

Furious Commuters and Mobs: A critical discourse analysis of non- protestors at an Extinction Rebellion protest

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Outline

1. Background & Methods
 - Reporting Protest
 - Critical Discourse Analysis & Transitivity

2. Data
 - Extinction Rebellion Tube Protest (October 2019)
 - News Reports for Analysis

3. Analysis & Discussion

4. Conclusions & Limitations

Reporting Protest

- News outlets can use language to “reflect, and in return shape, the prevailing attitudes of a society” (Fowler, 1991)
- Media representations of protest have become focused on “drama, spectacle and violence” (Cottle, 2008)
- Scrutinizing lexico-grammatical patterns in news reports reveals ‘systemic asymmetries’ of power (Hart, 2013)
- The representation of non-protestors can affect the way readers interpret the protest events and the protesting group (Stamou, 2001)

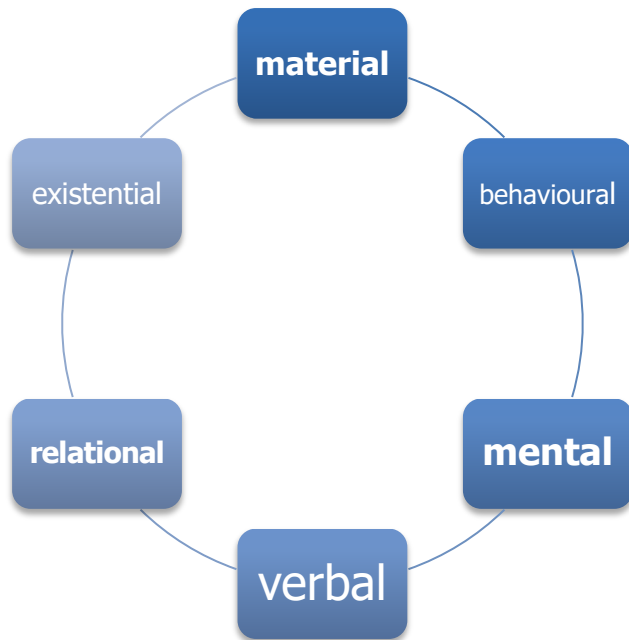
Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

- Broader analytical framework; no precise method
- Discourse as “social practice” (Fairclough, 1995)
- Problem-orientated (Wodak and Meyer, 2008)
- Discursive constructions of power imbalances (Wodak and Meyer, 2008)

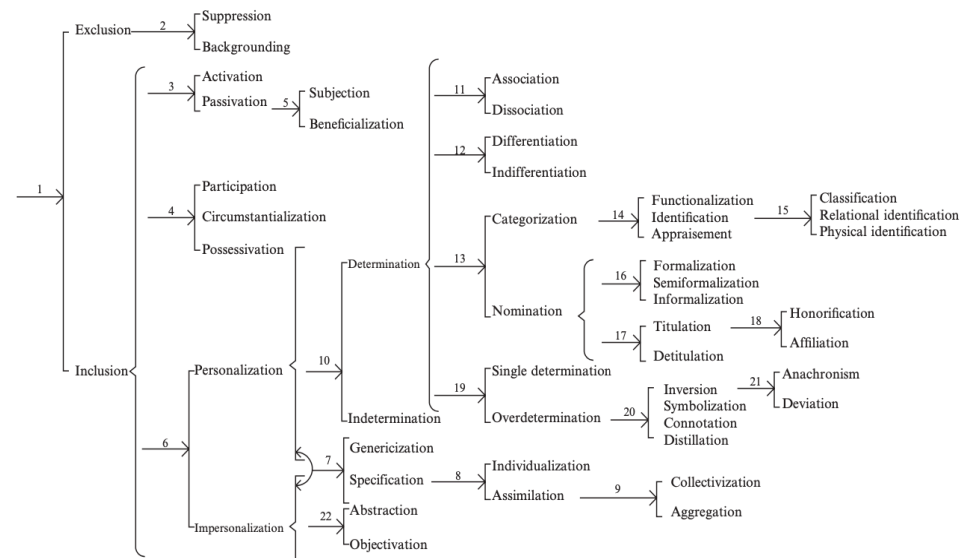
Transitivity (as a method of CDA)

- Lexico-grammatical analysis of ideational meaning at the clausal level
- Originally a framework of Systemic Functional Grammar (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013)
- Proposes categories to define **processes** and participants (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013) and later **social actors** (Van Leeuwen, 2008)

There are many categories!



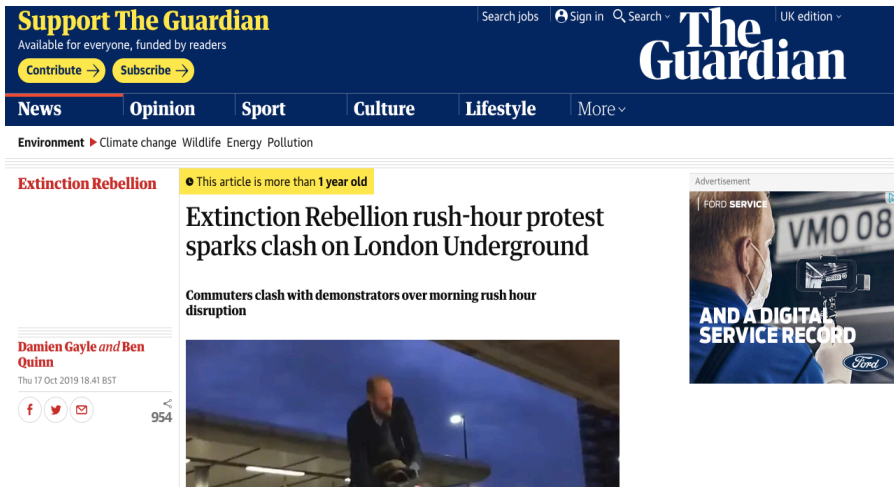
(Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013, adapted by Koller, 2019)



(Van Leeuwen, 2008)

The Data

- Two online news reports about the Extinction Rebellion Tube Protest (2019)

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Extinction Rebellion • This article is more than 1 year old

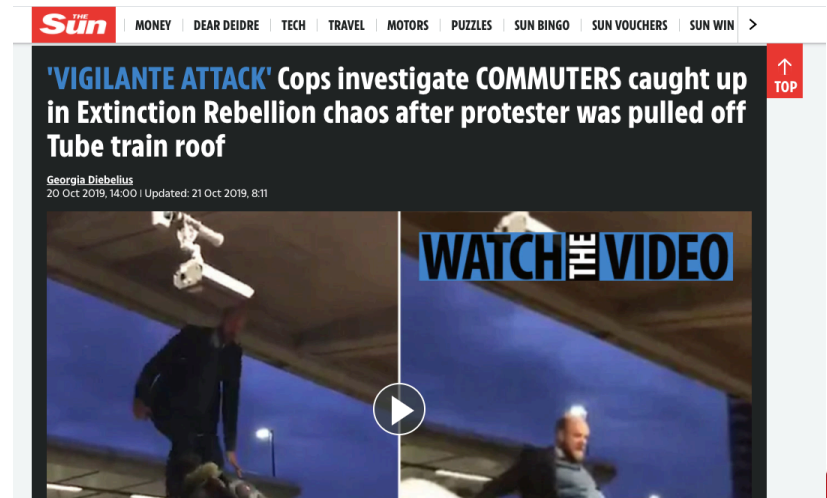
Extinction Rebellion rush-hour protest sparks clash on London Underground

Commuters clash with demonstrators over morning rush hour disruption

Damien Gayle and Ben Quinn
Thu 17 Oct 2019 18:41 BST

954

(Gayle & Quinn, 2019)



The Sun MONEY | DEAR DEIDRE | TECH | TRAVEL | MOTORS | PUZZLES | SUN BINGO | SUN VOUCHERS | SUN WIN >

'VIGILANTE ATTACK' Cops investigate COMMUTERS caught up in Extinction Rebellion chaos after protester was pulled off Tube train roof

Georgia Diebelius
20 Oct 2019, 14:00 | Updated: 21 Oct 2019, 8:11

WATCH THE VIDEO

(Diebelius, 2019)

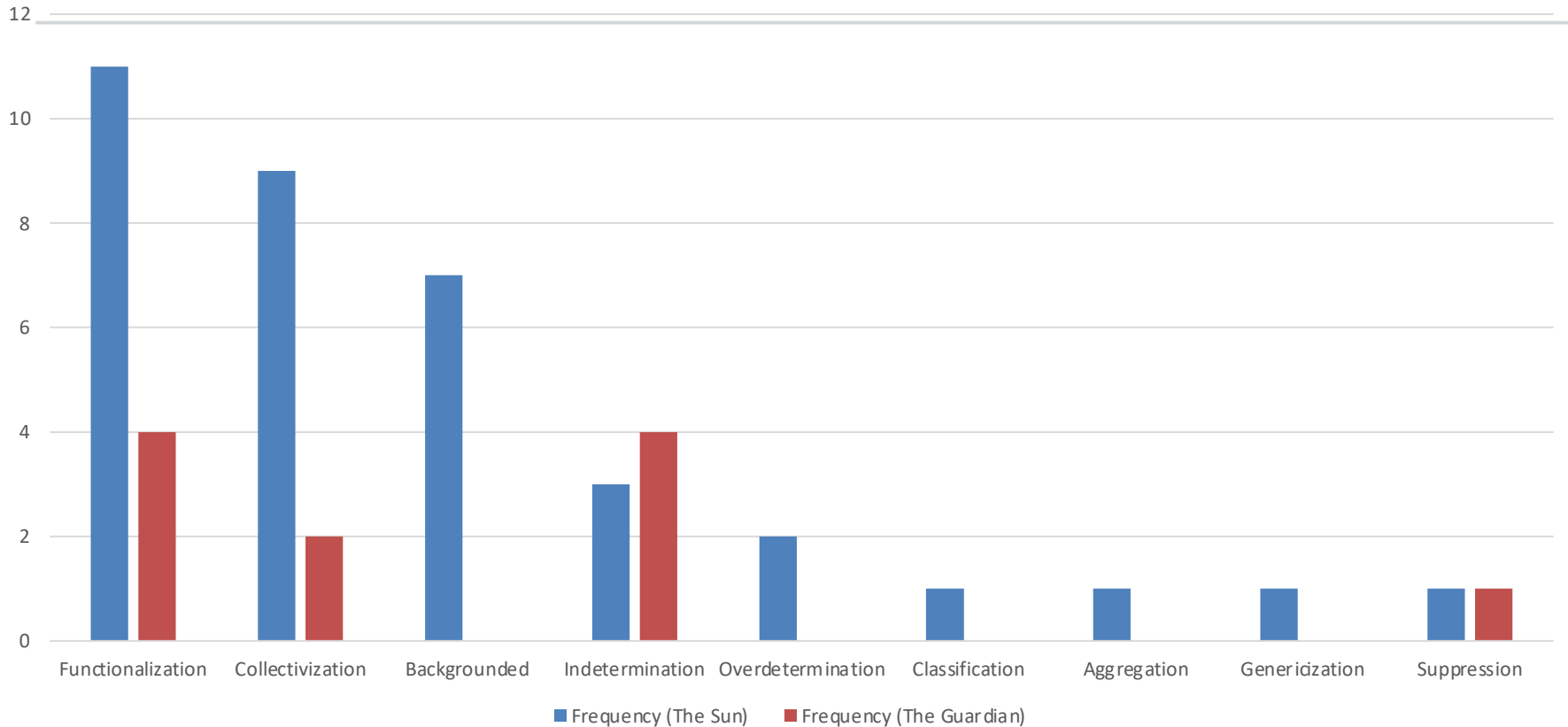
My questions:

“How are non-protestors represented in these news reports?”

“How does this affect the representation of Extinction Rebellion?”

Social Actor Representation

Raw Frequency of Social Actor Categories Used to Represent Non-Protestors



The Sun: 36

The Guardian: 11

Functionalization

- Representing social actor groups by what they do

The Sun

“furious commuters”

“one of the commuters”

“a number of commuters”

“travelers whose journeys were delayed”

The Guardian

“commuters” – *no pre- or post-modification*

Indetermination: the case of 'Mob'

- Indetermination (usually) refers to nominalizations that represent social actors taking part in multiple processes
- 'Mob' occurs twice in The Sun; not in The Guardian
- "MOB WENT CRAZY" [as a subheading]
- 'but he said he wasn't scared of the mob' [indirect reporting of an Extinction Rebellion protestor]

Social Processes: Material

- Material processes require some input of energy to occur and enacts change in the world
- Most frequent process in which non-protestors participate in both reports
- (The Sun = 11; The Guardian = 3)

Social Processes: Material

The Sun	The Guardian
pulled from the roof by furious passengers	commuters dragged a protestor
dragged from the roof of a tube train	Londoners who use public transport
commuters who carried out the ‘vigilante-style attack’	working people trying to get on with their lives
furious commuters at the crowded station lobbed drinks	
a number of commuters taking matters into their own hands	
people from attacking one activist further	
“ beaten up ” by up to 20 people	
pulled over by a crowd of people	
the general public for swiftly standing as one	
[the general public for] stepping forward	
[the general public for] closing the incident down	

Conclusions

- Non-protestors are more frequently represented in The Sun than The Guardian article
- Non-protestors are more frequently represented through functionalization and taking part in material processes
- In The Sun, there are more pre- and post-modifying evaluative terms around functionalization to present protestors and non-protestors in violent opposition
- In The Sun, non-protestors participate in more violent material processes
- Political biases of both newspapers becomes apparent in the systematic linguistic analysis of both reports
- **The lens of non-protestors proves a fruitful entry point for critical discourse analyses of protest**

Limitations

- Qualitative study with limited quantitative findings

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