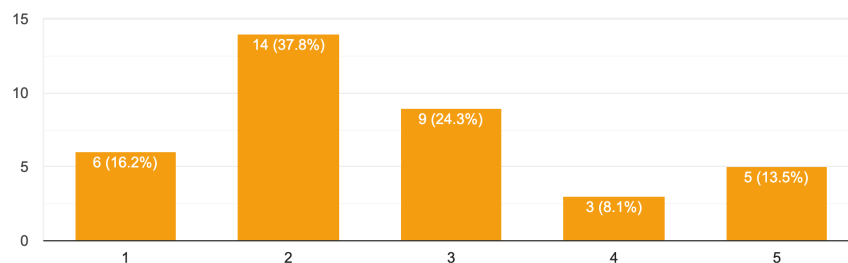


- Working in what I am passionate about, with a modest but sufficient salary.
- Working in what I am mildly passionate about, with an average salary.
- Working in what I am not passionate about, with a very high salary.

Question 22

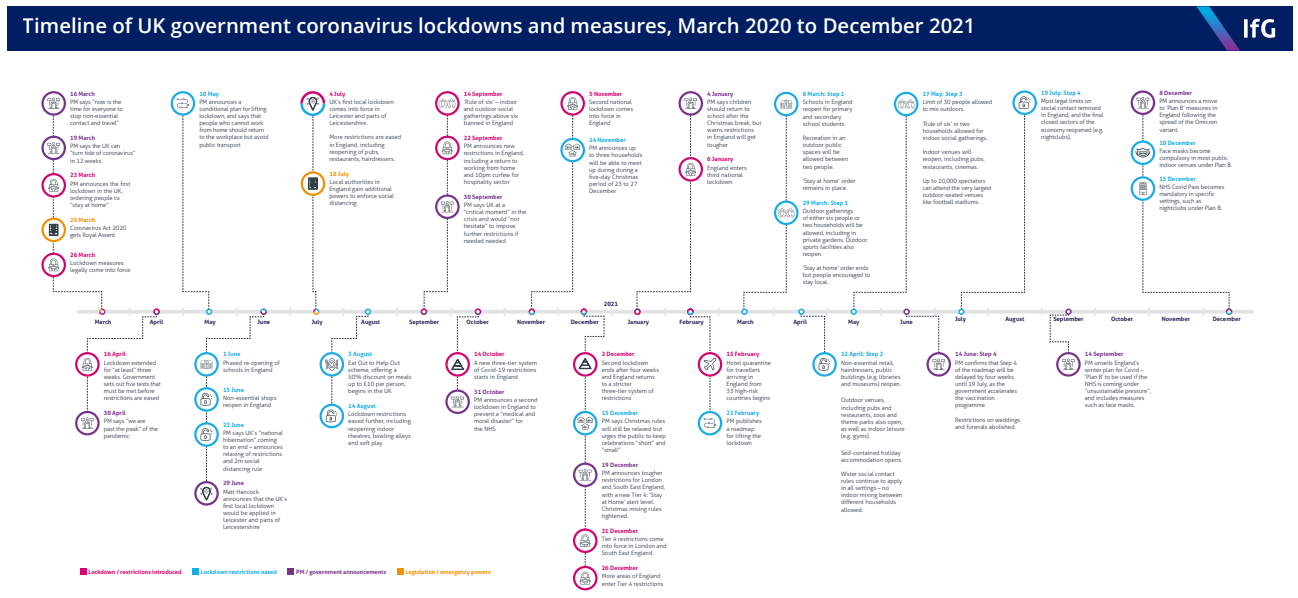
22. Do you fear death?

37 responses



Annex 3: Timeline of UK Government

Institute for Government. (2021, December 22). *Timeline of UK government coronavirus lockdowns and restrictions*. Retrieved December 26, 2022, from <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/charts/uk-government-coronavirus-lockdowns>



Source: Institute for Government analysis.

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