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One's company, two's a crowd: A cultural corpus-based study of loneliness and solitude in the United States

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To those who do not belong.

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Abstract – Italiano

Alcuni recenti sondaggi effettuati sulla popolazione americana hanno posto l'accento sull'aggravarsi del problema della solitudine negli Stati Uniti. L'ansia e il panico generali inevitabilmente generatisi non hanno fatto altro che distogliere l'attenzione dalle effettive dimensioni del problema. A volte, infatti, i risultati di questi sondaggi vengono male interpretati e il problema viene ingigantito. Nel tentativo di ridimensionare la preoccupazione e di interpretare le reali caratteristiche della solitudine come fenomeno culturale, il presente elaborato intende analizzare i concetti di *loneliness* e *solitude* nella cultura americana, per esaminare i diversi stati di solitudine e le diverse emozioni ad essi legate. La metodologia utilizzata per questa analisi è quella della linguistica dei corpora. Lo studio si dividerà in due parti. La prima metterà a confronto i concetti di *loneliness* e *solitude* in paesi con cultura individualista (tra cui gli Stati Uniti) e paesi con cultura collettivista all'interno del corpus GloWbE, al fine di individuare eventuali differenze e similitudini. La seconda parte, invece, si concentrerà esclusivamente sugli Stati Uniti, con la costruzione di un corpus di *advice columns* pubblicate in America nell'ultimo decennio (2009-2018). In questo corpus, si esploreranno le emozioni collegate allo stato di solitudine, per comprendere meglio quale sia la dimensione del problema e a cosa esso sia dovuto. La prima parte dell'elaborato, inoltre, presenta due capitoli contenenti basi teoriche e pratiche per lo studio. Il primo capitolo riguarda i temi *loneliness* e *solitude* nello sviluppo della cultura americana, con riferimenti al processo storico di costruzione degli Stati Uniti, e con esempi dalla letteratura dell'ottocento e del novecento. Il secondo capitolo invece riguarda l'aspetto pratico dello studio delle culture attraverso le lingue. Questo capitolo presenta le discipline Cultural Linguistics e Corpus Linguistics, insieme ad alcuni studi che hanno con successo utilizzato i corpora nell' analisi delle culture.

Резюме – Русский

Некоторые недавно проведенные опросы американского населения, уделили особое внимание обострению проблемы одиночества в Соединенных Штатах Америки. Общие тревожность и паника неизбежно возникающие из-за этих, отвлекли внимание от истинных масштабов проблемы. Иногда, на самом деле, результаты этих опросов неправильно интерпретируются, и проблема сильно преувеличивается. Нужно избавиться от чувства беспокойства и понять особенности одиночества как культурное явление. Главной целью настоящей работы является попытка проанализировать понятия *loneliness* и *solitude* в американской культуре, для того чтобы рассмотреть различные состояния одиночества и различные эмоции, связанные с ними. Методология, используемая для настоящего анализа, это методология корпусной лингвистики. Исследование состоит из двух частей. Первая часть будет сравнивать *loneliness* и *solitude* в странах с индивидуалистической культурой (в том числе США) и в странах с коллективистской культурой внутри корпуса GloWbE, чтобы определить любые различия и сходства. Вторая часть, с другой стороны, будет сосредоточена исключительно на Соединенных Штатах, при помощи корпуса из колонок советов, опубликованных в Америке за последнее десятилетие (2009-2018). В этом корпусе будет проведен анализ эмоции, связанные с состоянием одиночества, чтобы лучше понять масштаб и причину проблемы. Кроме того, в первой части работы также есть две главы, содержащие теоретические и практические основы для настоящего исследования. Первая глава посвящена темам *loneliness* и *solitude* в исторический развитии США и в примерами из американской литературы девятнадцатого и двадцатого веков. Вторая глава, с другой стороны, посвящена практическому аспекту изучения культур через языки. В этой главе представлены дисциплины *Cultural Linguistics* и *Corpus Linguistics*, а также некоторые исследования, которые успешно использовали корпусы в изучении культур.

Introduction

In a New York Times article from February 2018, Eric Klinenberg, sociology professor at New York University, talks about the supposed "health epidemic" of loneliness afflicting the world, with the United Kingdom recently appointing its first "minister for loneliness" and studies in the United States relating loneliness to serious medical conditions like cancer or diabetes. But, Klinenberg asks, is there really a growing epidemic of loneliness? And most of all, if there is one, is it really of any help to characterize it in those terms? Klinenberg argues that there is a tendency to misinterpret the statistics and overstate the problem of loneliness, which makes it harder to focus on the people who do need help. Moreover, with all the panic and alarm about the growth of loneliness, we have ended up treating it as a medical condition that absolutely needs to be cured, rather than as a normal human emotion. Rather than pathologizing loneliness, I intend to argue, we need to understand it in all its complexity. This means considering not only the sociological phenomenon of loneliness, but also the full range of possible emotions and experiences associated with being alone.

The present thesis aims to investigate the cultural profile of the ideas of *loneliness* and *solitude* in American culture. To do so, the discipline of Cultural linguistics will be integrated by corpus linguistics methodology, in two different corpus-based studies. The research will be divided in two parts: the first part will look at the differences and similarities of loneliness and solitude among individualist and collectivist cultures; the second part will focus on the United States only, with the collection of a corpus of advice columns and the research on the emotions connected to the state of being alone.

This thesis is composed of four chapters. In Chapter 1 the themes of loneliness and solitude in two centuries of American Literature (from the short story Rip Van Winkle, to the poems of Emily Dickinson, from Hemingway's old man to Kerouac's retreat in the Big Sur) will be discussed. In addition to this, the chapter will also deal with the changes of individuals' relations with groups throughout the development of the United States and it will talk about social relations in American society, from the 1950s until today. In doing this, the chapter aims at providing the theoretical context for the study,

highlighting the importance that the concepts of *loneliness* and *solitude* have had in the United States throughout the centuries.

Chapter 2 will provide the practical context for the study. The disciplines of Cultural Linguistics and Corpus Linguistics will be discussed. The chapter will then provide a literature review of Cultural Linguistics studies that have successfully employed the methodology of corpus linguistics to examine cultures. This chapter aims at proving that corpora are a viable tool for the study of cultures.

Chapter 3 presents a corpus-based study which will investigate the ideas of *loneliness* and *solitude* in individualist and collectivist countries in GloWbE. This chapter will draw on Geert Hofstede's research on cultural dimensions, in particular on the cultural dimension of Individualism and on the Individualism index of countries, compiled by Hofstede. The first part of this study will analyze the frequency of the two nouns and of the related adjectives *lonely* and *solitary* throughout the 20 varieties of English included in GloWbE. The second part of the study will analyze the nouns *loneliness* and *solitude* in two sets of GloWbE sub-corpora, representing individualist (the United States, Australia and Great Britain) and collectivist (India, the Philippines, Pakistan) countries. In particular, the collocates of the two nouns for each one of the six countries will be compared to each other, in search of possible differences or similarities in the experiences of loneliness and solitude.

Chapter 4 presents a corpus-based study about the emotions connected to the state of being alone in contemporary American culture. Questions and answers from three different advice columns (covering the years from 2009 to 2018) were collected, to form a corpus of advice columns. With the help of the AntConc software, followed by a manual analysis, the semantic prosody of the word *alone* will be investigated; moreover, the collocates of the word *alone* will be studied, in search of negative or positive connotation.

CHAPTER 1
Being alone in America: Loneliness and solitude in literature and society

1.1 Introduction

During a biology class in high school, our teacher made use of a strange metaphor that stuck with me ever since. To explain how the electrons occupy their places in the atomic orbitals, she compared the electrons to bus passengers and the orbitals to bus seats. Each passenger getting on a bus, she said, will tend to sit by themselves, occupying the empty sets of seats first, and only when each set of two seats is taken by one person, the next passengers will start to fill up the rest of the seats. In the same way, the electrons will first choose the empty orbitals, and only when each of the orbitals is occupied by one electron, the second places in the orbitals will begin to be filled. This proves that it is in our genes: our first choice will always be to stay by ourselves, to be alone, and the fact that the comparison used by our teacher helped everyone in the class, not matter their personality, to understand the otherwise incomprehensible jargon of biology, shows that it is a universally shared choice. Unlike the electrons though, which follow the strict rules of nature, people feel obliged to constantly establish relationships in the society in which they live, in order to avoid the risk of being excluded or considered crazy. Because of this fear, people go against their essence, against their nature. It is an imposition which has survived for hundreds, if not thousands, of years, without ever having been seriously called into question. With the exception of specific cases where a life of solitude or isolation is associated with eccentricity, with genius, or simply with a peculiar feature of the personality, the majority of the people who, for some reason, find themselves alone, will be considered to be affected by unresolved relational problems or endless sadness. And this is so much true, that every person does their best so as not to be or look lonely, in an attempt to avoid other people's judgement. Psychiatrists Olds and Schwartz (2009) explain how their patients find it hard and shameful to admit their loneliness, to the point

that most of them feel more comfortable saying that they are *depressed*, rather than saying that they are *lonely*. The natural human emotion of loneliness, they explain, is more strongly stigmatized than mental illnesses, like depression, which, on the contrary, has become more widely accepted (2009: 4).

The states and the emotions connected to being alone are multiple and varied. They go from the emotion of loneliness and isolation, to sadness and depression, from the need for silence and quiet, to meditation and prayer. Whatever one's reasons are for being alone, though, the outside world will always consider aloneness to affect one's life in a negative way. Other types of aloneness are rarely acknowledged, those states that are sought and deeply wanted, those states that bring peace or joy. The world we live in has a problem with being alone, with not making connections or creating valuable relationships. It is a world that makes one feel guilty for being alone, for not being part of society and of its rules. And yet, it is also a world that tends to isolate us, a world which repudiates loneliness on the one hand, but which has led us to be lonely on the other hand. Some of the technologies developed over recent years are thought to aim at a larger interconnection (like the enormous variety of social networks we are constantly encouraged to join), but others work in the opposite direction, creating more and more opportunities for us to have less contact with each other (like online shopping, or even just self-service check-out at the stores).

Over recent years, the different ways of being alone have been the subject of discussion in several articles and books. In particular, the feeling of loneliness is seen as the plague of the twenty-first century, as something of which our generation suffers more and more, while the state of solitude is seen as the anchor which can save us from the drift in our lives, the way to find our true self and well-being. The state of being alone though, be it loneliness or solitude, has been the subject of discussion for many centuries already, all over the world. This chapter will focus on the United States, starting with a brief historical introduction about the development of social relations in the United States. It will then move to some of the cases of solitude and loneliness as interpreted in American literature. Finally, it will discuss recent times and how loneliness and solitude are currently seen in the United States.

1.2 A historical perspective

Although this is not the place to delve into the history of the United States, which is complicated and influenced by many more factors than what it is possible for us to explore within these few pages, it is indeed necessary to start our chapter about loneliness and solitude in the United States with a few elements concerning American social history and how the relationship individual-groups developed throughout the centuries.

As Claude Fischer states in his book *Made in America*, published in 2010, one of the key elements of American culture and society is, and has always been, *voluntarism*. There are two features in voluntarism: first, the belief that each person, as an individual, is "unique, independent, self-reliant, self-governing and ultimately self-responsible"; second, the belief that individuals "succeed through fellowship – not in egoistic isolation but in sustaining, voluntary communities" (Fisher 2010: 10). In American culture, as a voluntaristic culture, people are responsible for their own fate, they always can, and are encouraged to, improve themselves. Particular importance is given to individuality as the key to one's fortune, even though success can only be found in voluntary groups.

The evolution of the relationships that American people have with groups, such as their own family, the neighborhood or the church, is long and changes along with the transformations taking place in the developing American society[1]. During the time of the early settlements, back in the sixteenth century, there were all the conditions for the development of a highly individualistic society. After all, the country was founded by individuals who had been willing to burn all the bridges with their original community, and sometimes with their family too. Like Fischer (2010: 102) notes,

> [m]ost newcomers arrived as individuals; in the first generations, three fourths of all white settlers came alone to America […]. Most of the other immigrants responded to publicity in Europe claiming that America offered

[1] For a deeper exploration of Americans' relationships with groups, see Chapter 4 in Fisher (2010), on which section 1.2 of this chapter is largely based.

white men the chance to become truly independent.

Classic communities, like those found in old European villages, did not exist in the early American settlements (with the exception of Puritan communities, which were tightly closed to outsiders and organized around a single church). During the colonial era, social groups started to develop. Churches expanded and became more important, as they were the only place for social life, and religious participation started to rise. Households began to be defined, by the law and customs, as a group of people being ruled by a free, adult male. Despite this consolidation of social groups, though, American communities were still far from the classic European communities.

In the late eighteenth century, with the advent of the Revolution, the already existing spirit of voluntarism increased, and the social relationships that had been built started to collapse. Following the Revolution, a number of legal reforms granted better rights to women (for example, on grounds for divorce), who were now starting to earn their own money in the household. Marriage was not anymore seen as one person absorbing the other, but as a relationship between two distinct and equal individuals. New congregations and churches were founded, all of which started to move away from the idea that only a few people could gain salvation, to arrive at the more individualistic idea of universal salvation. There was a decline in the influence that the household, the church and the community had on people, who started to realize that they no longer had to accept the old conditions.

As noted by Fischer (2010: 114), the post-Revolution

> [p]opulation growth, urbanization, faster travel, restless moving, new kinds of work, and accumulating wealth provided more nineteenth-century Americans with more social groups to join and greater independence within each one; these changes widened and deepened voluntarism.

Americans' social options multiplied exponentially in this period. In particular, the nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of a new social group, next to the already common social groups of family and religion: the workplace. Many Americans began to work away from home, rather than working on their own farm, or living in their employer's home, like they would do before. Having two separate places to work and

live, led people (mostly men) to start having relationships with their coworkers outside of the workplace. In addition to the workplace, another way for people to establish relationships in the nineteenth century was becoming part of a club. These clubs were both national formal and local informal associations of people with common interests and goals. These associations had a double relationship with their members: "unable to coerce participation and relying on people's free choice to join and stay, they nevertheless made significant demands on those who belonged; loyalty was part of the deal" (Fischer 2010: 132).

The twentieth century saw the number of social options and the voluntaristic aspect of culture and society increase even more. The changes in the idea of family, now produced a type of family that was the symbol of both individual and joint success: despite the greater number of options for personal individual success outside the family, Americans consider success being part of a fulfilling family. Divorce rates become almost 6 times as large throughout the twentieth century, and yet the marriage rates do not drop drastically: on the contrary, they keep increasing, especially in the first half of the century. Despite female emancipation and the rights gained over the years, Americans still believed that their marriage created a couple who could not be separated.

The neighborhood starts to lose its place as main social option, in favor of the workplace and coworkers. Isolation becomes a problem especially for the few people who still lived in rural areas: at the beginning of the twentieth century, more and more people moved from the farms to the towns and suburban areas. Even the ties among the people who still lived in the rural areas became weaker: with the tools and the machines to work in the field becoming cheaper and more accessible, the farmers stopped sharing and helping each other.

The clubs and formal associations as a form of social life were replaced by more informal associations. As Putnam (2000) explains, participation in this kind of associations drastically declined in the second half of the century. On the contrary, new kinds of associations were created (e.g. book clubs or hiking groups), the involvement in which had a more voluntaristic direction. As Fischer (2010: 156) explains,

> the classic lodge or club held their members through dues, elected offices, insurance programs, rules about attending meetings and public censure for

> misbehavior. Mutual support groups, Bible study classes, Saturday morning soccer games, and unscheduled get-togethers have little of that hold on individuals.

Voluntarism, the main feature of American culture and society, according to Fischer, strengthened throughout the centuries. Through the idea of voluntarism, Americans handled the conflict between the individual and society, between the desire for liberty and the need for personal relationships. Voluntarism allows the member of a group to freely exit, but also requires commitment from those members who decide to stay. Throughout his book, Fischer argues that American society should not be considered merely an individualistic culture, but rather a voluntaristic culture: Americans value relationships with groups and communities through which each person can succeed, but also believe in the individuals as independent persons achieving their own personal success.

1.3 Examples of loneliness and solitude in American literature

Section 1.2 showed us how the conflict between the individual and society was resolved by Americans through voluntarism. Despite this solution though, the conflict is still present and, at times, still concerns American life. Different ways are chosen in approaching this conflict, and this is true for American literature as well. Like Cahir (1999: xiii) says,

> the contradictory states of isolation and community, individualism and conformity were concerns that engaged nineteenth-century American writers who, though exploring the same essential problem, were notably varied in their approaches and their conclusions.

As Cahir suggests, the experience of isolation, and consequently those of loneliness and solitude, were central for nineteenth century authors. Loneliness and solitude, however, were also central elements in the twentieth century, although the perspective

shifts due to the increasing urbanizations of rural areas, and consequent human isolation. The next two sections will provide key examples from notable American authors, that can help to explain the different views of loneliness and solitude throughout American literature. Section 1.3.1 will focus on nineteenth century works by authors Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Emily Dickinson and Henry David Thoreau. Section 1.3.2 will focus on twentieth century works by authors Ernest Hemingway, Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, both members of the Beat generation, and Richard Wright. This choice is based on different criteria, the main one being the central role that loneliness and solitude have in the selected works. Moreover, this selection tried to equally cover the nineteenth century and the twentieth century, accounting for a variety of genres and styles, ranging from short stories, to novels and various forms of poetry.

1.3.1 Nineteenth century

The first, and one of the most famous, lonely characters in American literature is the eponymous protagonist of Washington Irving's short story "Rip Van Winkle," published in 1819. Rip Van Winkle is a Dutch-American villager in colonial America, who, one day, falls asleep in the mountains, during a walk with his dog. He wakes up 20 years later, after the events of the American Revolution, and he realizes that the world has moved on without him.

The Catskill mountains (Kaatskill, in the text), setting of the story of Rip Van Winkle, are a wild and forested area, in the state of New York. It is there that Rip, while trying to escape from his annoying wife, sits down to rest with his dog Wolf. Around them, the "rich woodland" echoing with "still solitudes", and the Hudson river "moving on its silent but majestic course". The peaceful solitude of this image contrasts with the towering cliffs of the "deep mountain glen, wild, lonely, and shagged", whose bottom was "scarcely lighted by the reflected rays of the setting sun" (here, and from now on, for quotations from the short story: Irving 2000).

Twenty years later, when Rip wakes up after having fallen asleep in the mountains (or, like suggested by Ferguson (2013: 20), after having "been an alcoholic on a twenty-year binge"), he finds himself alone. He is on that same green knoll, but the peaceful solitude he had found before, has now disappeared to leave place to loneliness only. His most loved possessions – his gun and his dog – are nowhere to be found, and, "with a heart full of trouble and anxiety", Rip decides to return to the village. But even there, he does not find what he had left: there are no people that he recognizes, his house is "empty, forlorn, and apparently abandoned", and in the desolate "lonely chambers" only silence is heard.

The feeling of loneliness is not necessarily linked to being physically alone. When Rip goes in the village and is surrounded by a big and curious crowd, he feels lonelier than ever. The places that he remembers have changed, and the people that he remembers have died or left. He is not even sure about who he is, as the villagers point to someone else (his son) when asks "Does nobody here know Rip Van Winkle?" In the end, Rip finds his children, who are now adults, and goes on to live with his daughter, who has made a new family, resuming his old idle life.

The story of Rip Van Winkle is, ultimately, a story of loneliness, and it is included in a collection which breathes the feeling of loneliness and isolation of its narrator. The collection *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, in fact, reflects its fictional narrator's "feelings of exile and loneliness" (Hanssen 2016: 1), when travelling to England for the first time. These feelings are evident in another of the stories in the collection: "The Voyage". As Hanssen (2016: 5) states, the setting of the story, "a boat as it crosses the Atlantic from America to England, increases the effect of alienation that Crayon attempts to achieve […] throughout the collection".

If in the story of Rip Van Winkle, his failures (the drinking addiction) brought him to experience the state of loneliness, other stories will have other causes for the same feeling. In Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "My kinsman, Major Molineux" from 1832, the cause for loneliness is betrayal[2]. Robin, a young man of barely eighteen years old, has

[2] Chapter 2 of Ferguson (2013) titled "Nathaniel Hawthorne Dissects Betrayal" dwells on this theme in Hawthorne's works, in particular the short story "My kinsman, Major Molineux" (1832) and the novel *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851).

just arrived in Boston by ferry. He is there to search for Major Molineux, a British Army official and relative of Robin, who could help him and give him work. Alone in a completely unknown environment, Robin starts asking around where he can find Major Molineux, but none of his attempts is successful. Every time he tries to ask about the Major, he is ridiculed and threatened of being punished, either physically or by being sent to jail. After wandering alone around the town for a long time, Robin stops in front of a church, where he is told to wait for Major Molineux's arrival. Looking at the Bible inside the church, "with a sensation of loneliness stronger than he had ever felt in the remotest depths of his native woods", Robin imagines (or sees?) his family praying at the table without him, and the door to their house is shut, leaving him outside, of the house, and of the family. Finally, Major Molineux arrives, but he is different than what Robin was expecting: he had been tortured and his image is not that of a powerful man. The crowd that had gathered there starts laughing and ridiculing the Major, and so does the now disillusioned Robin.

During the whole story, Robin is utterly alone. He is left alone by the people in the town, who do not help him in his search. He is left alone by his family, who sent him on the other side of the ocean, without any possibility of going back. He is left alone by the Major, who is nowhere to be found. He is even left alone by us, the readers, towards the end of the story: if, at first, we sympathize with Robin, a young man in an unknown place, who is humiliated and mistreated by everyone he meets, for no real reason, at the end of the story we take the side of Major Molineux, who is being humiliated and laughed at by Robin himself, again for no apparent reason. Robin realizes that he is completely alone – the town continues to ridicule him, and the Major cannot help him anymore – and he decides to find the company he was searching for by joining the mob, by laughing at his kinsman, with the longest and loudest laughter of all. "To cover his own loneliness and lack of inner resources" (Ferguson 2013: 40), he joins "the crowd that has made [him] feel lonely in the first place" (41).

The story of Robin and Major Molineux differs from Irving's "Rip Van Winkle", in that, in the end, Rip rejoins his group and creates a new identity for his person, while Hawthorne "insists on the choice between one or the other […] either the separate integrity of the self or a shared identity with the group" (Ferguson 2013: 42). Many more

aspects are shared, on the contrary, by Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" and another one of Hawthorne's short story, "Wakefield", written in 1835. Using Hawthorne's words (2011), "Wakefield" tells the story of a man who

> under pretence of going a journey, took lodgings in the next street to his own house, and there, unheard of by his wife or friends, and without the shadow of a reason for such self-banishment, dwelt upwards of twenty years. […] And after so great a gap in his matrimonial felicity – when his death was reckoned certain, his estate settled, his name dismissed from memory, and his wife, long, long ago, resigned to her autumnal widowhood – he entered the door one evening, quietly, as from a day's absence, and became a loving spouse till death.

Just like Rip, Wakefield leaves his life, and everyone around him, for twenty years. And, just like Rip, he resumes his old life and his old habits after coming back. Wakefield, though, disappears from his life on purpose: he wants "to see the difference that his absence makes" (Perry 1978: 617), he wants to look at his wife's reaction to his death. Wakefield's solitude is chosen, desired, but by choosing this state, Wakefield inadvertently becomes just part of the crowd: he loses his individuality and melts "into the great mass of London life". He is, at the same time, part of the society, through his wife's life, and invisible to society, and to his wife's life. Wakefield, as Perry (1978: 618) notes, represents our deepest desire: "to be invisible, to observe the events of the world without the contamination of one's presence. […] He can disappear and reappear effortlessly, because it is really done with the mind and not in the physical world at all". In the story, when the narrator guides us through the moments that led Wakefield to go back to his wife, we also are torn between the solitude and the warmth of the house, and the personal comments included by the narrator reflect the wish to have both:

> Shall he stand, wet and shivering here, when his own hearth has a good fire to warm him, and his own wife will run to fetch the gray coat and small-clothes, which, doubtless, she has kept carefully in the closet of their bed chamber? *No! Wakefield is no such fool*. He ascends the steps – *heavily!* – for twenty years have stiffened his legs since he came down – but he knows it not. *Stay, Wakefield!* Would you go to the sole home that is left you? *Then step into your grave!* [emphasis added]

For Hawthorne, isolation was "an existential choice" (Perry 1978: 618), "the

essential state of the human soul" (619). He "knew loneliness as well as the need to be alone" (Ferguson 2013: 36) and these ideas are reflected into his own works. If we look at his most famous novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, for example, we see again the coexistence of the state of solitude with the community in the protagonist Hester Prynne. For her, as for everyone else at that time, community was the center of the universe, but it was never enough to build a joyous life. The moment when Hester is forced to leave the community and live a solitary life, she finds the perfect balance "between woman thinking in solitude and thinking woman in the community" (Massie 2005: 84). The state of solitude is imposed on Hester, yet it is through that solitude that she finds her strength, just like by going on the scaffold, she "achieves the status of angel" (89).

Another American great novelist, who influenced, and was influenced by, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and for whose work and life loneliness and solitude are central elements, is Herman Melville. Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville met in August 1850 on a hike up Monument Mountain in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. This meeting, and the friendship that resulted from it, was particularly important for Melville, who will write his most famous work, *Moby Dick*, and dedicate it to Hawthorne, the year after. The two authors esteemed each other's work and writing, but when Hawthorne leaves the United States to move to England in November 1851, their strong friendship and (public and private) relationship inevitably ends. Cahir (1999: 18) describes the friendship as mutually enriching: "Each friend wisely understood something lonely and lamentable about the other". During their last meeting, Hawthorne realized that

> Melville would always be compelled to plunge the depths of matters that would alienate him from common living. […] Hawthorne, in contrast, understood the wisdom of letting go of one's intellectual need to wander through deserts dismal and ambiguities that can never be resolved (18).

In turn, Melville also understood something about Hawthorne in that last meeting, namely that

> in all his friend's dreamy ideals of womanhood and of fraternity, his tenderness for all children and all delicate souls, and his concealed desire for a sustaining intimacy, Nathaniel Hawthorne […] would none-the-less block familiarity in every way and would remain, to the end, an unassailably solitary

figure (18-19).

For Melville, isolation is "the human condition. Even if people function in a social structure they are fundamentally alienated from the human community. For Melville man is essentially and fully alone" (Cahir 1999: 3). These ideas are reflected into his works.

Melville's masterpiece *Moby Dick* combines many genres and many themes: among these, we can surely assert that *Moby Dick* is a book about loneliness (Dumm 2008: 72). Three of its main characters are, in fact, lonely people, each in their own way: there is Ahab, the captain, who spends decades obsessing about the white whale, Pip, the cabin boy who loses his sanity after floating for many hours in the open sea before being rescued, and the narrator, Ishmael, who will be the only survivor of the shipwreck of the Pequod.

As much as the figure of Ishmael is puzzling and mysterious (see Dumm 2005), the story of Pip tells us a lot about the results of loneliness. One day, after Pip has jumped in the water at the sight of a whale, the team has to release the entangled whale, in order to rescue Pip. After that episode, Stubb orders Pip to always stick to the boat while whaling, or otherwise he will not be saved again. The boat, here, can be seen as a metaphor for the community (Massie 2005: 115): when Pip jumps from the boat, he leaves the community, and the result of that is the loneliness in which he is trapped, the mental insanity he suffers as a consequence. But the feeling of solitude that Pip experiences in the middle of the ocean, with no ship or shore in sight, is not only frightening; it also allows him to reach an elevated standpoint from which he is able to see the truth (just like Hester Prynne from *The Scarlet Letter*). It is a truth, though, that "he can neither comprehend rationally himself nor share with those who have not experienced the depth of his solitude" (Massie 2005: 116-117), and the result is his lost sanity.

Self-imposed isolation and loneliness (probably together with mental illness) are central to Herman Melville's short story "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street", published in 1853. The narrator, a lawyer in Manhattan, hires a scrivener, Bartleby. At first, Bartleby is a very good employee and is able to copy a large amount of papers. But

one day, he starts answering every request coming from his employer and coworkers with the words "I would prefer not to". No other explanation.

Bartleby's workspace is described as being in the same room as his employer's, unlike those of the other employees, who worked in a different room, even though the door in between the two was almost always kept open. When he arrives, Bartleby is given a desk in front of a window, which had "no view at all, though it gave some light" (23). He was also given a folding screen, the illusion of a room to himself, but which kept him isolated from the lawyer's sight only, not his voice, "and thus, in a manner, privacy and society were conjoined" (23). This space is often referenced to, in the story, as Bartleby's hermitage, but on the contrary, it was nothing more than a false idea of solitude.

The situation gets worse and worse, and with Bartleby not reacting to any question, proposal or offer, the lawyer feels obliged to move on without him, and he does so, first by trying to fire Bartleby – who, though, won't ever leave the office – and then by deciding to move his work to a completely different building, leaving Bartleby behind. The landlord of the old building is not happy about it and he eventually decides to call the police, to have Bartleby removed. He is taken to prison, where he receives the lawyer's visit: Bartleby is looking worse than ever, he won't eat, and he is "standing all alone in the quietest of the yards, his face towards a highwall" (51). During his second visit, the lawyer finds Bartleby "strangely huddled at the base of the wall […], his head touching the cold stones" (53). He had starved to death.

In the last part of the story, the narrator tells us about a rumor he heard: apparently Bartleby, before arriving at his office, was working as a clerk at a Dead Letters Office. "Conceive a man by nature and misfortune prone to a pallid hopelessness, can any business seem more fitted to heighten it than that of continually handling these dead letters, and assorting them for the flames? […] On errands of life, these letters speed to death" (54) comments the narrator. According to his words, Bartleby's depression and isolation was caused by his past occupation. I argue, instead, that the falseness of the society, the false solitude (folding screen) in which the community (employer) had placed him, led Bartleby to face nothing more than a high wall (the ones he sees from the window, and the ones he stands in front inside the prison). The inability, and impossibility, to go beyond that wall, is the cause behind Bartleby's death.

Bartleby represents the dilemma of the relationship between society and solitude, by being, at the same time, "inexorably conjoined and desolately separate" (Cahir 1999: 14). He cannot experience to the fullest the solitude that lives within him, since society (the employer's voice) does not let him, and the attempts that society makes, do not succeed in bringing him away from that existential loneliness.

Experiencing solitude was very important and common for nineteenth century authors. For example, the story "Bartleby, the Scrivener" by Herman Melville is considered to be autobiographical (Cahir 1999: 14): when Melville talks about Bartleby, he is describing his own experience of solitude. Among the authors who talk about their experiences of solitude in their work, we certainly cannot forget two of the most radical ones who, even if under different circumstances, spent a lot of time alone: Emily Dickinson and Henry David Thoreau.

Emily Dickinson spent most of her life in complete solitude. After the first twenty or so years of her life, when she was part of the Amherst community, went to church and attended college, Dickinson started to slowly withdraw from society, giving up every activity that involved meeting other people and living her life inside her room. Over the years, the myth of Emily Dickinson has grown, in the United States and abroad, especially among women, who see in the voluntary seclusion the only choice Dickinson could make in order to pursue her poetry in nineteenth century America, without having to become a man's wife. Another theory, more psychoanalytical, links Dickinson's isolation and the state of seclusion that she chose for most of her life, to the complicated relationship with her family, from the "obsessive-compulsive traits" (Kavaler-Adler 1991: 22) of her father, to the not ideal relationship with her depressed mother, as described by John Cody (1971). Along the same line, Maryanne Garbowsky linked Emily Dickinson's self-imposed reclusion to mental problems, precisely to agoraphobia. Garbowsky (1989) analyzed Dickinson's poems in a chronological order and recognized "the pattern of an agoraphobic life-style: the flight from fears, the need for protection within her father's house, the atmosphere of family conflict and the desire for release from tormenting inner pressures" (1989: 79). According to Garbowsky (1989: 86), safety could be brought into Dickinson's life by "seclusion within the house".

Whatever the reasons behind Emily Dickinson's seclusion might be, she indeed

experienced, to the fullest, the nineteenth century idea of solitude. She wrote almost eighteen thousand poems in the course of her life, and many of them revolve around the ideas of solitude, loneliness and isolation that she was experiencing (the three poems below are from Franklin 1999). In “The Loneliness one dare not sound”, a poem from 1864, for example, the poet talks about the feeling of loneliness, which is a feeling so pervasive and intense that one is afraid to explore it or talk about it.

The Loneliness One dare not sound -
And would as soon surmise
As in it's Grave go plumbing
To ascertain the size –

The Loneliness whose worst alarm
Is lest itself should see -
And perish from before itself
For just a scrutiny -

The Horror not to be surveyed -
But skirted in the Dark -
With Consciousness suspended -
And Being under Lock -

I fear me this - is Loneliness -
The Maker of the soul
It's Caverns and it's Corridors
Illuminate - or seal -

(#877 – 1864)

The relationship towards loneliness was different, just one year before, in 1863. In “It might be lonelier”, the feeling of loneliness is still negative, but accepted. She considers loneliness to be her “Fate”, something that she knows and with which she has lived for many years already. To try to replace the loneliness with “peace” would mean to take a risk that is too high, because she is accustomed to loneliness, but “not used to Hope”. Hope would violate the sanctity of her room (that is, her life), which has been

“Ordained to Suffering”.

It might be lonelier
Without the Loneliness -
I'm so accustomed to my Fate -
Perhaps the Other - Peace -

Would interrupt the Dark -
And crowd the little Room -
Too scant - by Cubits - to contain
The Sacrament - of Him -

I am not used to Hope -
It might intrude upon -
It's sweet parade - blaspheme the place -
Ordained to Suffering -

It might be easier
To fail - with Land in Sight -
Than gain - My Blue Peninsula -
To perish - of Delight -

(#535 – 1863)

The poem “There is a solitude of space”, finally, tells us more about the idea of solitude. The first three lines define the different types of solitude that we know: the “solitude of space” might be what she finds secluded in her room; the “solitude of sea” might refer to the element of nature, very important in her life and in the nineteenth century idea of solitude; while the “solitude of Death” might refer to that pervasive feeling of loneliness. But there is a solitude that goes beyond all of these: it is “that polar privacy” that the soul experiences when it is, alone, before itself.

There is a solitude of space
A solitude of sea
A solitude of Death, but these
Society shall be

Compared with that profounder site
That polar privacy
A soul admitted to itself –

(#1696 - undated)

While Emily Dickinson lived in a state of solitude, which became stricter and stricter, for all her adult life (and this is reflected throughout all her poems), Henry David Thoreau lived in solitude only for a few years, a period of his life which he described in *Walden, or Life in the Woods*, published in 1854. The experiences of solitude of the two authors are also very different: if we accept the theories about Dickinson's mental problems, it follows that her seclusion was, at least partly, forced, while Thoreau's period of seclusion was deliberately chosen, it was, for him, a sort of experiment, to see what it was like to live away from society. Moreover, Emily Dickinson lived her solitude in her house, surrounded by her family and by the frequent visitors, who she would hear talk or perform music. Henry David Thoreau, on the contrary, lived his solitude in the woods, away from any neighbors and away from civilization[3].

Walden is the account of the two years, two months and two days, from July 4, 1845 to September 6, 1847, that Henry David Thoreau spent by himself in the wilderness, in a cabin that he had built himself a few months before, by Walden Pond near Concord, Massachusetts.

Although the moment when, and the reason why, Thoreau decided to move to Walden Pond are not clear, and the primary motivation for his move was probably the fact that he needed a space to write (Cramer 2004), we know that in the chapter "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For", Thoreau writes (2004: 88):

> I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what

[3] In the first few lines of *Walden*, Thoreau writes that he lived "alone, in the woods, a mile from any neighbor" (Thoreau 2004: 1). Jeffrey Cramer, though, tells us that he did have some neighbors, much closer than a mile away: the Irish railroad workers, "whom Thoreau saw on his daily walks", and Hugh Coyle, who lived not far from Thoreau for several months (Cramer 2004: 1).

> was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.

The purpose of his reclusion, therefore, is an experiment: to live life outside of society and its rules, to question "the individual's role and its obligations, not to society only, but to himself: how should he live, how he should interact with his neighbors, how he should obligate himself to the laws of the society within which he lived" (Cramer 2004: xvii).

As stated by Ford (1999: 204), solitude, for Thoreau, has the power "to convert the socially induced anxieties of self-division into the creative forces of self-awareness". Ford (1999), also notes that through the experience of solitude, Thoreau is able to discover his other self, which is part of a duality by which he "can stand as remote from himself as from another" (Thoreau 2004: 131). Thoreau continues the description of this discovery by saying: "However intense my experience, I am conscious of the presence and criticism of a part of me, which, as it were, is not a part of me, but spectator, sharing no experience, but taking note of it". The state of solitude brings Thoreau into a different world, it gives him a space where the two selves can co-exist.

During these two years of solitude, Thoreau still has visitors occasionally, as he writes in the chapter titled "Visitors". In fact, he writes that he "had more visitors while [he] lived in the woods than at any other period in [his] life" (Thoreau 2004: 139). In the woods, the circumstances were more favorable for meaningful meetings, as he explains: "I had withdrawn so far within the great ocean of solitude, into which the rivers of society empty, that for the most part, so far as my needs were concerned, only the finest sediment was deposited around me" (Thoreau 2004:139). And to the people who assumed that he must feel lonely down there, always by himself, he was tempted to reply: "What sort of space is that which separates a man from his fellows and makes him solitary? I have found that no exertion of the legs can bring two minds much nearer to one another" (Thoreau 2004: 129). The loneliness does not depend on the physical

vicinity of people, as "to be in company, even with the best, is soon wearisome and dissipating" (Thoreau 2004: 131), but on the relationship with nature. Thoreau reports feeling lonesome only once, a few weeks after moving into the woods, when he "doubted if the near neighborhood of man was not essential to a serene and healthy life" (Thoreau 2004: 127). The feeling lasted only about an hour: Nature, through the means of a gentle rain, made him "sensible of […] an infinite and unaccountable friendliness all at once like an atmosphere sustaining [him], as made the fancied advantages of human neighborhood insignificant" (Thoreau 2004: 127-128).

We saw how the themes of loneliness and solitude are central in the literature of the nineteenth century, in great part because of the emergence of the literary movement of American Romanticism, a movement which was still largely influenced by its European counterpart (it is not a case that Irving's short story "Rip Van Winkle" is based on the European tradition of folktales, or that Hawthorne's "Wakefield" is set in London, only to cite two of the examples mentioned above). Isolation and solitude, together with the contemplation of nature and of the sublime, were one of the main elements of the Romantic movement. Moving on to the twentieth century, we notice that the themes of loneliness, solitude and isolation are still central for the literary world, although they seem to be more related to the themes of alienation and depersonalization.

1.3.2 Twentieth century

The twentieth century, with the rapid industrialization and the development of larger and larger cities, brought about an unprecedented progress in society, but it also caused disillusionment in the American people. Americans felt lonelier and more isolated because of the society surrounding them, where they were no more individuals, but simply part of an assembly line which, with its repetitive work, alienated people from the world in which they loved, from the people around them, and sometimes, even from themselves[4].

[4] https://monthlyreview.org/2000/06/01/alienationin-american-society/ [accessed: Nov. 1, 2018]

Many examples of different forms of alienation leading to forms of isolation and loneliness can be found in the large collection of Ernest Hemingway's short stories (Hemingway 1987).

In the story "Cat in the Rain" (1925), Hemingway uses the physical spatial confinement of the characters to indicate their emotional estrangement and distance from each other. In particular, the story revolves around the American woman and her isolation from the other characters, like Darren Felty (1997) explains. We see the woman's journey from her room, down at the lobby, outside and then back to her room: every element she encounters in this journey adds to her isolation. The first element of isolation is in the room in which she is staying with her husband: on the second floor, the room faces the square, which in that moment is empty because of the rain: this "emptiness evokes isolation and implies confinement, especially in conjunction with the lonely waiter standing in the threshold of the doorway, a static figure trapped between outside and inside" (Felty 1997: 366). From her room, looking out the window, the wife sees a cat under a table, and again, we find two elements of isolation: the window behind which she is standing and the table under which the cat is hiding. Furthermore, her only attempt to try and escape the isolation that she feels, that is, her going outside in search of the cat, does not have the expected and hoped for results: "it does not provide her with a sense of newfound freedom", since the maid is there, protecting her from the rain with the umbrella, and steering her back inside, "nor does it offer her a companion with whom to share her loneliness" (Felty 1997: 367), since the cat is gone by the time she arrives. Back to her room, the woman makes a second attempt at overcoming the isolation, by sitting on the bed where her husband was reading. She tries to communicate her loneliness to her husband, who, however, goes back to reading without acknowledging her feelings. After yet again another failed attempt to be liberated from her isolation, the woman puts another barrier between her and her husband, by moving first in front of the mirror, and then back at the window, recreating the scene at the beginning of the story.

"God Rest You Merry, Gentleman" (1933) tells the story of a boy who asks two doctors to be castrated, as he thinks the sexual impulse that he feels is a sin against God. As the doctors refuse to perform the operation, he tries to self-amputate his penis with a razor.

Contemporary reviewers focused on the youth's attempt to purify himself, as Whitlock Levitzke (2010) explains, but the story has a deeper meaning and structure. First of all, the geographical setting of the story described in the first paragraph, with bare hills and great distances, already set the tone of the deep isolation that characterizes the story. The isolation in which the boy lives, represented indeed by his misunderstanding of his desires caused by religion, is also reflected in the doctors' failure to understand his needs, to communicate with him. Barriers are placed between the characters, between the boys and the doctors, but also between the doctors themselves, that do not allow the characters to understand, listen to or communicate with each other. Even the narrator, who is present when the boy comes into the hospital and asks for the operation, does not act or say anything to persuade him to change his mind: he is "a mere spectator who does not act, [and as such] the narrator perpetuates the isolation perceived by the other characters" (Whitlock Levitzke 2010: 27).

We could name many other short stories that have isolation and loneliness as a central element. For example, "Soldier's Home" (1925) tells the story of Harold Krebs, a young man who, after fighting in World War I, returns home a different person. Everything is the same as it was before the war, everything but him: he is the only one that is changed and does not fit anymore in what once was his life. Nobody seems to understand this, not even Krebs' parents: his mother wants him to pray with her to help him with his struggles, while his father is never there. "A Clean, Well-lighted Place" (1926) is the story of a lonely old man, who spends his nights getting drunk on brandy at the café. Speculating about the old man's story (he is very rich but lives only with his niece) are the two waiters, a younger one, who brags about his wife waiting for him at home and about being "all confidence", and an older one, more thoughtful and understanding. After closing the café and on his way home, the older waiter reflects about the fact that, after all, he is just like that old man: he, too, just needs a quiet, clean and well-lighted place to spend his time.

The 1952 novel *The Old Man and the Sea*, one of the most famous of Hemingway's works, includes the theme of isolation. The book tells the story of Santiago, who after an unproductive 84-days streak, decides to sail out farther than usual, to venture into the Gulf Stream. There, a marlin takes the bait that Santiago has placed in the waters, but the

fish is so big that Santiago is not able to pull it in. It is the fish, instead, that pulls the boat around for two nights and two days. On the third day, despite being tired and wounded himself, Santiago manages to pull the fish in. On his way to the town, a group of sharks attracted by the marlin's blood, attacks the boat and eats the fish, leaving only the head and skeleton. Once he reaches the shore, Santiago just goes home, leaving the carcass of the fish, which will amaze the other fishermen and the tourists the next morning.

Throughout the novel, Santiago is alone: he lives alone, he fishes alone, and the other people in town do not really care about him (even the young apprentice Manolin is forbidden by his parents to go sail with him). Santiago is especially alone during the three days in the open sea, where he only has himself to count on, in the fight with the marlin, first, and with the sharks, later. But as much as this aspect of isolation is evident, there is another aspect that seems more interesting. The old fisherman Santiago is a Spaniard living in Cuba. As Jeffrey Herlihy (2009) notes, the national origins of the fisherman, make him an outsider in the Cuban community, and that is reflected in his actions. Santiago was born in Lanzarote, one of the Canary Islands and, Herlihy notes, in the imperial period "the Spanish government encouraged Canarians to move to Cuba, in order to offset the growing African presence on the island" (Herlihy 2009: 29). Cuba was still a "harsh place for Spaniards" (31) during the years when Hemingway was writing the novel: Santiago, therefore, feels like a stranger in the small coastal village in Cuba. Despite trying to take up Cuban cultural and social practices (he even "takes up fishing for social approval", with not much success), he still cannot help but being associated with his country of origin. Even after he comes back from fishing with the skeleton of a giant marlin and the people in town acknowledge his skills, Santiago still "remains a man in exile, isolated, and without a social community" (Herlihy 2009: 41).

The feeling of distress and alienation coming from the massive urbanization of the twentieth century is particularly evident in the artists belonging to the movement of the Beat Generation, which developed in the United States after World War II, and in particular in the 1950s. The members of the Beat generation were considered by the critics of the time, and by the readers themselves, solely as urban figures, for the themes that they addressed, especially in the early stages of the movement (Phillips 2000). On the contrary, their works did not celebrate urban life, despite mostly being set in an

urban environment. This can be seen in one of the most prominent and influential Beat texts, Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*. Published in1956, this poem is an open critique of the American society, and in particular, as Phillips (2000: 4) describes it, it is "a poem which chronicles the maddening effects of urban life". Consumerism and urban life are seen by Ginsberg as a "sphinx of cement and aluminum"[5] that "bashed open their [the best minds of his generations] skulls and ate up their brains". American society and life in the metropolis become "Moloch", the biblical god recipient of human sacrifices, in the second part of the poem:

> Moloch the incomprehensible prison! Moloch the crossbone soulless jailhouse and Congress of sorrows! Moloch whose buildings are judgment! Moloch the vast stone of war! Moloch the stunned governments!
> Moloch whose mind is pure machinery! Moloch whose blood is running money! Moloch whose fingers are ten armies! Moloch whose breast is a cannibal dynamo! Moloch whose ear is a smoking tomb!
> Moloch whose eyes are a thousand blind windows! Moloch whose skyscrapers stand in the long streets like endless Jehovahs! Moloch whose factories dream and croak in the fog! Moloch whose smoke-stacks and antennae crown the cities!

The city, with its heavy industrialization, is seen by Ginsberg as an evil and violent being that required enormous sacrifice from the people who created it, who "broke their backs lifting Moloch to Heaven".

In criticizing the city, *Howl* also criticizes the feeling of isolation that it gives to its inhabitants: "Moloch! Solitude! Filth! Ugliness!". Ginsberg defines the "best minds of [his] generation" as "lonesome", he says that, because of the madness produced by the urban life, his friends "loned it through the streets of Idaho", "lounged hungry and lonesome through Houston", "loned in Denver": he himself is "lonely" in Moloch.

When talking about the Beat generation and about the aspects of loneliness and solitude addressed by its members, we cannot forget Jack Kerouac, the incarnation of the Beat movement, and "a very lonely man", in the words of his wife (Lelyveld 1969). We can see this loneliness in some of his most famous works. First, and most obviously, his collection of short stories titled *Lonesome Traveler* (1960), which recounts different

[5] *Howl*, Allen Ginsberg. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/49303/howl [accessed: Nov. 4, 2018]

travels, throughout the United States and the world. In the questionnaire that Kerouac includes at the beginning of the book, he explicitly says how he was influenced by writers like Ernest Hemingway and Jack London, whose biography read at the age of 18 made him decide "to also be an adventurer, a lonesome traveler" (Kerouac 1960: v).

Kerouac's most famous book, *On the road* (1957), also recounts his travels, although it is officially the story of Sal Paradise and his travels across the United States (and Mexico), together with his friend Dean Moriarty and several other people. All the main characters appearing in the novel are pseudonyms for Kerouac (Sal Paradise) and his friends, and the travels narrated in the book, actually happened in the late 1940s. The initial response to the book was very positive and the famous review by Gilbert Millstein right after the publication, described it as "the most beautifully executed, the clearest and the most important utterance yet made by the generation Kerouac himself named as 'beat', and whose principal avatar he is" (Millstein 1957). Initially, like we see in Millstein's review, the book was greeted "as a burst of rollicking, joyous American energy […] that rejected the ennui, pessimism and cynicism of the Lost Generation[6]" and whose heroes "savored everything, enjoyed everything, took pleasure in everything" (Brooks 2007). More recently, on the contrary, readers and critics have started to acknowledge the other side of the novel, that of loneliness and isolation, of pessimism and longing for home, like Louis Menand, writer and professor at Harvard, who described the novel as "a sad and somewhat self-consciously lyrical story about loneliness, insecurity, and failure" (Menand 2007).

Another one of Kerouac's novel that addresses the theme of isolation is *Big Sur* (1962). Like *On the road,* this novel also tells stories about the lives of Kerouac and his friends, despite the names of the characters being different. *Big Sur* tells the story of a famous writer who, unable to cope with the success (and alcoholism) in the city of New York, seeks refuge at his friend's, in a cabin in the California region of Big Sur, where he lives for three weeks. He comes and goes from the cabin to New York and from New York back to the cabin for three times, each time becoming overwhelmed by the loneliness in

[6] The term "Lost Generation" refers to the generation of people born around the turn of the twentieth century and who reached adulthood during or right after World War I. Writers like Francis Scott Fitzgerald, William Faulkner and John Steinbeck are part of this generation. Ernest Hemingway is considered to be the leading figure of the Lost generation and is the one who helped popularize the name.

the cabin and by the metropolis lifestyle made of heavy drinking and excessive talking in New York. The protagonist of *Big Sur*, and therefore Kerouac himself, is torn between the need for solitude and the fear of loneliness, between the need to live a life with other people and the desire of a comforting solitude.

Nature, and the healing power of the solitude it can offer, plays a big role in *Big Sur*, especially in contrast with the haunting urban life. Going back to the questionnaire at the beginning of *Lonesome Traveler*, we know that Kerouac wanted to spend time in nature, alone, to write and dream of Paradise, as he describes his "final plans" like this: "hermitage in the woods, quiet writing of old age, mellow hopes of Paradise" (Kerouac 1960: vi).

Nature and the sense of solitude and isolation are a central element in the poetic work of Richard Wright. The African-American author, mostly known for his fiction and non-fiction work (like the novel *Native Son* and the memoir *Black Boy*), also wrote about 4,000 haiku in the last two years of his life, while he was living in France with his family. The volume *Haiku: This Other World*, which includes 817 of those poems, has been published posthumously in 1998, 38 years after Wright's death in 1960. The collection is "a record of his momentary joy, haunting ailments, wistful humor, dreamed return, exiled life, and loneliness" (Zheng 2009: 61).

Wright wrote his haiku in the period of his illness, and he used those short Japanese poems as a sort of medicine, as "self-developed antidotes against illness", like his daughter Julia notes in the Introduction to *Haiku: This Other World* (1998: viii). In this introduction, she also tells us of how the haiku writing probably helped her father in recovering from a period (the last two years of his life) of several losses, with the deaths of some of his best friends. In the Afterword to the collection of Wright's Haiku, by Yoshinobu Hakutani and Robert L. Tener, we learn that original Japanese haiku are inspired by the beautiful scenes and seasonal changes of nature, and intentionally avoid all the ugly aspects of nature. When Wright approached the artistic form of haiku, he was "[e]xhausted by his financial problems, sickness and the polemics surrounding him" and, because of this, he was also "mentally and emotionally receptive to the ideas, beauty and form of haiku" as a way to liberate himself from the restrictions of rationality. Wright's haiku rarely reflect the expectations of a kind of poetry that would unite nature and

humanity (Morgan 2011). We see that already in the poem that opens the collection (1):

I am nobody:
A red sinking autumn sun
Took my name away.

Here, an element of nature, the "red sinking sun" creates an active alienation by removing the writer's "name", that is his identity, and making him into a "nobody". The experience of nature creates in the poet the feelings of alienation and loneliness.
A natural element connected with the feelings of loneliness and isolation in Richard Wright's haiku seems to be the snow, as noted by Morgan (2011: 100-102). We can see it in haiku 461, 519 and 521.

Entering my town
In a heavy fall of snow,
I feel a stranger. (461)

Even my old friends
Seem like newly met strangers
In the first snowfall. (519)

Just enough of snow
To make you look carefully
At familiar streets. (521)

The depersonalization of feeling like a "stranger" on the once "familiar" streets create the sense of loneliness. Even in his own town, among his friends, and in his streets, the poet feels lonely and out of place.

Another sign of the presence of loneliness in Wright's haiku is the often-repeated line "How lonely it is", as in haiku 574, 569 and 636.

Standing in the crowd
In a cold drizzling rain, –
How lonely it is. (574)

A thin waterfall
Dribbles the whole autumn night, –
How lonely it is. (569)

How lonely it is:
A rattling freight train has left
Fields of croaking frogs. (636)

Richard Wright is mostly known to the public for his work concerning racial issues in the United States. On the contrary, the haiku is a more racially neuter form of literature. As Morgan (2011: 114) explains, the "use of a racially neutral speaker allows Wright the space to foreground the processes of estrangement, isolation and dehumanization". The choice of haiku as the literary form "allowed for the possibility of naming the dread and fear created by alienation and objectification without it being exclusively connected to black experience".

Mentioned in this section are only some of the American literary figures that have dealt with the themes of loneliness and solitude in their works. Many other important authors have addressed these themes and have not been included in this chapter for mere reasons of space. Some of those are: Ralph Waldo Emerson, American philosopher, mentor and friend of Thoreau; Edgar Allan Poe, many of whose characters are lonely and isolated (see, for example, the poems *Alone* and *The Raven*) and who was an isolated person himself; William Faulkner, with his short story *A Rose for Emily*; Ralph Waldo Ellison, whose novel *Invisible Man* describes a person who lives underground and experiences social invisibility.

1.4 Social relations in American society

Many studies in the social sciences field have focused on social relations, but one of them specifically looks at the American character and at the way Americans relate to the society in which they live. *The Lonely Crowd*, written in 1950 by David Riesman, together with Nathan Glazer and Reuel Denney, has quickly become a bestseller and it still is a

cornerstone of sociology. In the book, the authors, talk about the difference between the *tradition-directed*, the *inner-directed*, and the *other-directed* social characters, and about the existence of these different characters in America. Riesman argues that changes in a society and population growth implicate changes in the social characters of the typical members of that society (Riesman 1961: 8):

> The society of high growth potential develops in its typical members a social character whose conformity is insured by their tendency to follow tradition: these I shall term *tradition-directed* people […]. The society of transitional population growth develops in its typical members a social character whose conformity is insured by their tendency to acquire early in life an internalized set of goals. These I shall term *inner-directed* people […]. Finally, the society of incipient population decline develops in its typical members a social character whose conformity is insured by their tendency to be sensitized to the expectations and preferences of others. These I shall term *other-directed* people […].

The *other-directed* character, Riesman argues, was emerging in the mid-twentieth century in the upper middle class of large American cities, while up until then, the *inner-directed* type was the most common. One of the reasons why the other-directed character was the dominant one in America[7] at the time was the presence of the systems of "capitalism, industrialism and urbanization" (Riesman 1961: 20).

The *inner-directed* types learn and internalize the principles of behavior, early on in their lives, in the privacy of their homes, from the (small number of) people in their family. They obey the directions of this "psychic gyroscope", as Reisman calls it, that they are given by their parents, and because of this, they possess a great stability. On the contrary, the *other-directed* people respond to signals that come from more people than just their parents. For them, "[t]he family is no longer a closely-knit unit […] but merely part of a wider social environment" (Riesman 1961: 25): the dividing line between what is familiar and what is strange disappears and they become cosmopolitan. As a result, the *inner-directed* types are more independent and strongly rely on themselves and on

[7] When Riesman and his colleagues wrote the book, the *other-directed* character was the dominant one only in the metropolitan areas of the United States, not in America as a whole. But, like he himself states, "since the *other-directed* types are to be found among the young, in the larger cities, and among the upper income groups, we may assume that, unless present trends are reversed, the hegemony of other-direction lies not far off" (Riesman 1961: 20).

their own knowledge, while the *other-directed* types are easily adaptable and able to create bonds quickly but not deeply, rather superficial. The *other-directed* people, by virtue of their adaptability can feel at home "everywhere and nowhere" at the same time, like Riesman says: it is this that makes them lonely, it is this that makes Americans a lonely crowd.

The Lonely Crowd was published more than six decades ago and addresses the society of the time. The book, though, is still relevant in our days (see Wilkinson 2010), as things seem to not have changed at all: Americans are still a lonely crowd. A recent report[8] by the health services provider Cigna from May 2018 found that many Americans feel lonely. Just under half of the people surveyed reported feeling alone sometimes or always; one in four people reported feeling like there is rarely or ever someone who understands them; 43 percent of the people surveyed reported feeling isolated by others. Along the same line, another survey[9] by the Kaiser Family Foundation from August 2018 reports that 22 percent of Americans "say they often or always feel lonely, feel that they lack companionship, feel left out, or feel isolated from others". Moreover, many scientific studies have showed a connection between loneliness and physical problems, like diabetes (Brinkhues 2017), heart diseases (Valtorta 2016) and even early mortality (Holt-Lunstad 2015).

As much as loneliness is a larger and larger problem, as the studies mentioned above prove, that should be faced and overcome, is really demonizing loneliness and defining it as "epidemic" the right way to do it? Is that really the right way to help people talk about their loneliness, when they feel sick ashamed about it? After all, like Eric Klinenberg (2018) says, "an occasional and transitory feeling of loneliness can be healthy and productive", and instead even the smallest hint of loneliness is seen as a devil, trying to take you with him to the underworld. The more this happens, the less people will feel free to talk about their feelings. And the less they talk about their feelings, the more difficult it will be to accept them and overcome their problems.

[8] Full report available here: https://www.multivu.com/players/English/8294451-cigna-us-loneliness-survey/docs/IndexReport_1524069371598-173525450.pdf [accessed: Nov. 11, 2018]
[9] Full report available here: http://files.kff.org/attachment/Report-Loneliness-and-Social-Isolation-in-the-United-States-the-United-Kingdom-and-Japan-An-International-Survey [accessed: Nov. 11, 2018]

CHAPTER 2
Studying cultures through language: Cultural Linguistics and Corpus Linguistics

2.1 Language and culture

The relationship between language and culture is a complex one: several disciplines have been developed and several studies have been carried out to understand it. These disciplines and studies attempt to answer fundamental questions such as: Are language and culture related to each other? And if so, in what way? Is the language we speak *reflected* in our culture, or perhaps our culture is reflected in the language we speak? Is the language we speak *influenced* by our culture or maybe it is our culture that is influenced by the language we speak? Language can be thought of as being the verbal expression of culture: can, then, a language be modified by a cultural change? Or is a culture modified by a language change?

The best-known hypothesis about the relationship between language and culture is, without any doubt, the hypothesis of linguistic relativity, also known as the *Sapir-Whorf hypothesis*, from the names of linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf[10]. The idea of linguistic relativity can be seen as a rendition of a model developed by anthropologist Franz Boas, Sapir's professor. According to Boas, the world is made up of cultural areas, "distinctive historical formations that in some cases, and for some period of time, achieved particular coherence" (Leavitt 2015: 24). Each of these cultural areas tends to transform new material into its own distinctive direction, and this is true for all cultural material, including language. The cultural areas, therefore, are also linguistics areas, whose boundaries are determined by the transformation of the material. It is easily deducible, then, that culture and language are in some way interrelated: the

[10] Despite the name, the two linguists never actually co-authored any work together. Benjamin Lee Whorf, the one who is most prominently associated with the linguistic relativity hypothesis, simply was Sapir's student.

culture and thoughts of a person are reflected in the language, but at the same time linguistic categories can impose themselves on the thoughts of that same person.

Boas' model was the starting point for the development of what has come to be known as the hypothesis of linguistic relativity. It is the theory that our thoughts, our actions, everything we are, do and think is determined by the language we speak. In the words of Sapir: "We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation" (Sapir, 1929: 69). Whorf (1940: 213) explains the idea this way:

> It was found that the background linguistic system (in other words, the grammar) of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual's mental activity, for his analysis of impressions, for his synthesis of his mental stock in trade. Formulation of ideas is not an independent process, strictly rational in the old sense, but is part of a particular grammar, and differs, from slightly to greatly, between different grammars.

There have been many criticisms to this hypothesis, so many that for decades it was entirely refused, leaving space, for example, for the development of Chomsky's Universalist theory of language in the 1960s. In the late 1980s and 1990s though, the theory of linguistic relativity was brought back to fame, with the argument that it had been discarded too easily and not interpreted in the correct way. During the 1950s, philosophers and psychologists had taken up the hypothesis, giving it the meaning that language determines our thoughts and puts limits to what we are able to think. The initial Boasian ideas on language and thought were distorted: language came to refer just to vocabulary sets, as opposed to the Boasian idea of sounds and grammatical categories; as to thought, they meant categories such as memory and recognition, as opposed to the Boasian construal of the world (Leavitt 2015).

The work on the hypothesis of linguistic relativity was then resumed in the 1990s by John Lucy. The psychologist and linguist published two volumes, both in 1992, that reformulated the hypothesis of linguistic relativity: in the first volume, he retraces the history of the hypothesis, in an attempt to correct the distortion in its meaning and in the meaning of its key concepts, language and thought; the second volume, instead, adopts a

more concrete approach and presents new experiments on linguistic relativity of grammatical categories. Lucy tried to reformulate the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis "by narrowing the problem to the influence of language on thought, especially the influence of formally structured linguistic meanings of "morphosyntactic categories" on the habitual thought of non-specialists" (Palmer 1996: 16).

Throughout the years, many different disciplines, other than those related to linguistics, have shown interest towards the relationship between language and culture. We just mentioned, for example, how psychology took up the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, hoping that it would answer their questions about the nature of the language-thought relationship.

As Alessandro Duranti (2001) notes about U.S. anthropology, in this field there are several different techniques and subdisciplines that study language as culture, like linguistic anthropology, anthropological linguistics, sociolinguistics, and they all differ from each other in their theory and methods. In the next section we will look at one of these disciplines, namely Cultural Linguistics.

2.2 Cultural Linguistics

The first scholar to use the term Cultural Linguistics was Gary Palmer, in his 1996 book *Towards a Theory of Cultural Linguistics*. In his book, Palmer (1996) starts by talking about three different traditions in Linguistic Anthropology, i.e. Boasian linguistics (which takes its name from Frank Boas), ethnosemantics and the ethnography of speaking (for which the author uses the acronym ES). All of these approaches to meaning and discourse, though, are either inadequate or too imprecise, or, like Whorf's hypothesis, they need further development. Palmer proposes to integrate these three approaches with Cognitive Linguistics, the discipline that focuses on language and cognition, originated by George Lakoff and Ronald Langacker (Lakoff 1987; Langacker 1987). He defines this combination as Cultural Linguistics.

It is important to highlight that, for Palmer, Cultural Linguistics is primarily concerned "not with how people talk about some objective reality, but with how they

talk about the world that they themselves imagine" (Palmer 1996: 36). Imagery, not only visual, but obtained through all the senses, is at the center of language and culturally constructed imagery is at the basis of this new theory of linguistic meaning, i.e. Cultural Linguistics. What Palmer calls with the quite generic and possibly confusing name of 'imagery', will later be known as cultural conceptualizations (Sharifian 2017b).

The latest tradition in Cultural Linguistics defines it as a discipline that "engages with features of human languages that encode or instantiate culturally constructed conceptualisations encompassing the whole range of human experience." (Sharifian 2017b: 2). Cultural conceptualizations relate to language in two ways: on one hand, language is the mediator that allows humans to construct meanings about their experiences, but on the other hand, aspects of language use and language structure reflect the cultural conceptualizations themselves. These two aspects are at the basis of Cultural Linguistics research.

2.2.1 Methods in Cultural Linguistics

Through which means does Cultural Linguistics analyze the cultural conceptualizations behind the making of meanings in a language? What are the methodologies that cultural linguists use for their research? Sharifian (2017b), in Chapter 4 of his Cultural Linguistics, lists several of them.

Research in the field of Cultural Linguistics can be initiated, for example, by researchers coming across a particular feature of a language that, they think, could hold a particular cultural conceptualization (e.g. untranslatable terms). Researchers can also decide to focus on the language related to a certain domain of existence, like a particular emotion (in this case, in fact, despite the fact that the experience of the emotion could be the same across cultures, the way in which the emotion is conceptualized and expressed, i.e. the language used to talk about it, would vary) or to focus on a key notion or word in a particular field, exploring the cultural conceptualizations of that concept.

What are the actual materials used by the researchers for their analysis? Sharifian stresses how "*any* body of data, *any* source of knowledge" (2017b: 42, emphasis in the original) might provide access to cultural conceptualizations. Indeed, if we look at previous Cultural Linguistics studies, we find that different types of data sources are employed, ranging from questionnaires and interviews, to field notes and naturally-occurring conversations.

Lu (2017), for example, examines the cultural conceptualizations of the language of migration as used by Chinese immigrants in Australia, exploring the cultural meaning of the speaker's identities as immigrants. The data employed for the study come from focus group interviews of 25 first generation Chinese immigrants. During these meetings, the participants "exchanged their opinions about China and China-related issues from a cross-cultural comparative perspective" (Lu 2017: 88).

Musolff (2017) uses questionnaires distributed to three different British universities and to Higher Education institutions of nine other countries (China, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Norway, Poland, Romania and Spain) to explore the differences in the metaphor "nation-as-a-body." The questionnaires were presented to the students as a simple exercise, part of the syllabus, to avoid any unintentional influence from the professors towards the students, who would therefore give only their own interpretation of the metaphor for their own country.

Sharifian and Tayebi (2017) combine field notes with online data in their study about the influence of culture in the perception of impolite language, while Wilson and Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (2017) employ online emotions sorting methodology, together with other methodological tools, to carry out their comparative study on the cultural conceptualizations of the emotion 'pride' in British English and Polish.

Alvanoudi (2017), in her research about language and its relationship with cultural conceptualizations of gender, analyzes about 45 hours of audio-recorded naturally occurring conversations, arguing that "interaction is the 'natural habitat' of cultural conceptualisations of gender, that is, the environment in which cultural conceptualisations emerge and are negotiated in daily life" (Alvanoudi 2017: 131).

Cultural conceptualization can be overtly observable, like in some of the cases above, but less so in other cases. When the cultural conceptualizations are not directly found in the lexicon or grammar of a language, they might be encoded into different patterns of language use, that can emerge only in naturalistic settings. Alvanoudi's research, for example, shows how some types of conceptualizations can be discovered only in their "natural habitat." Corpus Linguistics, the discipline based on real-life language use, could therefore be very useful for the study of those cultural conceptualizations which can only be found through the emergence of language patterns. Jensen (2017) proposes to combine corpus linguistics methods with Cultural Linguistics, not only for the reason mentioned above, but also because "both Cultural Linguistics and corpus linguistics take usage-based linguistics as one of their main premises, [therefore] it makes sense that corpus-analytical techniques can be used in addressing instantiations of cultural conceptualization in language use" (Jensen, 2017: 478).

2.3 Corpus Linguistics

Corpus Linguistics is a methodology for the study of language. Researchers in Corpus Linguistics use corpora, large collections of machine-readable and searchable texts, to explore possible patterns in language use.

A key figure in the development of Corpus Linguistics is John McHardy Sinclair, British professor and lexicographer who in 1991 published the book *Corpus, concordance, collocation*, which laid the foundations for future advances in the discipline and is considered the "bible" for corpus linguists[11]. For the ten years before this publication, Sinclair (and the University of Birmingham) had been working with the publishing company Collins to create COBUILD, the Collins-Birmingham University International Lexical Database. In this book, Sinclair proposes his famous "idiom principle" according to which people use a set of semi-preconstructed phrases in their

[11] As Michael Hoey, in his obituary for John Sinclair in the newspaper *The Guardian*, defines it. https://www.theguardian.com/news/2007/may/03/guardianobituaries.obituaries [visited: October 09, 2018]

language, in opposition to the "open-choice principle", which, instead, puts very minimal constraints on the speakers' choice of lexical items.

Corpus research can vary widely, not only in its scope, but also in the methods used. The first distinction we can make is that research in a corpus can be qualitative or quantitative, depending on what the researchers extract through corpus tools: we can look at simple concordances, i.e. at the words in their context, and pursue qualitative research, or we can look at a corpus frequency wordlist, and opt for a more quantitative research. Moreover, depending on the type of corpus (or corpora) analyzed, corpus research can focus on one or more languages/dialects (e.g. with parallel or translation corpora), on one or more historical times (diachronic analysis)[12], on one or more geographical places (diatopic analysis)[13].

Another distinction that can be made is between corpus-based studies and corpus-driven studies. This distinction was originally introduced by Tognini-Bonelli (2001). A corpus-based approach is a methodology that uses corpora in order to "expound, test or exemplify theories and descriptions that were formulated before large corpora became available to inform language study" (Tognini-Bonelli 2001: 65), while in a corpus-driven approach "the linguist uses a corpus beyond the selection of examples to support linguistic argument or to validate a theoretical statement" (Tognini-Bonelli 2001: 84). In other words, a study uses a corpus-based methodology when it intends to prove or refute a hypothesis that has already been formulated, while it uses a corpus-driven methodology when the corpus data are used to arrive at the formulation of a new hypothesis. In the latter case, the corpus is seen as embodying its own theory of language[14].

The use of corpora has had a strong impact on linguistics, reorienting our approach to the study of languages, like McEnery and Hardy say (2012: 1), giving us the

[12] For an example of diachronic study, see Tissari (2006).

[13] The Brown corpus, the first real machine-searchable corpus, built in 1961, contained 1 million words of American English. It was followed, a few years later, in the 1970s, by the Lancaster-Oslo/Berger corpus (LOB) of British English: this was thought of as being a sister corpus of Brown, in that it also contained 1 million words from the year 1961. These two corpora have been used for diatopic studies, since they allow scholars to compare not only British and American English, but also the UK and the U.S. (see for example Leech and Fallon 1992, and section 2.4 of this chapter).

[14] This idea has received criticisms and so has the distinction between corpus-based and corpus-driven approaches (see McEnery and Hardy 2012).

opportunity to produce new language theories, based on easily searchable attested language use, answering many questions that would never have been able to be answered otherwise. Corpus linguistics, moreover, has been successfully implemented, throughout the years, in fields like lexicography and translation.

Corpus linguistics can also be successfully applied to the field of Cultural Linguistics. After all, where is evidence about culture to be found, if not in a collection of authentic naturally-occurring language samples?

2.4 Employing corpus methods in the study of cultures

The first study to combine corpus linguistics techniques with cultural linguistics was published in 1992 in an article titled *Computer corpora – What do they tell us about culture?* published by Geoffrey Leech and Roger Fallon in the ICAME journal[15]. The study compares the frequency lists of the words in the Brown corpus of American English and in the LOB (Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen) corpus of British English, in order to find the most significant differences between the two cultures. Setting aside the most obvious differences that would have been of no interest for the purpose of the study, like spelling (e.g. theater vs theatre) or lexical choices (e.g. transportation vs transport) differences, the authors classify the other ones into the following 15 categories:

1. Sport	6. Law and crime	11. Arts
2. Transport and travel	7. Business	12. Religion
3. Administration and Politics	8. Mass media	13. Personal reference
4. Social hierarchy	9. Science and technology	14. Abstract concepts
5. Military and violence	10. Education	15. *Ifs*, *buts* and modalities

[15] Even though, in the words of its authors, this is the first "systematic attempt" at using corpora to study cultural aspects, this study is based on a book from 1982, "Word Frequencies in British American English", by Knut Hofland and Stig Johansson. This book, which is mainly a list of the most frequent words in the LOB (British English) corpus, also contains a parallel list of the most frequent words in the Brown (American English) and LOB corpora, and a discussion of the main differences between the two corpora in terms of word frequency.

The conclusion of the study shows a picture of American culture that is

> "masculine […], militaristic, dynamic and actuated by high ideas, driven by technology, activity and enterprise - contrasting with one of British culture as more given to temporizing and talking, to benefitting from wealth rather than creating it and to family and emotional life" (Leech and Fallon, 1992: 44-45)

As innovative as it was, there were still many limitations to this study. First of all, the corpora used are not very big: they are both around one million words, which is (and was, at the time) definitely not large enough to get reliable results. Moreover, the content of both corpora is restricted in two ways: the type of texts and the time. Both LOB and Brown include only written language, leaving out a substantial part of what could reflect the culture of a country, that is the spoken and spontaneous interactions, and they only include texts from the year 1961.

Leech and Fallon do not focus on a specific element, word or characteristic (despite identifying those 15 categories), but rather on the culture as a whole, on the comparison of British and American English. With time, the studies of culture through corpora have become more diverse and specific. With larger and more specialized corpora, researches can be more and more specific, and have been able to focus on a particular aspect of a culture, on a particular word or set of words, or on a particular genre.

Fina (2011) focuses on reviews from tourists found on the travel website TripAdvisor. The data collected for the corpora are reviews of accommodation in the Italian region of Puglia, written in English and Italian respectively by British and Italian native speakers. The study shows the differences "in the way English and Italian travellers perceive the holiday experience" (Fina 2011: 59) and analyzes the results in terms of Edward Hall's distinction between *High-Context (HC)* and *Low-Context (LC)* Cultures (Hall 1976) and in terms of Geert Hofstede's cultural dimension of *Uncertainty Avoidance* (Hofstede 2001).

In general, the Italian reviews analyzed are found to use more abstract words and generic descriptions, compared to the English ones, which were on the contrary more detailed. This result is in line with Hall's distinction between HC vs LC cultures, that sees the Italian one as a higher context culture and the English one as a lower context culture.

Systemic thinking, that is placing value on the context, on the general picture, is, in fact, a characteristic of HC cultures, whereas LC cultures are characterized by linear thinking, in that they tend to look closely and with more precision at details.

Moreover, Fina's results give a picture of Italian tourists looking for a "home away from home" in their reviews, with a significantly higher number of occurrences of (or similar to) "to feel at home" or "to feel like a family member". This is in line with Hofstede's scores of Uncertainty Avoidance for the two countries: Italy has a higher value (75) compared to the UK (35), showing that "Italian travellers tend towards a low tolerance for unknown situations and when they are on holiday they tend to search for a 'home away from home', that is they look for familiar clues that will help them feel comfortable in a new environment" (Fina 2011: 77).

In the same direction goes the research by Navarro (2016), which takes into consideration TripAdvisor reviews by American and Brazilian tourists, respectively in American English and Brazilian Portuguese, and frames the linguistic differences within the context of cultural orientations. The corpus compiled is made of 4 different subcorpora containing TripAdvisor reviews written by Americans and Brazilians about hotels in the USA and Brazil.

The main difference resulting from the corpus analysis is a significantly higher number of occurrences of the word "standard(s)" in the reviews written by Americans about hotels in Brazil, compared to the reviews written by Brazilians about hotels in the United States. The findings were then framed within the context of the cultural orientations "Thinking orientation", "Individualism" and "Action Orientation": this delineates a picture of the American culture that tends towards a linear thinking, universalistic and *do* orientation, with the use of specific (American, international or Brazilian) standards in their comparisons, contrasting with the Brazilian culture, which tends towards a systemic thinking, particularistic and *be* orientation, with the reviews generally more focused on subjective and emotional impressions.

Another use of corpus linguistics in the study of cultures was made by researches who focus on the nature of emotions[16]. In particular, the studies that we are going to

[16] On the study of emotions across cultures through Natural Semantic Metalanguage see Wierzbicka (1999).

analyze make use of the methodology of Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM)[17], developed by Anna Wierzbicka and Cliff Goddard. This methodology of linguistic and conceptual analysis is based on the assumption that every language has a certain number of lexical universals ("semantic primes") and grammatical universals, through which the meaning of every word (even the more semantically complex ones) could be expressed. We will not go into details about the conceptualization of the words or concepts for each of the studies, since this is beyond the scope of this section and would take up too much space; we will only look at instances where corpus methods have been combined with the NSM methodology and at the results that were obtained in the study of cultural differences.

Gladkova (2010) combines corpus-based research with the NSM methodology, in order to "analyze semantic and cultural differences between the English terms *sympathy*, *compassion*, and *empathy* and their Russian translational equivalents *sočuvstvie*, *sostradanie*, and *sopereživanie*" (Gladkova 2010: 268).

After searching the respective corpora (the COBUILD Bank of English for the English language and the Russian National corpus for the Russian language), Gladkova analyzes the occurrences, to identify the features of each one of the terms considered. For example, she points out that the data from the COBUILD corpus shows how *sympathy* can be felt towards someone one knows personally, someone one does not know really well, or at all, or even towards fictional characters; *sočuvstvie* (the Russian equivalent for the English *sympathy*), instead, is typically felt towards a person that is close (*bližnij*) and with whom the experiencer is in direct contact. Another difference Gladkova found between the two languages and the two sets of emotions lays in the mode of expression of those emotions: for example, some occurrences from the Russian corpus showed that people can thank others for their *sočuvstvie*, something that does not appear to happen in English, showing therefore that the demonstration of the emotion in English is less visible.

This and the other differences between the two sets of words analyzed by Gladkova in her study can be attributed to the different models of social interaction of the English and Russian cultures: one model, the Russian one, is based on the opposition between

[17] For an overview on the Natural Semantic Metalanguage approach and on its uses see Goddard (2010).

"one's people" (*blizkie*) and "alien people" (*čužie*) and on the importance given to the expression of emotions; the other model instead, the English one, relies to a lesser degree on the contrast between people one does or does not know and gives less importance to emotional expression.

Farese (2016) analyzes the Japanese emotion terms *haji* and *hazukashii* and the differences in meaning with their traditional English equivalent terms *shame* and *embarrassing*, arguing that the Japanese terms reflect two concepts that are specific of the Japanese language and culture. The methodology used for the semantic explication of the two Japanese emotion terms is, again, that of Natural Semantic Metalanguage. Corpora play a smaller role in this study, compared to Gladkova (2010), in that the examples adduced for the analysis of the terms come from different sources: a Japanese dictionary, several Japanese novels and the *Kotonoha* corpus of Japanese. Moreover, no corpora are used for the study of the English terms *shame* and *embarrassing*, as their semantic explications are taken from previously conducted research. Despite the fact that the Japanese corpus is being used for only part of the examples, Farese's study is still relevant to our purpose, that is highlighting the importance of the use of corpora in cultural studies.

The concept of *shame* is one of the most studied through the use of corpus linguistics methods: it is studied in the English language and culture or in comparison with other languages and cultures, by itself or together with related concepts like *guilt* or *embarrassment*. Out of all the human emotions, the emotion of shame seems to have captured scholars' attention many times. Heli Tissari (2006), for example, investigates the use of the word *shame* in English throughout the centuries. Using five different corpora[18] the author was able to cover the timespan that goes from 1418 to 1991 and to perform a historical study of shame. A study of *shame* from a gender point of view is, instead, at the center of Cathrine Norberg's research. Starting from the idea that "many Western societies associate shame with the feminine rather than the masculine"

[18] The Freiburg-LOB Corpus of British English (FLOB) and the Freiburg-Brown Corpus of American English (FROWN) for the year 1991, the Corpus of Early English Correspondence Sampler (CEECS) for the years 1418-1680, the early modern English period of the Helsinki Corpus of English Texts (HC) for the years 1500-1710 and ARCHER (A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers) for the years 1650-1990.

(Norberg 2012: 160), the author intends to investigate the idea of male and female shame in British culture, through the use of the British National Corpus (BNC). In particular, the study tries to explore the situations in which male and female feel or express shame, whether this is a positive or negative experience and whether shame really tends to be more of a feminine emotion or, instead, it is equally distributed over male and female discourse.

Shame has also been at the center of cross-cultural studies, like the one carried out by Karolina Krawczak. Krawczak (2014) studies the emotional category of *shame*, together with *embarrassment* and *guilt* (through their corresponding adjectives *ashamed*, *embarrassed* and *guilty*) and compares them in the British, American and Polish languages and cultures. This choice is based on the distinction of Poland as a more collectivist country than Great Britain and the United States, which are, instead, at the highest positions in the individualist chart.

The approach used in the study is that of multifactorial usage feature and profile analysis, which "assumes that contextualized language structure provides an insight into conceptual organization, which, in turn, is a key to socio-cultural profiling of reality" (Krawczak 2014: 447).

In the words of Nordmark and Glynn (2013: 112), the method can be described as follows:

> [It] consists of the repeated analysis of a range of semantic, pragmatic, and social characteristics of speech events. A large sample of a given phenomenon […] are extracted from a corpus with their context. These occurrences are manually annotated for whatever usage features are hypothesised to be indicative of conceptual structure. The results of this analysis provide a behavioural profile of the linguistic form. Due to its complexity, this profile needs to be interpreted with the aid of multivariate statistics, which permits the identification of usage-patterns across the data.

It is not possible in this context to dig deeper into the research (which is complex and difficult to summarize in just a few lines), but we can look at the final results of the comparison of the different cultures, which is ultimately what interests us the most. The analysis conducted revealed a cline that goes from *embarrassment*, through *shame* and gets to *guilt*, based on the gravity of the causes and the duration of the emotion. Along

this cline, in the Polish collectivist society, the usage model of *zawstydzony* (ashamed) tends towards that of *zażenowany* (embarrassed). For Britain and America, instead, the usage model of *ashamed* is closer to that of *guilty*. These findings are in line with the initial hypothesis of the research, according to which collectivist societies, like Poland, would have an interdependent and other-oriented character, whereas individualist societies, like Great Britain and the United States, would be more "independent and guided by internally defined standards, rather than externally imposed norms and expectations" (Krawczak 2014: 470).

The same approach of multifactorial usage-feature analysis has been adopted in other research that has abstract concepts as its object of study. For example, Sten and Glynn (2012) study the concept of *home* in the American culture of the nineteenth and twentieth century. They do so by building a corpus of texts by five different American authors (James Fenimore Cooper, David Henry Thoreau and Fredrick Jackson Turner from the nineteenth century; Woody Guthrie and Bruce Springsteen from the twentieth century), and by manually analyzing each one of the occurrences of *home*, to find the relative conceptual profile. Overall, the corpus findings and the following statistical analysis led the authors to the conclusion that nineteenth century authors saw *home* in a positive way, whereas there was a rise in negative usage in the twentieth century. Moreover, in the nineteenth century, *home* most commonly referred to "a place of origin, a spiritual place, and emotion or a nation state", while in the twentieth century "the referents shift to actions and places to which one 'belongs'" (Sten and Glynn 2012: 51)

Along the same line of research is another study by Dylan Glynn, focusing on the concept of *femininity* in American culture. The conceptualization of gender is a cornerstone of current research in cultural and social studies: Glynn (2015) intends to demonstrate the possibility of the description of socio-culturally sensitive concepts through the use of corpus data. In contrast to the study of *home*, though, in this case the center of the study is not the actual word *femininity*, but a set of lexemes that are related to it.

To begin with, an extensive list of adjectives relating to *femininity* was compiled using dictionaries. Afterwards, using the Corpus of Contemporary American English

(COCA), the six more frequent adjectives from the list were identified: *motherly*, *girly*, *girlish*, *feminine*, *womanish* and *womanly*. The data for the research was taken from the online platform LiveJournal[19]. The manual and statistical analysis of the occurrences of lexemes in the corpus revealed two basic usage categories for what concerns the lexemes relating to *femininity*: when the referents are male, the *femininity* lexemes tend to be used in a negative way, while with female or inanimate referents, a more positive usage is noted. Moreover, the *femininity* lexemes are most commonly referred to male referents when talking about their behavior and attitude, while they are used in wider contexts (décor and fashion, art and culture, health and appearance) when talking about female or inanimate referents.

This chapter was dedicated to the possibility of finding, and studying, cultures in corpora. The question addressed by Schneider (2018) is along the same lines: to what extent can traces of cultures be found in corpora, using corpus linguistics as a methodology? To find an answer, Schneider searches the corpora (mostly ICE, the International Corpus of English, but also GloWbE, the Corpus of Global Web-based English) for manifestations of cultures. In particular, he investigates three different layers of culture, namely *objects*, *dimensions* and *constructions*. *Objects* are the most straightforward manifestations of culture and they are the terms for cultural objects, notions and artefacts that would be considered typical of a country/culture (e.g. 'pub' for Great Britain, 'majhong' for Hong Kong). *Dimensions* refer to Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions, which are studied in the corpora searching for previously defined indicator terms of each dimension (e.g. 'together' for Individualism vs Collectivism, 'authority' for Power Distance). Finally, *constructions* refer to the semantic constructions that are more common in a culture (e.g. 'give me something' vs 'give something to me', where a change in the end focus is observed) and analyzes the possible meaning behind that. Schneider finds that, indeed, there is a certain presence of culture in corpora: the degree of this presence, though, varies with the varying levels of concreteness. Therefore, stronger cultural manifestations have been found for what concerns concrete objects and there is

[19] It needs to be noted that, although Glynn states that he is studying *femininity* in American culture, he takes data from LiveJournal personal diaries written "largely by young British and American students" (Glynn 2015: *no page*). It seems, therefore, that it is not only the American culture that is taken into consideration, but also the British one, and possibly others (cf. the adverb "largely").

a limited, but still clearly recognizable, presence of culture in the different dimensions. Fuzzier results, instead, have been obtained from the analysis of the culture in language constructions.

2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter considered the relationship between language and culture and tried to look at ways in which this relationship can be analyzed, particularly through the methodology adopted in this study, namely corpus linguistics. A list of previous studies was presented: there are not many studies already carried out that combine cultural linguistics with corpus linguistics (see Jensen 2017) and this is why we tried to include in our list also studies employing related methodologies (e.g. NSM or multifactorial usage-based analysis) that have in common with corpus linguistics proper the use of corpora and the study of (cross-)cultural elements. The chapter thus does not offer a comprehensive list of all the studies combining corpora and culture, but rather offers evidence supporting the possibility (and importance) of using corpora in cultural studies

CHAPTER 3
Loneliness and solitude in individualist vs collectivist cultures: A corpus-based study

3.1 Individualism vs Collectivism

The book *Culture's Consequences: Comparing values, behaviours, institutions and organizations across nations*, by the Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede, is one of the most cited and authoritative sources in the fields of social sciences and cultural studies. Originally published in 1981, with a second updated edition dating 2001, Hofstede's research draws upon a large dataset from worldwide surveys of IBM employees, conducted when Hofstede himself was working for the research department of the technology company (approximately 1967-1973). The book explores the differences in the thinking and behavior of people from more than 50 countries, and it has become a milestone in cross-cultural research.

In *Culture's Consequences* Hofstede defines four dimensions of culture[20]: "Power distance", "Uncertainty avoidance", "Individualism vs Collectivism" and "Masculinity vs Femininity". On the basis of their score from the analyzed data, each different country is given a place along these dimensions, and these places contribute to building the country's cultural profile. These dimensions are inevitably correlated to each other in the definition of a specific culture, but it would be impossible to keep them all into consideration when studying a definite aspect of that culture, especially for a limited piece of research like this one. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, only the dimension INDIVIDUALISM vs COLLECTIVISM will be taken into consideration, dimension which is defined by Hofstede as "the degree to which individuals are

[20] Four dimensions were originally discovered by Hofstede through the analysis of the IBM survey data. Two other dimensions ("Long-term vs Short-term Orientation" and "Indulgence vs Restraint") will be added through the years thanks to research carried out by two scholars related to Hofstede, the Hong Kong-based Canadian Michael Harris Bond and the Bulgarian Michael Minkov.

supposed to look after themselves or remain integrated into groups, usually around the family" (Hofstede 2001: XX). This cultural dimension defines the relationship between the individuals and the society around them, and it would therefore be very important in a study about *loneliness* and *solitude*.

Like for all the other dimensions, Hofstede compiles an Individualism Index (IDV), a list of 53 countries and regions ranked by their degree of Individualism. The index ranges between 0 and 100. In this index (Table 1), three English-speaking countries occupy the first three positions (United States, Australia and Great Britain), whereas the last positions in the rank are occupied by Latin American countries (Colombia, Venezuela, Panama, Ecuador, Guatemala).

Individualism Index Values for 50 Countries and Three Regions					
Rank	Country	IDV	Rank	Country	IDV
1	United States	91	28	Turkey	37
2	Australia	90	29	Uruguay	36
3	Great Britain	89	30	Greece	35
4/5	Canada	80	31	Philippines	32
4/5	Netherlands	80	32	Mexico	30
6	New Zealand	79	33/35	Yugoslavia	27
7	Italy	76	33/35	Portugal	27
8	Belgium	75	33/35	East Africa	27
9	Denmark	74	36	Malaysia	26
10/11	Sweden	71	37	Hong Kong	25
10/11	France	71	38	Chile	23
12	Ireland	70	39/41	Singapore	20
13	Norway	69	39/41	Thailand	20
14	Switzerland	68	39/41	West Africa	20
15	Germany (F.R.)	67	42	Salvador	19
16	South Africa	65	43	South Korea	18
17	Finland	63	44	Taiwan	17
18	Austria	55	45	Peru	16

19	Israel	54	46	Costa Rica	15
20	Spain	51	47/48	Pakistan	14
21	India	48	47/48	Indonesia	14
22/23	Japan	46	49	Colombia	13
22/23	Argentina	46	50	Venezuela	12
24	Iran	41	51	Panama	11
25	Jamaica	39	52	Ecuador	8
26/27	Brazil	38	53	Guatemala	6
26/27	Arab countries	38			

Table 1. Individualism index. Adapted from *Culture's Consequences*, Hofstede, G., 2001.

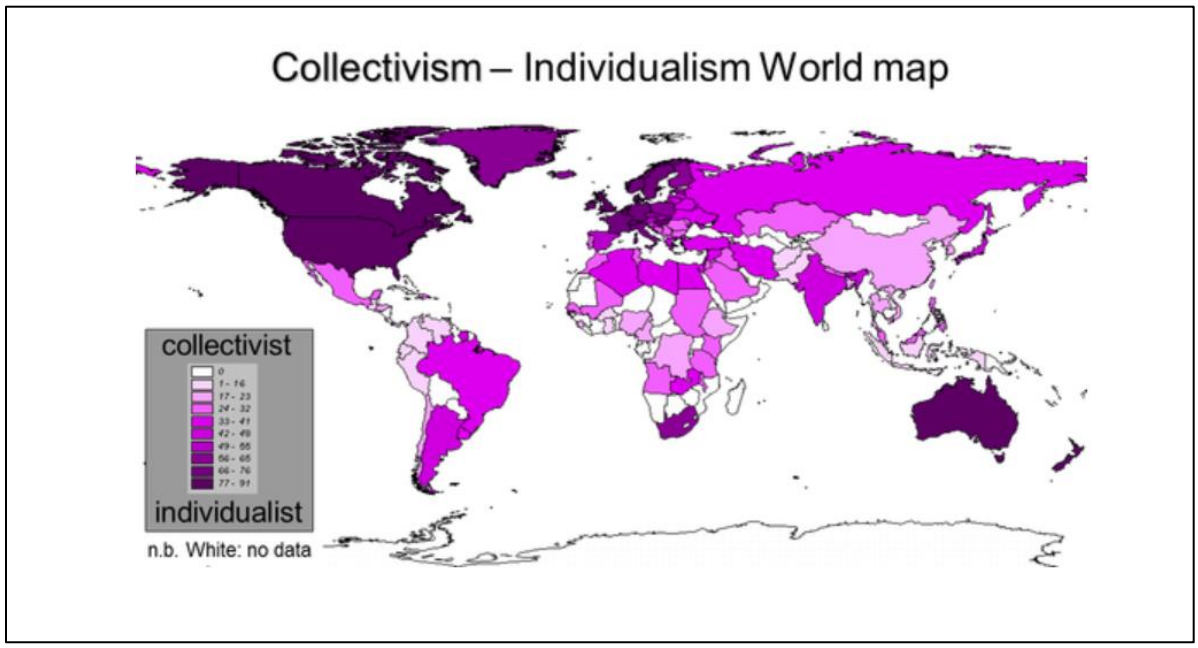


Figure 1. Collectivism-Individualism world map. Taken from the personal website of Geert Hofstede, http://www.geerthofstede.nl/ [visited September 15, 2018]

The list of countries in Table 1, i.e. the Individualism Index, as compiled by Hofstede, will be used as part of the present research: it will be taken as a starting point for the selection of countries, with their own societies and their own cultures, to be

studied in this analysis. Comparing countries, through their respective corpora, that occupy different positions in the index, and therefore have different values for Individualism, will allow for a more objective basis to support our hypotheses.

It must be acknowledged, though, that possible issues could arise from using Hofstede's study as a starting point: first of all, as it was already mentioned, all the cultural dimensions contribute to creating a culture, therefore it is important to keep in mind that this research can only be partial, since only one of the dimensions is taken into consideration. Differences or similarities found between cultures could derive from one of the other dimensions, not necessarily from the one we are focusing on. Moreover, Hofstede's analysis dates back to the 1970s/1980s, and the data was collected even earlier than that (the surveys have been carried out starting from the late 1960s). It is likely that the countries and their cultures have changed over the course of the years and that the indexes found in *Culture's Consequences* do not exactly mirror the current values and behaviors anymore. Hofstede himself points out that the 3-year periods 1967-1969 and 1971-1973 in which the surveys were taken already showed very different results with regard to individualism. For example, the data showed that "countries that have achieved faster economic development have experienced shifts towards individualism" (Hofstede, 2001: 255). But, as much as factors like economic growth, threats to the common physical environment and even other yet unknown forces can indeed modify a culture's degree of individualism, the differences between countries will always remain intact, because "cultures shift, but they shift in formation" (Hofstede, 2001: 255). The differences in the degree of individualism can become smaller with time, but they are unlikely to disappear completely.

3.1.1 Emotions in individualist and collectivist cultures

It has been suggested that individualist and collectivist cultures differ in the experience and in the display of their emotions. Like Fernandez et al. (2000: 85) state, "[i]ndividualistic cultures are supposed to reinforce emotional expression in general and collectivism is supposed to induce self-restraint and moderation in emotional display,

especially in negative emotions." Of course, the other cultural dimensions also play an important role in the (verbal or non-verbal) experience and display of emotions, for example high power distance is related, together with collectivism, to a lower level of emotional disclosure, and cultural masculinity is the dimension that most predicts low emotional expression (Fernandez et al., 2000). But since the dimension "Individualism vs Collectivism" is the one that is the most closely related to an individual's relationship to other people and society in general, it is arguably the one to take into consideration when studying the emotions connected to the state of being alone, away from society.

The culture in which we live and in which we were raised influences the way we think, shapes the way we feel and experience our emotions. Like Mesquita (2001: 68) notes, "[e]motions in collectivist cultures are expected to stress and reproduce the self in relation to others or the self in relation to the world, whereas emotions in individualist cultures are assumed to underline and amplify a bounded subjective self". In other words, individualist cultures would seem to be more focused on the individual, while collectivist cultures would seem to value relationships with others. Where do the ideas of loneliness and solitude stand in all of this? Are they closely dependent on the degree of individualism of a culture or not?

3.1.2 Loneliness and solitude

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the word *solitude* as "the quality or state of being alone or remote from society"[21] and, although it does not offer a definition for the word *loneliness* (other than just saying that it is the noun for the adjective *lonely*), the features of *loneliness* can be inferred by looking at the definition of *lonely*. It is actually better to talk about the plural, the definitions, since the adjective *lonely* seems to have more than one aspect to take into consideration. According to Merriam Webster, *being lonely* is, for example, "being without company", but also "cut off from the others" and "sad from being alone."[22]

[21] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/solitude
[22] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/lonely

Definitions of *solitude*	
Merriam-Webster Dictionary	1. The quality or state of being alone or remote from society 2. A lonely place (such as a desert)
American Heritage Dictionary	1. The state or quality of being alone or remote from others 2a. The state of being secluded or uninhabited 2b. A secluded or uninhabited place[23]
Cambridge Dictionary	The situation of being alone, often by choice.[24]
Collins Learner's Dictionary	The state of being alone, especially when this is peaceful and pleasant.[25]

Table 2. Dictionary definitions of *solitude*.

Definitions of *lonely*	
Merriam-Webster Dictionary	1a. being without company 1b. cut off from others 2. not frequented by human beings 3. sad from being alone 4. producing a feeling of bleakness or desolation
American Heritage Dictionary	1a. Dejected by the awareness of being alone 1b. Producing such dejection 2. Without others of a similar kind; lone; solitary 3. Unfrequented by people; desolate[26]
Cambridge Dictionary	1. (of someone) feeling sad because you are alone, or (of something) causing this feeling 2. A lonely place has no people, buildings, etc.[27]
Collins Learner's Dictionary	1. Someone who is lonely is unhappy because they are alone or do not have anyone they can talk to. 2. A lonely situation or period of time is one in which you feel unhappy because you are alone or do not have anyone to talk to. 3. A lonely place is one where very few people come.[28]

Table 3. Dictionary definitions of *lonely*.

[23] https://www.ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=solitude
[24] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/solitude#dataset-cacd
[25] https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/solitude
[26] https://www.ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=lonely
[27] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/lonely#dataset-cacd
[28] https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/lonely

Tables 2 and 3 show definitions for the word *solitude* and for the word *lonely*[29], from four different dictionaries. As can be seen, looking at the other definitions of the word, the state of *solitude* is generally chosen and self-determined (Cambridge) therefore positive and pleasant (Collins): being alone, in the case of solitude, is something intentional and done to possibly reach a better psychological or emotional state. When experiencing the feeling of *loneliness*, on the other hand, being alone is generally a cause of suffering, therefore it is a negative feeling (forms of sadness, dejection or unhappiness appear in all the definitions provided): loneliness is something people are subjected to without a choice (non-self-determined) and sometimes it does not even depend on the actual state of being physically alone.

This leads us to the next question: is there a difference in the experiencing of *loneliness* and *solitude* between individualist cultures and collectivist cultures?[30] Is one of the two more frequent than the other, depending on the type of culture the person lives in? Hofstede (2001: 225) claims that

> "Individualism stands for a society in which the ties between individuals are loose: Everyone is expected to look after him/herself and her/his immediate family only. Collectivism stands for a society in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty"

If this is the case, then it must be the case also that the state of being alone, of being on their own, can cause different feelings in someone belonging to an individualist society compared to someone belonging to a collectivist society. The idea is that emotions deriving from the state of being alone must be different and must cause different feelings, but for now there can be only be hypotheses: for example, one hypothesis could be that people in individualist cultures could be more likely to

[29] Merriam-Webster is not the only dictionary that does not have a definition for loneliness. The American Heritage Dictionary also only has a definition for *lonely*, while Cambridge and Collins define *loneliness* respectively as "the state of being lonely" and "the unhappiness that is felt by someone because they do not have any friends or do not have anyone to talk to", therefore not explicitly giving any definition other than that of the adjective *lonely*.

[30] Studies have been carried out on the differences in the motivations behind solitude and behind loneliness in individualist and collectivist societies. See van Zyl, C. J. J. et al. (2018) and Lykes, V. and M. Kemmelmeier (2013).

experience *loneliness*, since they are more likely to live alone and have fewer ties to family and other types of groups. But it can also be true that *loneliness* is more commonly experienced in collectivist cultures, since the importance attributed to interpersonal ties is so strong that the lack of such ties exponentially increases the feeling of *loneliness*, unlike in individualist cultures, where the lack of ties is more typical (Lykes and Kemmelmeier, 2013). With regards to *solitude*, what cultures are more likely to experience *solitude*, that is the chosen and self-determined state of being alone? Is it the individualist cultures, where one can more easily have the chance to be alone, or the collectivist cultures, where the state of social isolation is less widely accepted? Or, perhaps, *solitude* is more common in the collectivist cultures, precisely because the interpersonal ties are so strong, that they allow the people belonging to that culture to explicitly choose the state of social isolation, as opposed to the individualist cultures, where individuals are constantly isolated?

An attempt to answer these questions will be made by adopting corpus linguistics methods: in comparing large corpora from different countries with different cultures, we will look at the differences and similarities that emerge and at the way they could be related to the values of individualism.

3.2 Method

The corpus we chose to perform our research is GloWbE[31], an acronym which stands for "Global Web-based English corpus", collected by Mark Davies and the researchers at Brigham Young University, or BYU. GloWbE is a corpus of World Englishes[32], therefore it is perfect for a comparative study across countries and cultures, with the 20 varieties of English dialects that it comprises. GloWbE, like the name suggests, is a corpus of internet pages, divided approximately into 40% of general web pages from different genres and

[31] GloWbE is available online at https://corpus.byu.edu/glowbe/

[32] The term World Englishes was coined by Braj Kachru in 1982 (Kachru 1992). The plural of the word "English" stands for the many different varieties of English that have developed through the decades, both native and non-native varieties. Studying World Englishes means studying these different varieties, in their history, context and background.

60% of informal blogs. The coexistence of different genres makes GloWbE the perfect corpus to look into "which topics of discussion are more common in one dialect (or groups of dialects) than another, and what is being said about particular concepts in different dialects" (Davies and Fuchs, 2015: 22). The results obtained from our research could provide new insights into the natural and real-life language of those countries and their respective cultures.

GloWbE was selected for this study instead of another corpus that comprises different varieties of English, namely the International Corpus of English (ICE). ICE currently contains 14 different corpora (3 of which only include written language). Although very carefully constructed, manually annotated, and containing texts other than those published on the web, ICE is a relatively small corpus, with its 12.2 million words. The size of ICE would be more than enough for studies on high frequency words or constructions, but in our case, where the words we want to research are not expected to be that frequent, ICE would not provide enough results for us to be able to come to sound conclusions. GloWbE, on the other hand, is a 1.9 billion words corpus and is therefore arguably more adequate for research on lower-frequency words and constructions.

COUNTRY	CODE	WORDS	COUNTRY	CODE	WORDS
United States	US	386,809,355	Singapore	SG	42,974,705
Canada	CA	134,765,381	Malaysia	MY	42,420,168
Great Britain	GB	387,615,074	Philippines	PH	43,250,093
Ireland	IE	101,029,231	Hong Kong	HK	40,450,291
Australia	AU	148,208,169	South Africa	ZA	45,364,498
New Zealand	NZ	81,390,476	Nigeria	NG	42,646,098
India	IN	96,430,888	Ghana	GH	38,768,231
Sri Lanka	LK	46,583,115	Kenya	KE	41,069,085
Pakistan	PK	51,367,152	Tanzania	TZ	35,169,042
Bangladesh	BD	39,658,255	Jamaica	JM	39,663,666
TOTAL: 1,885,632,973					

Table 4. GloWbE sub-corpora and number of words. Adapted from www.corpus.byu.edu/glowbe/

As mentioned above, the data in GloWbE come from 20 different varieties of English, spoken in 20 different countries around the world. As we can see from Table 4, not all the sub-corpora have the same size, some of them are considerably bigger and some considerably smaller: this is expected and unavoidable, given that GloWbE is a web-based corpus and there will inevitably be a larger number of web pages in English from countries like the United States or Great Britain, compared to countries in Africa or smaller countries like Singapore or the Philippines. Moreover, that could also be a design choice, to have each corpus reflect the actual number of speakers of English in each country.

GloWbE contains data from both Inner Circle and Outer Circle countries. This distinction was first hypothesized by Braj Kakhru (1992), who divided the English-speaking world into Inner Circle, Outer Circle and Expanding Circle. The Inner Circle is limited to the countries where English is spoken as the first language (i.e. United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand); the Outer Circle includes the countries where English is spoken as a second language, in addition to the national language(s), but still plays (and has historically played) an important role in those countries, which have undergone extended periods of colonization; finally, the Expanding Circle includes the countries in which English is only studied and not an official language, but which use it as a lingua franca for international communication.

The status of the English language in each country in GloWbE is, of course, very different. This difference, therefore, should not be overlooked during the analysis of the contrasts and similarities among the languages and among the cultures that they represent. In the Outer Circle countries, English shares its place as official language with, at least, one other language and most of the times, English is not even the most commonly spoken one between the two. We should therefore be careful when drawing conclusions not to overestimate the findings of our research, given the fact that it is based exclusively on English data, and we cannot be sure that these data can reflect the entirety of a culture.

The research into the concepts of *loneliness* and *solitude* will start with looking at GloWbE in its entirety. The CHART function on GloWbE makes it possible to look at and compare the frequency of words and/or phrases in the different sub-corpora of each

country. Therefore, the frequencies of the nouns *loneliness* and *solitude* and of the adjectives *lonely* and *solitary* will be analyzed throughout the 20 varieties of English of which GloWbE is composed. It is important to remember that this comparison will be based on the normalized frequencies of the searched words. Looking at the normalized frequency (i.e. at the frequency of the searched term per million words) instead of the raw frequency will avoid the risk of considering the frequency of a word in the bigger sub-corpora as more significant, simply because higher. The results from this first part of the research will be helpful in the choice of which sub-corpora to analyze in the second part of the research.

The focus will then move to the single sub-corpora: using the COLLOCATES function, the collocates of the nouns *loneliness* and *solitude* will be analyzed in the sub-corpora for the United States, Australia, Great Britain, India, the Philippines and Pakistan. By selecting these sub-corpora, we have tried to account for a sample of Individualist countries (US, AU and GB) and compare them with a sample of Collectivist countries (IN, PH and PK). The first three are the countries with the highest scores for Individualism in Hofstede's index (see section 3.1); the last three countries, instead, were each chosen based on different criteria. Pakistan is the last GloWbE country in Hofstede's index, therefore the one with the highest Collectivism score. The choice of India was merely based on the sake of convenience: India is, among the non-strictly individualist countries (i.e. those appearing in the first positions of the index) the one with the largest corpus (96,430,888 words for India, while less than half of that for the other ones) and therefore the one that could more easily provide insights into our study. Finally, the choice of the Philippines was based on the need to have at least one variety of English that was more connected with American English rather than British English (with Pakistan and India). Some of these choices were also supported by the results of the frequencies in each GloWbE sub-corpora (see section 3.3.2). These three collectivist countries, though, have a different range of scores and occupy different places in Hofstede's index, something that will have to be kept in mind when analyzing the results of the study. In the COLLOCATES function of the GloWbE interface. no part of speech was specified for the collocates, so that open-class words in general, occurring near the selected nodes, could be retrieved. For this reason, the selected span was -4/+4: this will allow for an analysis

of the words, even if they are not directly next to *loneliness* or *solitude.* The collocates for each sub-corpus will be manually sorted by their Mutual Information (MI) scores[33]. Mutual Information indicates how strong the link between two things, in this case between two words, is and it "can be used to calculate collocations by indicating the strength of the co-occurrence relationship between a node and collocate" (McEnery and Hardy 2012: 247). Sorting the collocates by their MI scores, instead of their raw frequency in the corpus, will allow for a clearer distinction on the significant collocates, that does not risk being biased, since it is based on a statistical measure[34]. The Mutual Information score was set at a minimum of 3. Once the list of the most frequent collocates was obtained, the first 30 collocates from that list were taken into consideration for the research, and they were manually sorted by their MI score, so that only statistically significant collocates would be analyzed. Care was taken to make sure that the collocates appearing in this list had a frequency of at least 2 (for this reason, it was possible to include only 25 collocates of *solitude* from the PH corpus). The next section will show how an additional selection in the list of collocates was performed, to make sure that the occurrences of the collocates did not all belong to the same text.

The purpose of the present chapter will be to define the concepts of *loneliness* and *solitude* in the Individualist and Collectivist countries, and to evaluate possible differences and similarities.

3.3 Results and discussion

3.3.1 *Loneliness* and *solitude* in GloWbE

The first part of this research takes into consideration the 20 different sub-corpora of which GloWbE is composed. A quick search for the nouns *loneliness* and *solitude* and for

[33] For more information on how the Mutual Information scores are calculated in the BYU corpora, see the webpage https://corpus.byu.edu/mutualInformation.asp

[34] Sometimes, the significance of collocates can vary depending on the statistical measure being used (McEnery and Hardy 2012: 127). Other statistical tests have been developed and are used to calculate the significance of collocations, for example the Chi-Squared test (see Oakes and Farrow 2007), the Log-likelihood test, or the t-score.

the adjectives *lonely* and *solitary* yields the results that can be observed in Figures 2-5 and that will be discussed below. Table 2 in section 3.2 offers the complete list of the countries in GloWbE, each with their own abbreviation.

SECTION	ALL	US	CA	GB	IE	AU	NZ	IN	LK	PK	BD	SG	MY	PH	HK	ZA	NG	GH	KE	TZ	JM
FREQ	7999	1616	686	1660	601	731	284	389	113	200	108	209	166	236	155	154	158	148	141	99	145
WORDS (M)	1900	386.8	134.8	387.6	101.0	148.2	81.4	96.4	46.6	51.4	39.5	43.0	41.6	43.2	40.5	45.4	42.6	38.8	41.1	35.2	39.6
PER MIL	4.21	4.18	5.09	4.28	5.95	4.93	3.49	4.03	2.43	3.89	2.74	4.86	3.99	5.46	3.83	3.39	3.70	3.82	3.43	2.82	3.66

Figure 2. Frequency of the word Loneliness in GloWbE

SECTION	ALL	US	CA	GB	IE	AU	NZ	IN	LK	PK	BD	SG	MY	PH	HK	ZA	NG	GH	KE	TZ	JM
FREQ	5205	1061	441	917	291	431	186	301	284	206	146	107	123	130	96	109	66	42	100	117	51
WORDS (M)	1900	386.8	134.8	387.6	101.0	148.2	81.4	96.4	46.6	51.4	39.5	43.0	41.6	43.2	40.5	45.4	42.6	38.8	41.1	35.2	39.6
PER MIL	2.74	2.74	3.27	2.37	2.88	2.91	2.29	3.12	6.10	4.01	3.70	2.49	2.95	3.01	2.37	2.40	1.55	1.08	2.44	3.33	1.29

Figure 3. Frequency of the word Solitude in GloWbE

As can observed in Figure 2, the word *loneliness* has an average normalized frequency of 4.21 per million words, with Ireland being the country with the highest normalized frequency (5.95 pmw) and Sri Lanka being the country with the lowest normalized frequency (2.43 pmw). Overall, only 6 out of 20 countries (Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, Australia, Singapore, Philippines) have a normalized frequency that is higher than the average one, although that of the United States (4.18 pmw) is only 0.03 points away from the average.

Moving on to Figure 3, the normalized frequency of the word *solitude* in GloWbE can be observed. The average normalized frequency for this word is lower, compared to the one of *loneliness*: 2.74 per million words. In this case, 11 countries out of 20 have a normalized frequency that is higher (or equivalent, in the case of the United States) than the average one: United States, Canada, Ireland, Australia, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Philippines and Tanzania. The frequency of the word *solitude* is the lowest in the Ghana sub-corpus, with a normalized frequency of 1.08 pmw. The sub-

corpus of Sri Lanka, on the contrary, shows the highest frequency (6.10 pmw); moreover, the normalized frequency of the word *solitude* in the Sri Lanka sub-corpus is much higher compared to the other sub-corpora. It is interesting to note this, especially considering the fact that Sri Lanka is the country with the lowest normalized frequency of the word *loneliness*. One might conclude, based on this quick look at the corpus frequencies, that the experience of *solitude* is a lot more common in Sri Lanka than the experience of *loneliness*.

For a clearer understanding of the two concepts of *loneliness* and *solitude*, it was necessary to go beyond the two words, which have turned out not to be very frequent in the pages sampled in GloWbE, that is webpages and blogs (as proved by Figure 2 and Figure 3). Therefore, it was decided to look at the frequency of two adjectives connected to the concepts of *loneliness* and *solitude*, namely *lonely* and *solitary*. Indeed, it would seem more natural for someone to express their feelings by saying, for example, "I felt lonely", rather than "I experienced a period of loneliness", especially in the informal language that makes up more than half of the corpus.

With regard to the choice in the adjectives, *lonely* was the first and immediate choice to represent *loneliness*, as both words convey the same idea of an imposed and sad emotion, and can be used interchangeably, as in the examples in the previous paragraph. The choice of an adjective to represent *solitude*, on the other hand, was more complicated. *Solitude* is considered to be a state, rather than an emotion, and there is no single adjective that on its own can fully capture that state. The final choice was to investigate the adjective *solitary*, which is the one that seems to be the closest to the idea of *solitude*. The word *solitary*, unlike *lonely*, does not have an exclusively negative meaning[35]; although it is mostly a neutral word that describes the state of living or doing something by oneself, it can also take on negative (as in "solitary confinement") or positive (as in "solitary retreat") meaning, depending on the word it is modifying. Like for *solitude*, in the adjective *solitary* there is the idea of self-determination: a solitary

[35] See https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/solitary and https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/solitary

person, for example a recluse, chooses to live alone and seeks to live a solitary life[36].

SECTION	ALL	US	CA	GB	IE	AU	NZ	IN	LK	PK	BD	SG	MY	PH	HK	ZA	NG	GH	KE	TZ	JM
FREQ	24570	5017	1573	5381	1673	2183	1118	1048	502	386	300	765	574	878	514	483	363	365	471	492	484
WORDS (M)	1900	386.8	134.8	387.6	101.0	148.2	81.4	96.4	46.6	51.4	39.5	43.0	41.6	43.2	40.5	45.4	42.6	38.8	41.1	35.2	39.6
PER MIL	12.93	12.97	11.67	13.88	16.56	14.73	13.74	10.87	10.78	7.51	7.60	17.80	13.78	20.30	12.71	10.65	8.51	9.41	11.47	13.99	12.23

Figure 4. Frequency of the word Lonely in GloWbE

SECTION	ALL	US	CA	GB	IE	AU	NZ	IN	LK	PK	BD	SG	MY	PH	HK	ZA	NG	GH	KE	TZ	JM
FREQ	9322	1712	594	2183	540	842	412	428	361	308	219	128	184	204	187	262	138	98	221	181	120
WORDS (M)	1900	386.8	134.8	387.6	101.0	148.2	81.4	96.4	46.6	51.4	39.5	43.0	41.6	43.2	40.5	45.4	42.6	38.8	41.1	35.2	39.6
PER MIL	4.91	4.43	4.41	5.63	5.34	5.68	5.06	4.44	7.75	6.00	5.55	2.98	4.42	4.72	4.62	5.78	3.24	2.53	5.38	5.15	3.03

Figure 5. Frequency of the word Solitary in GloWbE

Figures 4 and 5, show the frequencies of the words *lonely* and *solitary* in GloWbE and its sub-corpora. The first thing to be noticed is how the normalized overall frequencies of the two adjectives in GloWbE is relatively higher, compared to that of the nouns *loneliness* and *solitude*. In particular, the adjective *solitary* (4.91 pmw) is almost twice as frequent as the noun *solitude* (2.74 pmw) and the adjective *lonely* (12.93 pmw) is more than three times as frequent as the noun *loneliness* (4.21 pmw). The adjective *lonely* also has a much higher frequency compared to the adjective *solitary*, 12.93 pmw and 4.91 pmw respectively, mirroring the results obtained from the above comparison of *loneliness* and *solitude* (although the magnitude of the difference in frequency is almost twice as large in the case of the adjectives as in the case of the nouns).

For the adjective *lonely*, 9 out of 20 countries have a higher normalized frequency than the average one: United States, Great Britain, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, Tanzania. The lowest frequency of the adjective *lonely* can be observed in the Pakistan sub-corpus (7.51 pmw), a surprising fact, since the

[36] It must be noted though that the adjective *solitary*, for example when used in the expression "solitary confinement" does not stand for a chosen and sought experience of solitude, but rather for an imposed one.

frequency of the word *loneliness* in the same sub-corpus was close to the average one and higher than the one of 10 other sub-corpora. The sub-corpus with the highest frequency, on the other hand, is the one for the Philippines, with a normalized frequency of 20.30 pmw: this result is in line with what we observed for the noun *loneliness*, for which the Philippines had the second highest frequency (after Ireland).

For the adjective *solitary*, half of the sub-corpora (10 out of 20) have a higher normalized frequency than the average one: Great Britain, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania. The country with the highest frequency of the word *solitary* is Sri Lanka, with a normalized frequency of 7.75 pmw, while the country with the lowest frequency is Ghana, with a normalized frequency of 2.53 pmw. These results are both in line with what was observed about the word *solitude*, whose lowest frequency was also registered in Ghana and highest frequency was registered in Sri Lanka.

The difference in the frequencies of the words *loneliness* and *solitude* observed in the Sri Lanka sub-corpus, is not completely mirrored in the words *lonely* and *solitary*: Sri Lanka is indeed the country with the highest frequency of the adjective *solitary*, but not the country with the lowest frequency of the adjective *lonely*. A similar contrast that can be noticed from the comparison of the frequencies of the two adjectives concerns the country of Singapore. In fact, Singapore is the country with the second highest frequency of *lonely* (17.80 pmw) and the country with the second lowest frequency of *solitary* (2.98 pmw). Even though, just like in the case of Sri Lanka, this difference does not appear in the comparison of the nouns, it could still be worth it to investigate more into the differences in the frequency of *loneliness* and *solitude* or *lonely* and *solitary* in these corpora.

3.3.2 *Loneliness* and *solitude* in individualist and collectivist contexts

The primary aim of the present chapter is to identify the possible contrasts and/or similarities between *loneliness* and *solitude* in the different countries of GloWbE, and to establish whether any contrast or similarity could be connected to the cultural

dimension of individualism.

The next step in the research consists in the analysis of the collocates of the words *loneliness* and *solitude*, in order to identify their characteristics in each of the selected countries. The United States, Australia and Great Britain were chosen to represent individualist countries (they occupy the first three positions in Hofstede's index, therefore they have the highest individualism values) and India, the Philippines and Pakistan were chosen to represent collectivist countries (for the reasons stated in section 3.2). The latter are evenly distributed in the lower part of Hofstede's index, therefore they can be considered more collectivist than individualist. However, they have different values for individualism (respectively 48, 32 and 14 out of 100). These differences should not be underestimated when analyzing the concepts of *loneliness* and *solitude*, as they can be the reason behind possible contrasts or similarities between the collectivist countries themselves, especially considering that there is no major difference in the individualism values of the selected individualist countries (US: 91, AU: 90 and GB: 89 out of 100).

The COLLOCATES function of the GloWbE interface makes it possible to look at the list of words that occur near the nodes *loneliness* and *solitude*. No part of speech was specified for the collocates, so that open-class words in general will be retrieved, both nouns and verbs, both adjectives and adverbs, occurring near the selected nodes. For this reason, the selected span was -4/+4: it will allow us to observe words not directly next to *loneliness* or *solitude*. The results obtained give us the list of words ordered by their frequency in the sub-corpus as collocates of the node word. For the purpose of this study, we take the first 30 most frequent collocates in this list and sort them by their Mutual Information (MI) value: by doing so, we make sure not to mistake the frequency of the collocate with its importance in defining the concept of the node, but we also eliminate the co-occurring words appearing only once (for which no evidence exists about their collocational status), that would appear in the first position if we sorted them only by their MI values.

The next step is to manually check the collocates, to filter out the ones that appear on the lists but are not significant for the process of analysis of the words. The first

instinct would be to eliminate all the occurrences of *loneliness* and *solitude* in the lists of collocates (the two words appear in almost every list, except for the collocates of *loneliness* in PH). Upon further reflection though, it was decided to keep *loneliness* and *solitude* in the collocates lists for two reasons: it could happen that the countries have the tendency to use the two words in a binomial, tendency which could be different in different countries. Excluding the collocates *loneliness* and *solitude* would mean to exclude this possibility. Moreover, it must be remembered that sometimes the words *loneliness* and *solitude* could be used as synonyms (even though they fundamentally indicate two different ideas, as seen in the definitions in Tables 2 and 3 of section 3.1.2). Therefore, eliminating these collocates would mean to not account for possible linguistic differences among each variety of English (e.g. there could be a more formal or conservative variety that uses the word *solitude* more frequently to indicate not just the positive chosen feeling of being alone, but also the more negative and imposed one). One example in which it could seem that *loneliness* and *solitude* are used as synonyms is Example 1:

> Example 1. What a wonderful assistance from the Almighty that He first informed me in my **loneliness** and **solitude** that He would assist me and bring thousands of men to me and disappoint my enemies in their evil designs against me. (PK sub-corpus)

Moving on, the collocates that were part of a literary reference were excluded. For example, since the word *solitude* appears in the title of the famous book *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Colombian author Gabriel Garcia Márquez, five out of the six sub-corpora analyzed presented at least one collocate of *solitude* that was connected to this book: *hundred* (in US, AU, GB, IN and PH), *100* (in US), *Gabriel* (in GB). Moreover, looking at collocates of *solitude* in the US sub-corpus, the same example can be made for the collocate *invention*, which occurs 8 time, always in the title of Paul Auster's book *The Invention of Solitude*, and the collocate *leadership*, which in some cases appears in the title of the book *Solitude and Leadership* by William Deresiewicz, and even when it does not appear in the title itself, the web page in the corpus contains texts that refer to the book, like an article or a review. Among the collocates of solitude in the GB sub-corpus, the collocate *slaves* is removed, since it always refers to the title of Patrick Hamilton's

book *The Slaves of Solitude.* On the other hand, the collocate *fortress*, which appears as a collocate of *solitude* in US, GB and IN, was not removed from any list: although many times we find it in the name *Fortress of Solitude*, Superman's headquarters in the Arctic, there is also a considerable number of occurrences (roughly 25%, a total of 12 out of 47) where *fortress of solitude* is used figuratively, without any reference to the superhero, to indicate a secure and protected place where one can find refuge, as in Examples 2 and 3 below:

Example 2. Therefore, you need to create a space which gets you away from the everyday stresses and pressures of your job. It needs to be a kind of **fortress** of **solitude** in which you will not be disturbed. (US sub-corpus)

Example 3. You want nothing to do with the outside world and can't stand when the outside world breaks through your quiet **fortress** of **solitude**. (GB sub-corpus)

This leads us to think that *fortress of solitude* has become part of the English language and, therefore, deserves to be taken into account in the analysis of *solitude*. Finally, we eliminate *superstar* from the list of collocates for *solitude* in IN, as it only refers to *The Solitude of a Superstar: The Public-Private Journey of a Dream Catcher*, title of a session with Indian actor and tv personality Shah Rukh Khan at THiNK festival in 2012, and the words *Thomas* and *Merton*, name and surname of an American writer, from the list of collocates of *solitude* in PH.

The initial criterion (described in section 3.2) to include words in the collocates lists was that they had to have a minimum raw frequency of 2. In this second phase, other words were expunged from the lists of collocates, after the manual analysis of each occurrence revealed that they did occur twice or more, but every time in the same text, surrounded by the same words. This could happen for several reasons: sometimes, the same webpage appeared twice in the corpus, both under the Blog section and under the General section (as shown in Figure 6), leading the concordance tool into thinking that there were two occurrences of a collocate.

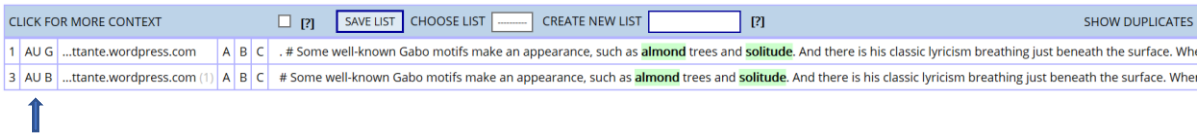


Figure 6. Example of concordance lines for the word *almond* as collocate of *solitude* in the AU sub-corpus. The concordance lines appear in the same text in the same webpage, (appearing once under the General category and once under the Blog category).

Sometimes the exact same text, and therefore the same collocate, appeared in texts from different webpages. Therefore, extra care had to be taken in not just looking at the name of the webpage, but in actually looking at the sentence in which the collocate appeared.

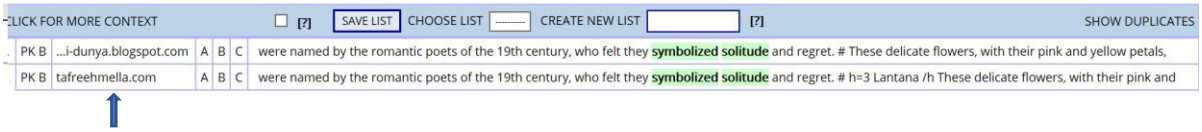


Figure 7. Example of concordance lines for the word *symbolized* as collocate of *solitude* in the PK sub-corpus. The concordance lines appear in two separate webpages, but in the exact same text.

It must be noted that those cases where the collocates appeared on the list for a flaw in the corpus construction (which included the same webpage twice) or in the concordance tool (which does not recognize the fact that different webpages can have the exact same texts) appear to be more frequent among the collocates of the collectivist countries. Among these, the highest number of expunged collocates was encountered among the collocates of the word *solitude*. A few cases also appeared among the collocates of the word *solitude* from the AU sub-corpus. The full list of the collocates that were eliminated from the initially collected lists will be shown (against a red background) in Figures 8-11 below.

After this initial selection, we can now be sure that the remaining words are actual collocates of *loneliness* and *solitude* and can help us to define the two concepts and find contrasts and similarities between them.

Loneliness

Collocates of Loneliness (Individualist Context)												
US				AU				GB				
	Collocate	Freq.	MI		Collocate	Freq.	MI		Collocate	Freq.	MI
1	Isolation	73	9.22	1	Emptiness	8	9.14	1	Isolation	110	9.47
2	Boredom	24	8.96	2	Unhappiness	6	9.10	2	Boredom	24	8.77
3	Emptiness	16	8.82	3	Abandonment	8	8.89	3	Loneliness	16	8.14
4	Loneliness	24	8.80	4	Isolation	35	8.84	4	Sadness	31	8.12
5	Alienation	11	8.46	5	Boredom	10	8.71	5	Despair	22	7.14
6	Solitude	11	8.28	6	Loneliness	12	8.70	6	Vulnerability	12	7.03
7	Sadness	31	8.23	7	Solitude	7	8.69	7	Grief	16	6.58
8	Alleviate	10	7.65	8	Sadness	15	8.18	8	Depression	52	6.46
9	Longing	9	7.32	9	Longing	6	8.00	9	Frustration	17	6.22
10	Despair	18	7.16	10	Despair	13	7.64	10	Tackling	9	5.81
11	Sorrow	9	6.83	11	Utter	10	7.20	11	Feelings	35	5.63
12	Grief	18	6.69	12	Depression	35	6.97	12	Combat	12	5.50
13	Rejection	14	6.62	13	Frustration	8	6.44	13	Anger	17	5.35
14	Depression	51	6.46	14	Eternal	6	6.14	14	Anxiety	21	5.34
15	Frustration	15	6.09	15	Anxiety	13	6.10	15	Guilt	9	5.34
16	Feelings	37	5.59	16	Feelings	18	5.90	16	Distance	26	5.13
17	Guilt	11	5.53	17	Experiencing	7	5.64	17	Elderly	9	4.95
18	Anxiety	12	5.26	18	Anger	6	5.21	18	Overcome	10	4.94
19	Confusion	10	5.08	19	Silence	7	5.14	19	Loss	38	4.78
20	Anger	13	4.85	20	Feeling	22	4.62	20	Tackle	10	4.67
21	Fear	42	4.79	21	Experienced	9	4.37	21	Pain	36	4.66
22	Pain	33	4.75	22	Stress	7	4.28	22	Suffer	14	4.61
23	Feeling	35	4.48	23	Fear	12	4.22	23	Fear	35	4.59
24	Stress	12	4.33	24	Battle	6	4.20	24	Feeling	40	4.34
25	Terrible	10	3.95	25	Loss	8	3.49	25	Poverty	9	3.83
26	Desire	10	3.56	26	Felt	10	3.38	26	Suffering	10	3.80
27	Loss	14	3.35	27	Pain	8	3.32	27	Sense	42	3.73
28	Sad	10	3.35	28	Growing	6	3.22	28	Measure	9	3.53
29	Sense	34	3.30	29	Alone	7	3.12	29	Experienced	9	3.35
30	Deep	11	3.11	30	Social	16	3.00	30	Older	11	3.34

Figure 8. Collocates of *loneliness* in the individualist countries. From now on, the collocates that were expunged in the initial selection are shown against a red background; green is for the collocates that appear in all three lists, yellow for the ones that appear in two lists out of three and white the collocates that appear in only one list.

If we analyze the lists of collocates for *loneliness* (in Figure 8) in the individualist countries sub-corpora (US, AU, GB), we immediately notice a pattern of negative semantic prosody: collocates like *isolation*, *boredom*, *sadness*, *despair*, *depression*, *frustration*, *anxiety*, *anger*, *fear*, *pain*, and *loss* appear in the three sub-corpora, and for the most part they also appear in the same order of importance (i.e. Mutual Information score). Each one of the sub-corpora seems to have its own way of dealing with and considering loneliness: for example, the fact that collocates like *tackle*, *tackling*, *combat* and *overcome* appear exclusively in the GB sub-corpus, suggests the possibility of a

stronger reaction to the experience of loneliness, in the comparison with Australia (among whose collocates, only one could share the same sense related to active response, the collocate *battle*) and the United States (the collocates of which do not show any kind of active response).

Collocates of Loneliness (Collectivist Context)												
	IN				PH				PK			
	Collocate	Freq.	MI		Collocate	Freq.	MI		Collocate	Freq.	MI	
1	Self-hatred	3	12.18	1	Homesickness	5	11.22	1	Releaser	2	14.97	
2	Aloneness	6	11.09	2	Amorous	2	11.09	2	Boredom	4	9.74	
3	Boredom	7	9.45	3	Emptiness	3	9.30	3	Alienation	4	9.65	
4	Emptiness	4	8.98	4	Boredom	5	9.29	4	Overwhelm	2	9.31	
5	Sadness	9	8.83	5	Isolation	9	9.19	5	Solitude	4	9.28	
6	Solitude	4	8.69	6	Disappointments	2	8.70	6	Inflammatory	3	8.93	
7	Isolation	12	8.58	7	Heartbreak	2	8.54	7	Forgetfullness	2	8.69	
8	Loneliness	4	8.32	8	Sorrow	6	8.19	8	Isolation	7	8.56	
9	Depression	24	8.21	9	Pang	2	8.12	9	Helplessness	2	8.35	
10	Alienation	3	8.10	10	Frustrations	2	7.98	10	Loneliness	2	8.33	
11	Vulnerability	3	7.43	11	Sadness	3	7.46	11	Meditation	3	8.07	
12	Utter	6	7.30	12	Rejection	3	7.38	12	Reduces	4	7.96	
13	Longing	3	7.18	13	Disappointment	3	7.26	13	Genes	2	7.80	
14	Anxiety	7	6.77	14	Hurts	4	7.01	14	Devote	2	7.54	
15	Fights	3	6.49	15	Lonely	3	6.29	15	Isolated	3	6.90	
16	Frustration	3	6.06	16	Overcome	4	6.22	16	Feelings	11	6.84	
17	Fears	4	5.99	17	Feelings	5	5.58	17	Depression	5	6.84	
18	Feelings	9	5.93	18	Tomorrow	3	4.99	18	Darkness	3	5.96	
19	Terrible	3	5.44	19	Nobody	3	4.94	19	Reduced	4	5.85	
20	Fear	12	5.26	20	Pain	5	4.66	20	Grave	6	5.65	
21	Anger	5	5.24	21	Caused	3	4.52	21	Expression	4	5.56	
22	Absolute	5	5.10	22	Bring	10	4.51	22	Herself	3	5.25	
23	Characteristics	3	5.03	23	Deal	7	4.40	23	Extreme	3	5.24	
24	Feeling	10	4.78	24	Lack	4	4.36	24	Pain	4	4.92	
25	Closer	3	4.55	25	Feeling	4	4.00	25	Feeling	4	4.83	
26	Pain	7	4.44	26	Cause	5	3.63	26	Fear	8	4.82	
27	Crucial	3	4.25	27	Despite	3	3.56	27	Poverty	3	4.79	
28	Fight	5	3.93	28	Sense	4	3.55	28	Problems	5	3.85	
29	Forget	4	3.89	29	Feel	7	3.13	29	Sense	4	3.75	
30	Sense	9	3.73	30	Together	5	3.06	30	Care	3	3.23	

Figure 9. Collocates of *loneliness* in the Collectivist countries.

Moving on to the collocates of *loneliness* in the collectivist countries (in Figure 9), we immediately see the difference in the number of shared elements: comparing the three lists of collocates from IN, PH and PK, we notice that far fewer words appear in three or two lists, compared to the individualist countries, and many more words are characteristic of one single country/sub-corpus. This might indicate a lower agreement

on the meaning of the concept of *loneliness* among these countries: even though the collocates appearing in only one of the lists are all, still, generally negative (e.g. *anxiety* and *fears* in IN, *disappointment* and *sorrow* in PH, *darkness* and *problems* in PK), each one of the sub-corpora seems to have its own *loneliness* traits, in a more significant way than the sub-corpora of the individualist countries. The feeling of *homesickness* (as in Example 4), for example, is a characteristic of loneliness only in the PH sub-corpus, as none of the collocates from the two other lists is similar or close to that feeling. The same is true also for the notion of *helplessness* in the PK sub-corpus (Example 5).

Example 4. The churches have become a refuge for OFWs as they fight **homesickness** and **loneliness** and live with the everyday struggles of living in a foreign land. (PH sub-corpus)

Example 5. …motivates him to seek reunion with the Real, a union which puts an end to the feelings of alienation, **loneliness**, and **helplessness**. (PK sub-corpus)

Let us now compare the concept of *loneliness* in the individualist context and collectivist context. Some of the collocates shared by the three individualist countries are also shared by the three collectivist countries, and those are: *boredom*, *isolation*, *feeling*, *pain*, *sense*. Other collocates shared by the three individualist countries, only appear among the collocates of IN, for the collectivist countries, for example *anger*, *anxiety*, *longing*. Some of the collocates exclusive to the IN sub-corpus among the collectivist countries, are shared with single individualist sub-corpora. For example, IN shares the collocate *vulnerability* with the GB sub-corpus and the collocate *terrible* with the US sub-corpus. This might be a sign of India being closer, with regard to *loneliness*, to the individualist countries (as we know, India occupies the 21st position, out of 53 countries, in Hofstede's Individualism index, so it is roughly in the middle).

In general, no evident difference can be found between *loneliness* in the individualist context and *loneliness* in the collectivist context. It would seem therefore that the feeling of *loneliness* is generally characterized by a sense of *boredom*, *isolation* and *pain*.

Solitude

Collocates of Solitude (Individualist Context)											
US				AU				GB			
	Collocate	Freq.	MI		Collocate	Freq.	MI		Collocate	Freq.	MI
1	Solitude	18	9.59	1	Seclusion	3	9.98	1	Fortress	27	9.97
2	Fortress	18	9.42	2	Loneliness	7	8.69	2	Solitude	16	9.85
3	Introspection	6	8.60	3	Stillness	3	8.44	3	Hermit	5	9.26
4	Loneliness	11	8.28	4	Charms	3	8.27	4	Blissful	5	8.95
5	Crave	5	7.46	5	Almond	3	8.00	5	Stillness	4	8.60
6	Hundred	48	6.81	6	Silence	26	7.80	6	Loneliness	8	7.99
7	Silence	25	6.78	7	Intimacy	5	7.66	7	Contemplation	4	7.95
8	Isolation	8	6.64	8	Bliss	4	7.51	8	Gabriel	5	6.93
9	Invention	8	6.08	9	Wilderness	3	6.54	9	Wilderness	4	6.43
10	Wilderness	5	6.01	10	Profound	4	6.09	10	Meditation	5	6.36
11	Quiet	19	5.99	11	Interior	3	5.69	11	Silence	16	6.28
12	Reflection	6	5.36	12	Quiet	8	5.68	12	Hundred	21	6.11
13	Prayer	8	4.81	13	Mountains	3	4.86	13	Enforced	4	6.04
14	Enjoying	5	4.79	14	Enjoying	3	4.78	14	Isolation	5	5.87
15	Seeking	7	4.26	15	Peace	7	4.65	15	Quiet	15	5.48
16	Mountain	6	4.23	16	Hundred	4	4.62	16	Grief	4	5.43
17	Poverty	8	4.22	17	Seek	6	4.59	17	Slaves	4	5.34
18	Relative	7	4.16	18	Prefer	4	4.44	18	Peaceful	5	5.18
19	100	12	4.02	19	Trees	4	4.39	19	Simultaneously	4	5.16
20	Absolute	5	3.95	20	Remote	3	4.38	20	Peace	22	5.02
21	Finds	5	3.86	21	Absolute	3	4.30	21	Mountains	4	4.73
22	Prefer	6	3.86	22	Enjoy	9	4.26	22	Periods	5	4.57
23	Enjoy	14	3.85	23	Privacy	3	4.07	23	Seeking	8	4.56
24	Moments	5	3.74	24	Seeking	3	3.97	24	Moments	7	4.33
25	Youth	5	3.71	25	Passed	4	3.88	25	Poverty	7	4.33
26	Mental	7	3.67	26	Offers	3	3.62	26	Spiritual	4	4.32
27	Leadership	7	3.54	27	Island	4	3.53	27	Beauty	6	4.15
28	Alone	14	3.50	28	Places	5	3.46	28	Seek	7	4.08
29	Peace	9	3.45	29	Perfect	4	3.18	29	Enjoyed	6	3.66
30	Deep	8	3.26	30	Alone	4	3.07	30	Mental	7	3.64

Figure 10. Collocates of *solitude* in the Individualist countries.

A look at the words shared among the three lists of collocates of *solitude* in the individualist countries (Figure 10), gives us the picture of an actively sought and enjoyed (*enjoying*, *seeking*, *enjoy*, *seek*) state of quietness (*silence*, *quiet*, *peace*, *peaceful*) in the nature (*mountain*, *mountains*, *wilderness*). Some collocates, shared between two countries, or characteristic of one country alone, go in the same direction (like *crave* and *finds* in the US sub-corpus); other collocates, instead, reflect an idea of *solitude* that is closer to the one of *loneliness*, something imposed and that causes pain (like *enforced* and *grief* in the GB sub-corpus). Generally, most of the collocates found in only one of the lists, revolve around a set of related ideas: *introspection*, *reflection* and *prayer* (from the

US sub-corpus), *contemplation* and *meditation* (from the GB sub-corpus), and, possibly, even *interior* and *privacy* (from the AU sub-corpus), all reflect the idea of *solitude* as a state of inner reflection, of self-examination.

Collocates of Solitude (Collectivist Context)											
IN				PH				PK			
	Collocate	Freq.	MI		Collocate	Freq.	MI		Collocate	Freq.	MI
1	Life-protecting	2	15.29	1	Merton	2	12.17	1	UOI	2	14.93
2	Ta'ala	2	11.00	2	Closeness	2	9.47	2	Khalwat	3	13.34
3	Dhkir	2	10.43	3	Solitude	2	9.32	3	Symbolized	2	10.28
4	Seclusion	2	9.35	4	Lush	2	8.16	4	Exclusivity	2	10.17
5	Solitude	4	9.06	5	Silence	7	7.79	5	Unease	2	9.86
6	Loneliness	4	8.69	6	Oneself	2	7.34	6	Loneliness	4	9.28
7	Fortress	2	8.14	7	Desert	2	6.94	7	Solitude	4	9.24
8	Sleepless	2	8.08	8	Thomas	2	5.89	8	Doorway	2	9.19
9	Meditate	4	7.31	9	Mountains	2	5.77	9	Nest	2	8.72
10	Superstar	4	7.10	10	Classroom	2	5.52	10	Seclusion	2	8.10
11	Silence	7	6.53	11	Hundred	3	5.50	11	Cave	6	7.65
12	Burnt	3	6.48	12	Escape	2	5.48	12	Companion	9	7.36
13	Quiet	6	6.30	13	Prayer	3	5.33	13	Privacy	6	7.29
14	Transformation	3	5.76	14	Closer	2	5.27	14	Horrible	4	7.23
15	Moments	5	5.75	15	Enjoyed	2	5.16	15	Corner	5	6.32
16	Allah	5	5.23	16	Feelings	2	5.12	16	Stands	4	5.61
17	Q	4	5.22	17	Pray	2	4.88	17	Adopted	3	5.28
18	Relative	3	5.01	18	Thoughts	2	4.51	18	Sought	3	5.25
19	Pleasure	3	4.86	19	Enter	2	4.48	19	Wisdom	4	5.24
20	Vast	3	4.81	20	Peace	3	4.23	20	Desires	3	5.10
21	Peace	8	4.71	21	Gives	2	3.89	21	Sit	4	5.05
22	Sit	4	4.52	22	Live	4	3.66	22	Spent	4	4.77
23	Hundred	3	4.42	23	Process	3	3.54	23	Met	4	4.62
24	Seek	3	4.33	24	Nature	2	3.53	24	Total	5	4.36
25	Enjoy	6	4.29	25	Community	2	3.24	25	Company	6	3.83
26	Alone	6	4.28	26	---			26	Meet	3	3.80
27	Desire	3	3.93	27	---			27	Night	5	3.58
28	Cover	3	3.74	28	---			28	Alone	3	3.45
29	Self	3	3.38	29	---			29	Complete	3	3.42
30	Remain	3	3.37	30	---			30	Became	3	3.14

Figure 11. Collocates of *solitude* in the Collectivist countries.

In contrast to all the other lists of collocates that we analyzed above, the three lists of collocates of *solitude* from the collectivist countries (Figure 11) do not share any words. There are, indeed, some collocates that are shared between two lists, but even the number of those is not very large. The only aspect that seems to be shared among the three lists is that of religion, as seen from the collocates *Ta'hala*, *Dhkir*, and *Allah* in the IN sub-corpus, the collocate *prayer* in the PH sub-corpus and the collocates *khalwat*, *cave* and *companion* (the last two only appearing near *solitude* in web-pages about Islam and religion).

It is important to note that the frequency of the collocates for the word *solitude* turned out to be quite low. This is a consequence of both the relatively smaller size of the IN, PH and PK corpora compared to US, AU and GB, and the rather low frequency in the corpora of the word *solitude* itself. As a result, we have decided here to exclude only those collocates that appear a single time; unfortunately, in this case, it was not possible to select a higher cutoff point. The Mutual Information could give strange results with low frequencies (i.e. 1-3 tokens)[37]: this might be the reason behind the relative discordance among the IN, PH and PK collocates. Another reason for that could be, again, the fact that the three countries occupy three relatively distant positions in Hofstede's Individualism index, and, therefore, could have a different way of thinking about solitude (although the disagreement does not exist to the same degree among the collocates of the word *loneliness*). In fact, India's collocates would seem to be closer to the individualist ones (if we exclude the religious terms like *Ta'hala*, *Dhkir*, and *Allah*): we find both the idea of actively sought (*seek*, *enjoy*, *desire*) quietness (*quiet*, *peace*) and the idea of self-examination (*meditate*, *transformation*).

One of the contrasts that emerged in the analysis of the collocates of *solitude* in individualist and collectivist contexts concerns the duration of the state of solitude. Among the collocates of the individualist countries, words like *moments* and *periods* were noticed (as seen in Examples 6-8).

Example 6. She was savoring the **moments** of **solitude** that she knew might be lost with her new upcoming roles of wife and... who knew what else. (US sub-corpus)

Example 7. Here, employees can sit in silence-in minimalist rooms decorated in earth tones, accented with cushy pillows, floor mats and fragrant flower buds-to catch a few critical **moments** of **solitude** and to decompress from the myriad stresses of a workday. (GB sub-corpus)

Example 8. As intensely social creatures with a blueprint written by culture

[37] https://corpus.byu.edu/mutualInformation.asp

and experience, **periods** of **solitude** are a privilege of the socialized, those onto whom society has already deeply imprinted itself. (GB sub-corpus)

Excluding India, for the reasons stated above, none of the collocates of *solitude* in the collectivist countries seems to express a duration for the state of solitude. The only collocate that could be close to this function is the word *night* in the PK sub-corpus, but even in this case, the collocate is about a preferred time of the day to be in solitude, not about the duration of the state. This leads us to think that, in the individualist countries, *solitude* is seen as something that has a limited duration, something which one can and should only live for *moments*.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter we have tried to analyze the concepts of *loneliness* and *solitude* across individualist and collectivist cultures. We started by identifying the idea of Individualism as presented in Geert Hofstede's research on cultural dimensions, looking at the index compiled in *Culture's Consequences*, where 53 different countries and world regions are listed based on their degree of Individualism. We explained how, depending on the degree of Individualism of their country and culture, people can experience emotions in different ways.

We were then interested in knowing whether this also applied to the experiences of *loneliness* and *solitude*, and if so, in what ways. We employed corpus linguistics methods to answer these questions. Through searches performed in GloWbE, the Global Web-based English corpus developed at the University of Brigham Young, we analyzed the frequencies of the nouns *loneliness* and *solitude* and of the adjectives *lonely* and *solitary*. We noticed a general higher frequency in *loneliness* and *lonely*, compared to *solitude* and *solitary*. Remarkable is the case of Sri Lanka, whose sub-corpus showed the highest frequency of *solitude* and *solitary* and the lowest frequency of *loneliness*. Sri Lanka, unfortunately, was not part of Hofstede's study and does not appear in the

Individualism index, therefore it could not be part of the next part of the research.

The study then moved on to two sets of countries: the United States, Australia and Great Britain on one side and India, the Philippines and Pakistan on the other side, respectively representing Individualism and Collectivism. An analysis of the collocates of the words *loneliness* and *solitude* in these sub-corpora allowed us to draw the following conclusions: there seems to be a general agreement on the main traits of the experience of *loneliness*, since collocates like *isolation*, *boredom* and *pain* are shared among the six sub-corpora. Every country, though, seems to have its own characteristics with regard to this emotion (like an active response in the case of GB). The comparison between the two sets of countries led to the conclusion that the experience of *loneliness* seems to be similar in individualist and collectivist countries.

With regard to the experience of *solitude*, there is a greater degree of discordance, possibly due to the not very high frequency of both the collocates and the node word. Generally, most of the characteristics of *solitude* are shared among the three individualist countries, even though the actual collocates shared are fewer than what we have seen for *loneliness*. The collectivist countries also share one aspect of the experience of *solitude*, that is the religious aspect, but they do not share much more than that. The comparison between the two sets of countries led to the conclusion that the experience of *solitude* in the individualist countries is seen as a state with a finite and limited duration (with collocates like *moments* and *periods*). Finally, it should be noted that, although India was initially placed among the collectivist countries based on its position in Hofstede's index (and probably due to some degree of unconscious bias), the results mostly show India as being closer to the individualist countries than the collectivist countries.

CHAPTER 4

Loneliness and solitude in American culture: Evidence from a corpus of advice columns

4.1 Why advice columns?

The study presented in this chapter analyzes the ideas of loneliness and solitude, and in general the feelings related to being alone, in contemporary American culture through a corpus of advice columns.

In an episode of the WBUR podcast *OnPoint*[38], Meredith Goldstein, the writer behind Boston Globe's advice column *Love Letters*, describes advice columns as a "time capsule" of the years in which they were written. Author Jessica Weisberg supports this idea, later in the same episode, saying that reading the advice columns written decades ago, "provides a window into what life was like" at the time. In the preface to her book *Asking for a Friend: Three Centuries of Advice on Life, Love, Money & Other Burning Questions from a Nation Obsessed* (2018: 8), Weisberg explains how the words of the advice columnists have been "quintessential to formation of American identity", despite rarely being studied or mentioned in textbooks.

An advice column is the place for taboo talk, the place where anyone can express their feelings anonymously, without the fear of being judged. And when their feelings *are* being judged, by the columnists or by the readers, they are not, in any ways, connected to their person. An advice column is the place where advice seekers go, when they need impartial advice (as Goldstein says in the *OnPoint* episode), something that they are not able to get from their family or friends. Paradoxically, an advice column is the only place where one can talk to a stranger and ask the most intimate question or reveal the most

[38] WBUR, OnPoint: "Advice Columns: An American Love Affair" (April 11, 2018) http://www.wbur.org/onpoint/2018/04/11/advice-columns-love-affair [accessed Nov. 15, 2018]

humiliating secrets, because everything is done anonymously and because, after all, that stranger is not really a stranger, but someone that can be fully trusted.

Section 1.1 in Chapter 1 of this thesis mentioned the tendency of people not to talk about their loneliness, to express their feelings giving them other names, while never saying that they are lonely. Advice columns, being the place to share the feelings that cannot be shared with the people around you, seem like the perfect source of material to study the emotion of loneliness, and the state of solitude, viewed as the need to be, or spend some time, alone.

4.2 Milestones in American advice columns

To better understand the choice of both advice columns in general and the advice columns chosen for the corpus, it is necessary to point out some of the main stages of advice writing in America. It is the only way to grasp the role that advice columnists have had throughout the years, how big of celebrities they were and how important their opinion was.

The first real advice columnist in the United States: Beatrice Fairfax. Behind this pseudonym was Marie Manning, young crime and politics reporter and talented writer from Washington DC, who was relegated to the women's page when she moved to work at the *New York Evening Journal*. There, on July 20, 1898, she answered some questions from the readers, that were considered inappropriate for the editorial letters page, thus officially starting the column *Dear Beatrice Fairfax*. The column was incredibly successful from the beginning (Manning would come to receive about 1400 letters each day), with Beatrice Fairfax becoming a celebrity and gathering a loyal readership base (Gudelunas 2008: 42-43).

What made Fairfax's column thrive was the sense of intimacy established between the columnist and the readers, an intimacy based on facts and reality, rather than on the

fiction and unrealistic tales that had been in style on newspaper's women's pages until then. Almost always, Fairfax's columns used a first-person narration, allowing the columnist to be more practical and direct in her answers (Gudelunas 2008: 40-41). *Dear Beatrice Fairfax* was thought to be "a public confessional for the unhappy, who could write to the paper about their troubles and in return get unbiased opinion and friendly advice" (Olson 1992: *no page*). The columns of Beatrice Fairfax dealt with different themes, the primary clearly being that of romance. Many of the letters, though, show the underlying theme of class and clashing cultures, as Gudelunas (2008:48) notes: especially in the beginning of its run, many new immigrants and rural transplants[39] to the United States would turn to Fairfax's column to ask for advice on how to adjust to their new life.

Dorothy Dix, pseudonym of Elizabeth Meriwether Gilmer, would become an even bigger celebrity than Beatrice Fairfax. A native of Tennessee, Gilmer started working as an assistant for the *New Orleans Picayune* in 1894, and the year after she started her own column *Sunday Salad* as Dorothy Dix. This weekly column was not an advice column in the strict sense, as it did not directly respond to (or publish) letters from the readers. The column contained "personal essays about gender, marriage, ethics and religion" (Weisberg 2018: 76), although it would occasionally also include recipes, hence the name *Sunday Salad*. The success of the column was astounding, and it soon became clear that the column did not only appeal to women, but also to men. For this reason, the newspaper's editors decided to rename the column *Dorothy Dix Talks*.

Gilmer would start to print the letters she received, therefore starting her advice column, only in 1901, when William Hearst contacted her to write a daily column for his *New York Journal* (ironically, the columns by rivals Fairfax and Dix would often be only a few pages distant from each other). As Gudelunas (2008: 78) explains, Dorothy Dix was seen as a specialist, as an expert, not only for her life experiences, but mostly for her prominent work as a reporter: people would ask for her advice on topics ranging from etiquette to class relations, but her specialty was, without any doubt, the relationship

[39] See section 1.2 of Chapter 1 in this thesis, which tells how, towards the end of nineteenth century/beginning of twentieth century, due to massive urbanization, many people started to move from the rural areas of the United States to cities and suburban areas.

between men and women.

Unlike the column of Beatrice Fairfax, which was written by many different people throughout the years, the trademark Dorothy Dix was registered by Elizabeth Gilmer in 1917. That same year, she moved from New York, back to New Orleans, and started syndicating her columns. She would continue writing until her death in 1949, having her pieces printed on 273 newspapers, across the United States, Europe, Mexico and Latin America (Weisberg 2018: 72).

Despite the fact that both Dorothy Dix and Beatrix Fairfax published their columns until mid to late 1940s, in the last few years they were not the undisputed queens in the reign of advice columns anymore. Competition was increasing as many more women were starting to take on the role of advice columnists. Among this new generation, the most famous columns were *Ask Ann Landers* and *Dear Abby*.

The character of Ann Landers was first introduced in 1943 on the *Chicago Sun-Times* by Ruth Crowley, who also wrote a child-care column on the same newspaper. Crowley would be the person behind the column *Ask Ann Landers* until 1955 (with a three-years-long break), when Esther Pauline 'Eppie' Lederer, née Friedman, replaced her after her unexpected death. The column is largely connected to the figure of Eppie Lederer, who would continue writing it for 47 years, but it cannot be denied that it was made popular by Ruth Crowley. Like Gudelunas (2008: 87) says, *Ask Ann Landers* was "both popular and controversial": Crowley's column was sharp and wanted to go against the traditional figures of advice columnists of that time. Some of the differences pointed out by Gudelunas (2008) between Crowley's and Lederer's Ann Lenders lay in the gender and age of the writers: for example, in Crowley's column, the writers were overwhelmingly female (80 percent) and only 3 percent of the writers did not specify their gender in the letter, while in Lederer's column, 23 percent of the writers did not feel the need to specify their gender, as it was not important for the letter. Moreover, Crowley's column appealed more to young adults and teenagers (59 percent), while in Lederer's case, the percentage is reversed, with 61 percent of the letters coming from adults.

Even though, as we mentioned, the Ann Landers column was already popular (it was already syndicated in 30 newspapers) when Eppie Lederer took over, it is also true

that Ann Landers became a media icon and a journalistic institution only with Eppie. At the time of her death, her column was carried in more than 1200 newspapers around the world (Fox 2002). Eppie Lederer actively participated in politics and she was not afraid to address taboo topics, like homosexuality, in *Ask Ann Landers*. She was very liberal, on the one hand (she was an advocate of gun control and abortion rights), but also deeply traditional, on the other hand, for what concerned questions of personal morality: "some people felt the column was liberal, although others felt it was the last bastion of Victorian primness" Gudelunas (2008: 109) explains.

It is impossible to talk about Ann Landers, without mentioning Abigail Van Buren, the fictional author of the *Dear Abby* column. Behind this pseudonym was Pauline Esther 'Popo' Phillips, née Friedman, Eppie Lederer's identical twin sister, who started her own advice column on the *San Francisco Chronicle*, just months after her sister took over Crowley's *Ask Ann Landers*. The two columns, the two columnists and the two sisters defined each other throughout the years. Their relationship changed over time: from the symbiotic bond, typical of twins, that they had during childhood and adolescence (they even had a double marriage on the same day), jealousy and the desire to prevail over one another slowly took over and led the sisters into this advice columns popularity war.

The two sisters gave "similar, if not identical, advice" (Weisberg 2018: 105): *Dear Abby* was also at times very progressive, like, for example, on the matter of gay rights and birth control, and at times very traditional, for example about women taking on full-time jobs and neglecting their marriage and children. In general, "both women's voices, […] helped transform the prim, lovelorn column into a vital interactive conversation on modern mores" (Shapiro 2013: *no page*).

Pauline Phillips wrote *Dear Abby* until 2002, year when she was replaced by her daughter Jeanne Phillips, as Pauline had developed Alzheimer's disease. Esther Lederer also wrote her last column in 2002, year when she died. Unlike Dear Abby, the history of the character Ann Landers ended with the death of Eppie, as was her final wish.

The last twenty years have seen a change in the typical advice columns: despite still being printed on the newspapers, more and more advice columns have been transferred to other types of media, like radio and television (although both Abigail Van Buren and Ann Landers already used to frequently appear on television decades ago). Recently, the

internet has seen an outburst of several types of advice columns. Webpages now carry, just like the printed newspapers did, traditional advice columns concerning human relationships (e.g. the online columns of *Dear Sugar* and *Dear Prudence,* which are also radio podcasts), but also specialized advice columns, concerning themes ranging from sexuality (e.g. *Savage Love*[40]) to problems on the workplace (e.g. *Ask A Manager*[41] and *Dear Businesslady*[42]). The internet generation has allowed everyone to express their own opinion. Like Finnie (2015: *no page*) points out, "prospective advice columnists no longer need the support of a printed publication or the approval of an editor for their work. Social media and free or low-cost publishing platforms paired with social media mean that any column has the potential to reach an audience". Nowadays, both advice seekers and advice givers can easily go online and find what they are looking for.

4.3 Method

To study loneliness and solitude, and the feelings related to the state of being alone, in contemporary American culture, a corpus of advice columns was manually compiled. The corpus contains texts (questions and answers) from three popular advice columns, as detailed in sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 below.

4.3.1 The corpus: what was excluded

Before starting with the manual compilation of the corpus, some criteria had to be established regarding the choice of which advice columns to include. If an advice column did not respond to one of the criteria, which are listed below, that advice column was not

[40] https://www.thestranger.com/archive/savage-love
[41] https://www.askamanager.org/archives
[42] https://www.thebillfold.com/author/businessladycourtneyc-w-guerra/

included in the corpus. By setting these criteria in advance, it was possible to restrict the field of our research to a smaller number of columns, so that the texts for the corpus could be collected manually in a relatively short amount of time.

1. *New Generation*: the first criterion according to which some columns were excluded from the corpus was that the corpus should only include "new generations" columnists (Fallon 2015), so that the analysis could focus only on contemporary American culture, without the risk of the texts in the corpus being influenced by older traditions and beliefs. For this reason, the column of *Dear Abby*, written from 2002 by Jeanne Phillips, had to be excluded, despite its incredible popularity.
2. *All of human emotions*: another criterion concerned the level of specialization of the columns. All the columns that focused on a particular topic were excluded, like those focusing on sexuality, on the workplace, on LGBTQ rights, etc. This was done in order to focus on columns whose audience was as large as possible and whose questions and answers were not restricted to a group of people or situations but would encompass a range of human emotions. Therefore, columns like *Savage Love*, *Ask A Manager*, *Ask A Queer Chick*, *Dear Businesslady*, and others, were all excluded from the corpus to be compiled.
3. *Endorsement*: the columns to be included in the corpus needed to be endorsed in some way, so that the corpus evidence would not risk being unreliable. Therefore, the columns not published on a newspaper (online or paper) were not taken into consideration during the collection of texts. As it was mentioned at the end of section 4.2 of this chapter, the internet has virtually allowed anyone to own a website and post their own advice, without the need for the posts to be approved in any ways: including texts from advice websites (like the column *Dear Wendy* at www.dearwendy.com) could potentially undermine the reliability of our results.

4.3.2 The corpus: *Dear Sugar*, *Love Letters*, *Ask Polly*

After operating a selection, based on the criteria described above, among the advice columns freely available online, the columns chosen for the compilation of the corpus were:

- *Dear Sugar*, by Cheryl Strayed
- *Love Letters*, by Meredith Goldstein
- *Ask Polly*, by Heather Havrilesky

Dear Sugar[43] is a weekly advice column published on the online magazine *The Rumpus* by Cheryl Strayed. This column was originally authored by a different columnist but the figure of Sugar is strongly associated with that of Cheryl Strayed (see Errico 2012). Steve Almond, the previous author, had written the *Dear Sugar* column only for about 10 months (end of January – end of November 2009). Cheryl Strayed took over the column in March 2010 and published pieces on the newspaper until May 2012. After stopping writing her weekly column at *The Rumpus*, Strayed kept the identity she had in the column *Dear Sugar*, in her advice podcast of the same name. For the purpose of building this corpus, therefore, only the questions and answers written by Cheryl Strayed – that is those published between March 2010 and May 2012 – were collected, leaving aside the questions and answers from 2009.

Love Letters[44] is a daily advice column published both online and in print on *The Boston Globe* (it is published every day on the website and on Tuesdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and in the Sunday Magazine in print). Author of *Love Letters* is columnist Meredith Goldstein, who has been writing the column ever since its beginning, in 2009. Characteristic of this column is the way in which the columnist addresses her readers: at the end of each answer Meredith Goldstein calls upon her readers and asks questions about the letter she received (questions of the type: What would you do if you were this person? Do you agree? What advice would you give?). The readers, in turn, leave

[43] https://therumpus.net/sections/dear-sugar/
[44] https://loveletters.boston.com/

comments under the column, so the letter writer gets advice both from the columnist and from the community of readers.

Ask Polly[45] is a weekly advice column by Heather Havrilesky published online on *New York Magazine*'s *The Cut*. The newspaper started carrying the column in 2014 (it was first launched on *The Awl* in 2012), and like *Love Letters*, but unlike *Dear Sugar*, *Ask Polly* is still published and very popular. *Ask Polly*'s main feature is the length of her answers, which are not limited to simple advice about the letter but seem more like elaborated essays on the existential problems of life. Fallon (2016: *no page*) notes how "*Ask Polly* allows space for feelings, however uncomfortable or improper those feelings are, under the theory that people have to move through those feelings naturally, rather than suppress them, to actually get over them".

It was decided to include in the corpus both the questions coming from the reader and the answers given by the columnist, to account for both sides of the coin, both the problem and the solution. Comments to the column coming from other readers were not included in the corpus: they only appear on the column *Love Letters* (which dedicates a specific section of the webpage to the comments and whose columnist Meredith Goldstein specifically asks for the readers' opinion at the end of her answer), therefore they would make the samples not comparable. *Dear Sugar* and *Ask Polly* are both weekly columns, published respectively on Thursdays and Wednesdays. *Love Letters*, on the contrary, is a daily column. For this reason, to make the samples comparable, it was decided to collect only one column per week for *Love Letters*, specifically the columns published on Tuesdays. In each of the three advice columns that form the corpus, some of the texts were manually pruned or not collected at all: for example, the column *Dear Sugar* would sometimes, instead of answering a question, host interviews, which did not match the corpus design parameters; Heather Havrilesky published one *Ask Polly* every day for one week (June 26 to June 30, 2017) as a celebration for the release of her book: only one of these columns was included in the corpus. On the contrary, the column *Love Letters* sometimes has two columns published on the same day: when that was the case for Tuesdays, both columns were included in the corpus, as happened with *Dear Sugar*

[45] https://www.thecut.com/tags/ask-polly/

which would, at times, answer more than one letter in each column.

The corpus was given the name AdviceColumns_US. For each question and each answer appearing in the selected columns, a different text document was created. Each text included in the corpus was given a descriptive name, that showed four elements: the name of the advice column, the type of text (question or answer), the title of the column (sometimes shortened, for reasons of space), and the date of publication. We can see an example of how the texts were renamed in Figure 1.

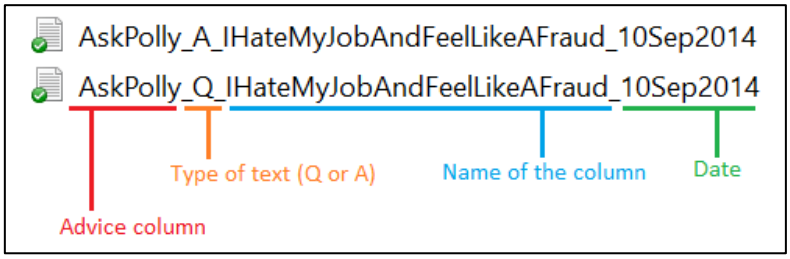


Figure 1. Example of the descriptive names given to the texts in the corpus.

Advice column	Years	Number of texts	Number of tokens
Dear Sugar	2010-2012	175	135,751
Love Letters	2009-2018	966	294,301
Ask Polly	2014-2018	414	559,978
Total	**2009-2018**	**1555**	**990,030**

Table 1. Number of texts and tokens in AdviceColumns_US, divided per each advice column.

Table 1 shows the total number of texts included in the corpus. For each advice column, the texts were collected from the first one, throughout its existence. For what concerns *Love Letters* and *Ask Polly*, which are still being published, the texts were collected until the end of August 2018.

4.3.3 AntConc

The software used for the text analyses in the corpus AdviceColumns_US is AntConc 3.5.7, released by its developer Laurence Anthony in 2018. AntConc is a software tool for corpus linguistics research, freely available and downloadable from Anthony's website[46]. The AntConc software provides the users with several tools that can be useful in the different phases of corpus analysis. Below are the main AntConc tools used in the present study.

The first tool is the Concordance tool, which allows users to look at the words and the context in which they appear in the corpus. Moreover, by using the KWIC sorting options, the users can rearrange the concordance lines at three different levels, either on the right or on the left of the node word. The sorting options help the users in identifying recurring constructions in the corpus, by arranging the words near the node word in an alphabetical order (the Clusters/N-Grams also allows the user to look at recurring expressions in the corpus, but this tool will not be used in the present study). Clicking on the highlighted node word in the Concordance tool, will direct the user to the File View tool, which is particularly useful for this study, because it allows the users to look at the raw text of the individual file in which the node word appears. By doing this, the users can more easily analyze the results obtained from the other tools, especially when clarifications are needed about the context. The Collocates tool allows the users to find possible collocates for words, and to sort them based on their frequency or statistical measure, to analyze sequential and non-sequential patterns in the corpus.

Other AntConc tools include: the Word List tool, which shows the complete list of all the words present in the corpus, sorted by their frequency; the Keywords tool[47], which shows the most unusually frequent words in the corpus, by comparing them with the words in a reference corpus; the Concordance Plot tool, which allows the users to look at the position of search results in target texts.

[46] http://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/

[47] The Keywords tool is particularly useful for corpus-driven studies, where the user could look at the keywords in the corpus in order to formulate a hypothesis. For the difference between corpus-driven and corpus-based studies, see section 2.3 in Chapter 2.

4.3.4 The research

With the research about *loneliness* and *solitude* in individualist vs collectivist cultures (Chapter 3) in mind, the present chapter will analyze the characteristics of the feelings related to being alone and will compare them to the results obtained from the previous chapter. The research in the present chapter aims to analyze the feelings connected with being alone, namely loneliness and solitude, in contemporary American culture, using a corpus of advice columns. The assumption is that the language used, and the topic dealt with in advice columns reflect the society and the time in which they are written.

This chapter, unlike the previous one, does not focus specifically on the words loneliness and solitude. On the contrary, this analysis is directed at investigating the range of emotions connected with the state of being alone, which could include *loneliness* and *solitude*. With this aim in mind, it was decided to not start the research with the words *loneliness* and *solitude* (or related adjectives), since doing that would mean to set boundaries to the emotions that could be connected to the state of being alone. Instead, it was decided to start with a corpus search of the word *alone*. As the Merriam Webster definition[48] shows, the adjective alone does not carry any particular negative or positive value. For this reason, it was considered the best choice for the present investigation, as a search for other adjectives, like *lonely* or *solitary* would have been more likely to be biased by the negative, positive or neutral values carried by them.

To this aim, concordance lines for the search term *alone** were generated by the Concordance tool of AntConc. The star symbol (*) in AntConc is the wildcard that stands for "zero or more characters": by setting *alone** as the search term, the results obtained would include any possible occurrence of the word *aloneness* too. The total number of concordance hits for this search was 447, of which 446 for the word *alone* and only 1 for the word *aloneness*. The following criteria were applied in manually removing those concordance lines, whose use of the word *alone* did not correspond to that of the present

[48] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/alone

research:

1. The concordance lines where the word *alone* was used as a synonym of the word *only* (as described by the second meaning of *alone* from the Merriam-Webster dictionary, "exclusive of anyone or anything else"[49]), as in Example 1 below, were excluded.

   Example 1. "Dear Abby didn't build a lasting franchise of folksy American guidance on empty platitudes **alone** (although they occasionally played a part!)"

   [file: AskPolly_A_CutOfMyMotherInLaw_6May2015.txt]

2. The concordance lines in which the word *alone* is part of the fixed expression "let alone", as in Example 2 below, were excluded.

   Example 2. "I can't even narrow down a country, let **alone** a city, or what I would like to do there."

   [file: DearSugar_Q(1)_It'sSoMuchEasierToBeTheBlowjobQueen#32_15Apr2010.txt]

3. For the concordance lines in which the word *alone* is part of the expression "to leave someone or something alone" a selection was made: the lines in which the expression referred to an abstract object or idea (like a problem, an argument, the past) and had the meaning of "ignore" or "not pay attention" were excluded; the lines in which the expression referred to one or more living beings were kept. Even though the meaning of "ignore" or "not pay attention" can also be used in reference to human beings and not just abstract concepts, it was not always possible to distinguish the two meanings in the lines from the corpus. Examples 3 and 4 below exemplify this point.

   Example 3. "I'm writing because I don't know if I should ask him to consider trying to find a job here or just leave it **alone**."

   [file: LoveLetters_Q_WhenCanIHaveTheTalk_12Apr2011.txt]

   Example 4. "How do I get over this: the damage I did and my selfishness, that I didn't just leave them **alone** like I should have?"

   [file: AskPolly_Q_FormerFriendsForgiveMe_19Oct2016.txt]

[49] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/alone

After manually removing these occurrences, the concordance lines that were taken into account for the purpose of the present research went from 447 to 388. Moreover, the single concordance line for the word *aloneness* was also not taken into account. Therefore, the final number of concordance lines on which the analysis is based is 387.

The next section will discuss the results of the manual analysis of the occurrences of the word *alone* and the feelings connected to it. The list of collocates of the word *alone* will be analyzed, and in particular the collocates *afraid*, *fear*, *lonely* and *time* which were considered relevant for the analysis of the feelings connected to the state of being alone.

4.4 Results and discussion

The semantic prosody of the remaining 387 hits of the search term *alone* was analyzed. The concept of semantic prosody[50] identifies the tendency of a word or phrase to consistently co-occur with units that have negative or positive meanings (McEnery and Hardy 2012). The semantic prosody of a word can be defined by the words surrounding it. In the case of this study, by looking at the words that surrounded each hit of the word *alone* and at the feelings that the state of being alone was causing, it was possible to manually assign the 387 hits to three categories: Positive[51], Negative and Neutral/Unclear. The hits were assigned to each category based on the words that surrounded them and, generally, on the context of the text. To do this, most of the times it was necessary to look at the full version of the text in the File View tool, as the concordance line in the Concordance tool (with a Search Window Size of 50 characters) did not always provide enough information about the state of being alone. Looking at the

[50] The term "semantic prosody" was first used by Louw (1993: 157), who defines it as "a consistent aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates". Louw attributes the concept to Sinclair, who would develop it later, e.g. in Sinclair (1996). Many scholars have studied the concept of semantic prosodies and there has been a disagreement, throughout the years, on what that concept actually refers to. For a review of the various contributions to the concept of semantic prosody, see Chapter 1 in Stewart (2010).

[51] The single occurrence of the word *aloneness* would have been included in the Positive category, as the excerpt from the text (from the file AskPolly_A_PretendingI'mHappySingle_4Jan2017.txt) is: "How long do I get to savor *this glorious life* of **aloneness** until some dude stomps in and spoils it all?"

full version of the texts allowed for a better understanding of the feelings connected with the state of being alone. Table 2 shows the number of hits for each category.

Category	Number of hits	Percentage
Negative	155	40%
Positive	54	14%
Neutral/Unclear	178	46%

Table 2. Feelings connected to the state of being alone and relative number of hits in AdviceColumns_US.

As Table 2 shows, in the corpus AdviceColumns_US, the negative feelings connected to the state of being alone are three times as common as the positive feelings. The Neutral/Unclear category, though, is the largest of the three. This is not surprising, as detecting feelings from a written text is not always easy, or possible at all. In many of the cases that were categorized as Unclear, the feelings were not explicitly articulated and written out, which made it difficult or impossible to include them in the two other categories. Moreover, in some cases, the hits that were categorized as Neutral showed both negative and positive feelings connected to the state of being alone: neither of the two feelings was more prominent that the other, resulting in the impossibility to assign those hits to the Positive or Negative category. Example 5 shows a case from the Neutral category, where the idea of living alone is seen both as being a *relief* and a *bad idea*.

Example 5. "Living **alone** might feel like a *relief* at first, but in my opinion, you'll end up isolating yourself. That's a *bad idea* at a time when you need to stop reinforcing this illusion that your preferences and desires are shameful and make you a misfit."
[file: AskPolly_A_ShouldILiveAlone_25Nov2014.txt]

Examples 6 and 7 show concordance lines from the corpus that were categorized, respectively, as Negative and Positive.

Example 6. "Every single human alive would be *anxious* and *depressed* if they were **alone**, in a *crap* town, with a *scary-hard* academic to-do list in front of them"
[file: AskPolly_A_ShouldILiveAlone_25Nov2014.txt]

Example 7. "if your boyfriend can't understand that your need for **alone** time is about *self-care*, as opposed to disrespecting his family, you should start re-thinking this whole relationship"

[file: LoveLetters_A_We'reAlwaysWithHisFamily_22Sep2015.txt]

In general, it was easier to recognize the concordance lines that were going to be characterized as negative, compared to the ones that were going to be characterized as positive. One of the most challenging cases to categorize was the expression "You're not alone" (or variations of it using different pronouns), which appeared many times in the corpus.

This expression can be used, other than in the literal sense, to show support to someone going through an emotionally difficult period: telling them that they are not alone in their suffering is a positive and affirmatory way to make that person feel better. Therefore, the first and immediate sensation that was felt in the analysis of the feelings conveyed by this expression, was that they were positive. Upon further reflection, though, the real feeling behind the word *alone* in that expression became clearer. Trying to make someone feel better by telling them that they are NOT alone, that they are not the only ones in that painful situation, implies that the state of being alone is a negative one and that the mere fact that other people are suffering just like you, even though not necessarily with or next to you, could make you feel better. All of the instances in the corpus where the expression "You're not alone", or its variations, were used in a situation similar to the one described above (as shown in Examples 8,9, and 10) were categorized as negative.

Example 8. "Then put your own swagger aside and say: I am trying. I am lost. I am *not* **alone** in this. I want to show up instead of hiding."

[file: AskPolly_A_WhyDoesn'tAnyoneLikeMe_30Sep2015.txt]

Example 9. "Or maybe we're smoothly functioning perfection and it's the world that makes us think we don't work. Sometimes it's hard to tell the difference. Either way, we are *not* **alone**."

[file: AskPolly_A_StartBelievingInMyWorth_6Apr2016.txt]

Example 10. "I'm not a doctor, so I cannot advise you about that. But I can tell you that you're *not* **alone** in your insecurities and fears; they're typical of writers, even those who don't have depression."

[file: DearSugar_A_WriteLikeAMotherfucker#48_19Aug2010.txt]

From this first step in the analysis, it is clear that the feelings connected with the state of being alone are inherently more negative (40%) than positive (14%). A look at the list of collocates of the word *alone* (in Figure 2) will shed some light into what those feelings are.

Rank	Freq	Freq(L)	Freq(R)	Stat	Collocate
1	5	2	3	7.35392	christmas
2	17	17	0	7.01709	leave
3	17	14	3	6.76397	afraid
4	5	5	0	6.54656	spending
5	13	12	1	6.49796	spend
6	18	14	4	6.37649	living
7	11	10	1	6.19950	left
8	5	1	4	6.11046	lonely
9	46	40	6	5.86658	being
10	5	4	1	5.86395	needed
11	64	35	29	5.65848	time
12	10	5	5	5.64372	alone
13	24	21	3	5.60770	let
14	7	4	3	5.54310	fear
15	5	4	1	5.43015	must
16	5	2	3	5.30695	room
17	5	3	2	5.13760	accept
18	7	5	2	5.10026	less
19	5	3	2	5.06200	baby
20	7	6	1	5.05029	home

Figure 2. List of the first 20 collocates of the search term "alone". The parameters were set at: 5L-5R, minimum frequency 5. Underlined in red are the negative collocates.

The list of collocates for the word *alone* in the Collocates tool (in Figure 2), shows two negative feelings: fear (in the collocates *afraid* and *fear*) and loneliness (in the collocate *lonely*). No real positive collocates are identified in this list. Some of the collocates are part of the fixed expressions analyzed in section 4.3.4: *leave alone* and *let alone*. Some other collocates describe actions that are done alone: *spending* (*time*) alone,

living alone, *being* alone. The next sections will discuss some of the collocates from this list, that are considered relevant for the present research, therefore the collocates *afraid* and *fear* (for the feeling of fear) and the collocate *lonely* (for the feeling of loneliness). Moreover, the collocate *time* will be analyzed, in order to understand whether spending time alone is connected to positive or negative feelings.

4.4.1 *Afraid to be alone*

Clicking on the collocate *afraid* from the list in Table 2, redirects to the Concordance tool and retrieves all the concordance lines in which the word *afraid* appears next to *alone* (Figure 3). The same is true for the collocate *fear*, whose concordance lines can be seen in Figure 4.

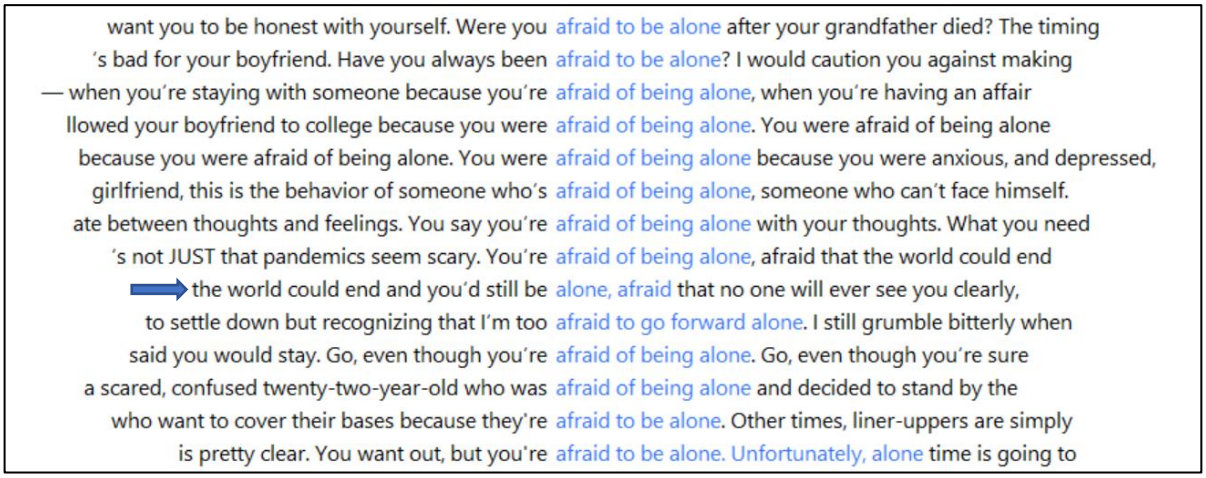


Figure 3. Concordance lines of the search term "alone" with its collocate "afraid".

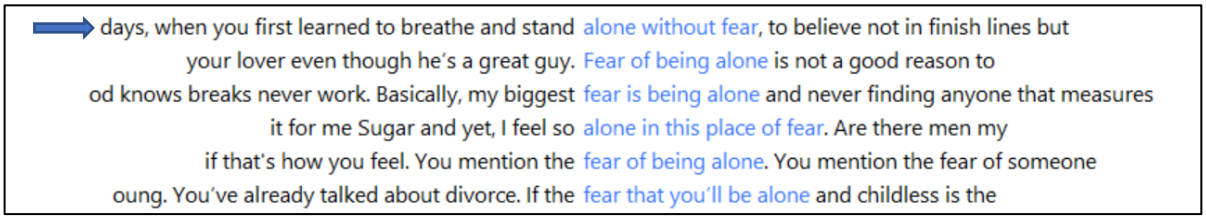


Figure 4. Concordance lines of the search term "alone" with its collocate "fear".

The feeling of being alone, in the corpus AdviceColumns_US, seems to be feared. Almost all the lines in Figures 3 and 4 reveal the fear behind the state of being alone,

except for one (marked with a blue arrow in Figure 3), where the fear refers to "not being seen clearly" by the people around you, and the state of being alone can be both a cause and a consequence for that. Even the line in Figure 4 (marked with a blue arrow) which refers to "learning to stand alone without fear", implies that the natural state in standing alone would be to be afraid, since having no fear is something that has to be learned.

Moving from the two collocates *afraid* and *fear* to some of their synonyms, other examples along the same line are noticed throughout the corpus (Examples 11, 12 and 13). These confirm that one of the negative feelings related to being alone is that of fear.

Example 11. "Or maybe he'll find that he never loved you enough, and was just *scared* of being **alone**."
[file: AskPolly_A_HeDoesn'tWantSex_4Feb2015.txt]

Example 12. "My guess is that you're not very good at managing an unstructured life yet and you're dissatisfied with your relationship, but you're *terrified* of being **alone**, because THEN what will you have?"
[file: AskPolly_A_WhyDoesn'tAnythingFeelFun_1Jul2015.txt]

Example 13. "my depression over not knowing what to do with my life, my *anxiety* about being **alone**, my worry that there was something deeply wrong with me"
[file: AskPolly_A_ExRuinedCollegeExperience_30Aug2017.txt]

4.4.2 *Alone and lonely?*

Another collocate of *alone* (in Figure 2) that had a negative connotation was the adjective *lonely*. Is the emotion of loneliness related to the state of being alone? The immediate answer to this question would be yes, as loneliness implies being or feeling alone. But looking more closely at the results from the corpus seems to reveal something else.

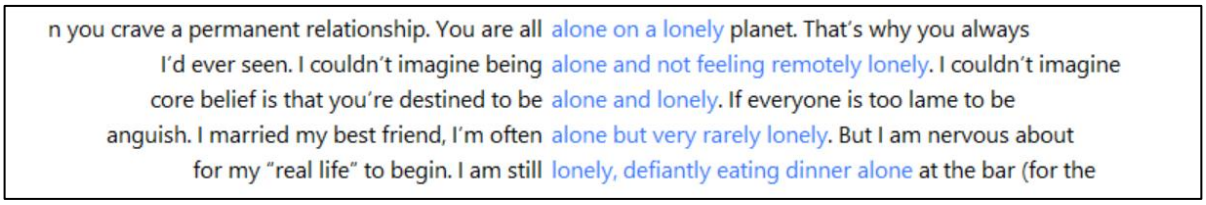


Figure 5. Concordance of the search term "alone" with its collocate "lonely".

Figure 5 shows the concordance lines for the search term *alone* and the collocate *lonely*. In two out of the five lines, the words *alone* and *lonely* appear near each other, but they either contradict each other ("I'm often alone but very rarely lonely") or do not refer to the same subject/object ("You are all alone on a lonely planet"). The feeling of loneliness, therefore, seems to be not entirely connected to the state of being alone.

To make sure that this was not simply due to a possible low number of occurrences of the word *lonely* in the corpus, a search of the adjective was performed in the Concordance tool. The search revealed 161 hits of the word *lonely*, distributed in 115 texts. Expanding our research even further, a new search was performed for the search term *lonel**, which would include results for the forms *lonely*, *lonelier*, *loneliest* and *loneliness*. In this case, a total of 202 hits were found, distributed in 136 texts.

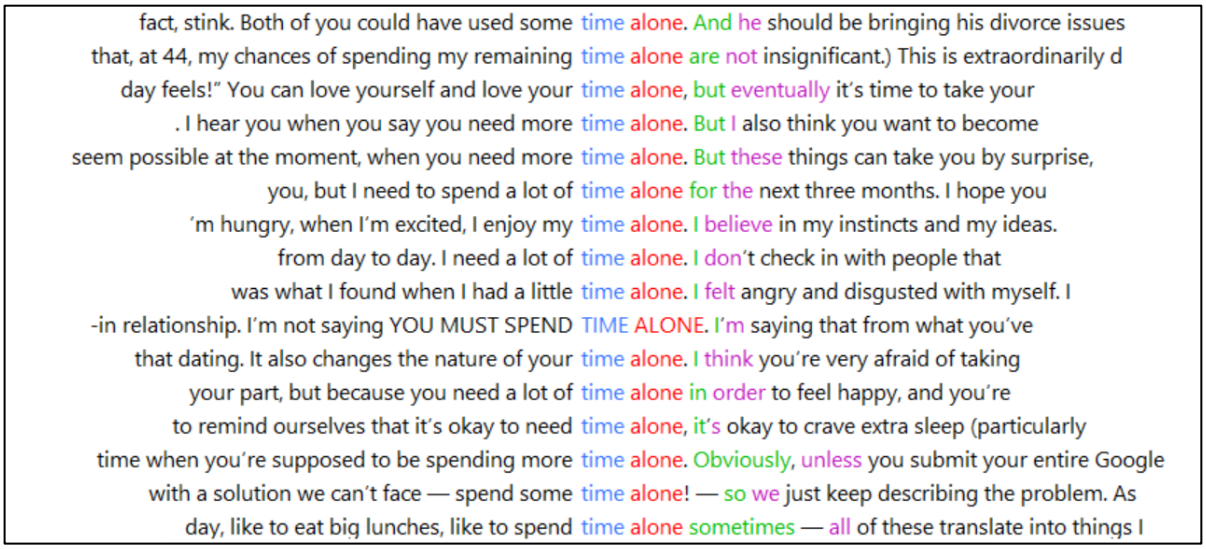
Rank	Freq	Freq(L)	Freq(R)	Stat	Collocate
1	6	2	4	10.08370	isolated
2	10	6	4	8.50724	depressed
3	7	3	4	7.33827	lost
4	9	3	6	7.14141	sad
5	14	11	3	6.67931	feeling
6	6	3	3	6.54545	angry
7	6	4	2	6.37350	alone
8	35	28	7	6.02417	feel
9	6	5	1	5.92561	felt
10	6	6	0	5.27786	little
11	10	3	7	5.25528	too
12	6	3	3	5.23747	without
13	29	23	6	5.21897	re
14	7	4	3	5.04593	still
15	8	8	0	4.95320	very
16	15	8	7	4.92418	because
17	150	70	80	4.87190	and
18	15	10	5	4.77884	how
19	6	2	4	4.67231	than
20	20	8	12	4.60892	are

Figure 6. List of the first 20 collocates of the search term - lonel -.*

Generating the list of collocates for the search term *lonel** confirmed the initial idea: there are five different collocates describing different feelings, before the collocate *alone*. The emotion of loneliness, before being connected to the state of being alone, is connected to the state of being *isolated*, *depressed*, *lost*, *sad* and *angry*. The assumption that can be made by looking at this list of collocates is that many different elements are combined into the emotion of loneliness, with the state of being alone as one of them. However, it is neither the only nor the primary element, therefore it can be inferred that being lonely does not equal being alone, that loneliness can be experienced even when we are not physically alone, but just isolated from the people around us.

4.4.3 *Precious alone time*

Among the collocates of the search term *alone*, one of them strikes as being by far the most frequent: *time*. Clicking on it, reveals that most of the occurrences of *time* as a collocate of *alone* are in the expressions "time alone" and "alone time". Examples of the concordance lines can be found in Figure 7 below.



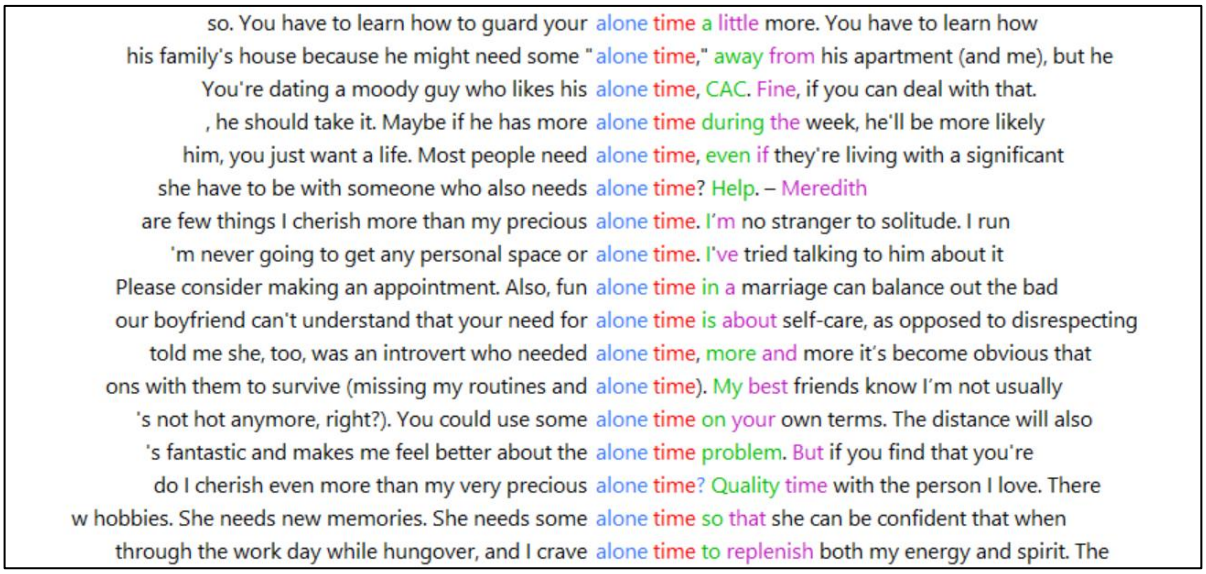


Figure 7. Examples from the concordance lines of the search term alone with its collocate time. In particular, the top part of the figure shows occurrences of the expression time alone, while the lower part shows occurrences of the expression alone time.

Time spent alone seems to be an important element in the corpus AdviceColumns_US. But one might wonder whether it is a positive or negative experience. Is spending time alone different from being alone? Sorting the three levels of context on the left of the node word, adjectives and verbs that define the experience of *alone time* can be more easily analyzed. Figure 8 shows a random selection of the concordance lines, sorted by their left context.

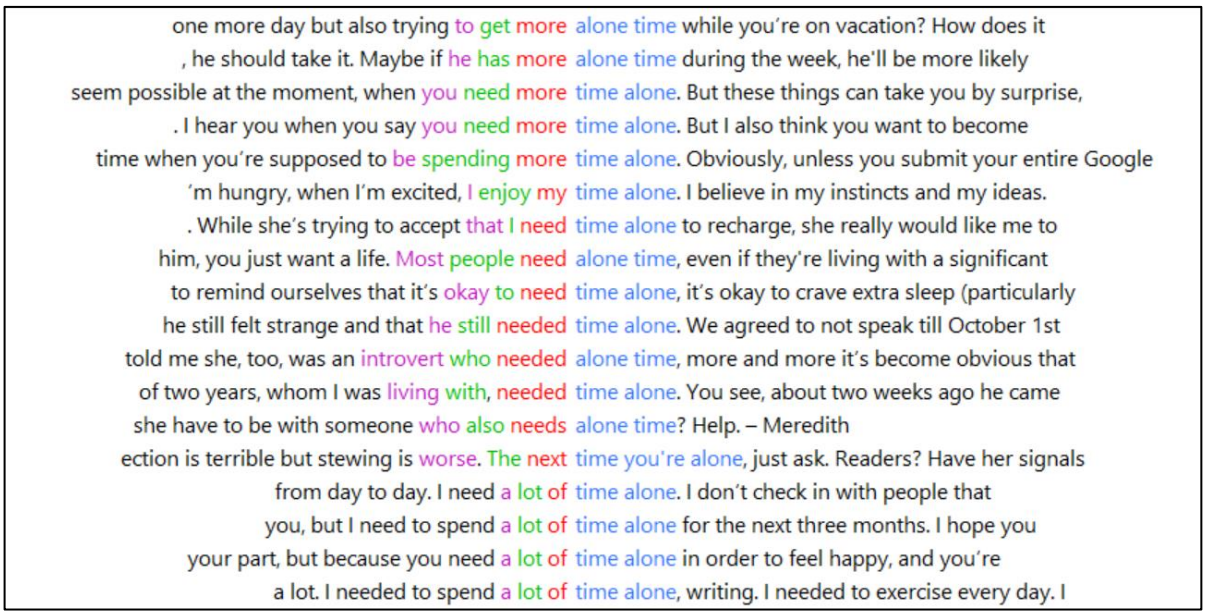


Figure 8. Examples from the concordance lines of the search term alone and its collocate time, with the context levels sorted on the left of the node.

Not many adjectives defining the time spent alone emerge from the concordance lines. The adjective *precious* appears twice, but both times in the same text, while the adjective *fun* appears in contrasting "fun alone time" with the bad moments in a marriage. Neither of those could be considered very significant by itself. Looking at the verbs used before "alone time" and "time alone", though, reveals more about the feelings connected with those experiences. Figure 8 shows a few cases where the time alone is needed (not only when forms of the verb *need* come right before "time alone" or "alone time", but also in examples like "I need to spend a lot of time alone"). Other similar examples from the corpus refer to *time alone* as being craved, wanted and missed, and as something that should be guarded (Examples 14 and 15).

Example 14. "I *crave* **alone time** to replenish both my energy and spirit."

[file: AskPolly_Q_AmITooUptight_10Aug2016.txt]

Example 15. "You need to learn how to occasionally opt out of your wife's plans without feeling like a jerk for doing so. You have to learn how to *guard* your **alone time** a little more."

[file: AskPolly_A_ILoveMyFriends_20Jun2018.txt]

Moreover, *alone time* is often seen as the solution to an emotional problem, like sadness, as in Examples 16, 17 and 18 below:

Example 16. "There is a problem with a *solution* we can't face — spend some **time alone**! — so we just keep describing the problem."

[file: AskPolly_A_StopBeingObsessedWithBoyfriend_25Feb2015.txt]

Example 17. "You're not like your sister — not because of some failing on your part, but because you need a lot of **time alone** *in order to feel happy*"

[file: AskPolly_A_ShouldILiveAlone_25Nov2014.txt]

Example 18. "*I'm just not happy* -- I need some **time alone** to think"

[file: LoveLetters_Q_HeNeedsTimeAwayFromMe_17Sep2013.txt]

With this in mind, even the adjective *precious* referred to "alone time", which we discarded as being not significant, because not common enough, can be considered part of the same picture: time spent alone is highly valued as something that can resolve any emotional problem or difficult situation. Spending time alone is needed and enjoyed and the possibility to spend some time alone should be guarded and preserved, to be able to retreat there whenever needed.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter aimed at studying the feelings connected to being alone, and among those loneliness and solitude, in contemporary American culture. To do so, a corpus of advice columns was built. Advice columns represent the time and place in which they were written and are, therefore, a good source for studies of culture.

The corpus AdviceColumns_US, was analyzed using the free software AntConc. As the aim of the research was to explore the emotions connected to the state of being alone, the corpus searches revolved around the word *alone*. By manually analyzing each concordance line, the instances of *alone* and the context surrounding them were manually assigned to three groups, depending on whether they were connected with Positive, Negative or Neutral/Unclear feelings. This operation showed that 46% of those instances were Neutral or Unclear, 40% of them were Negative and only 14% were Positive: the negative feelings connected with the state of being alone are almost three times as frequent as the positive feelings. This was verified in the list of collocates of the word *alone*, where no real positive collocate was found. Together with many neutral words, the negative collocates *afraid*, *fear* and *lonely* appear in the list.

Further analysis of concordance lines revealed that the emotion of fear connected with the state of being alone is very common in the corpus and is expressed by words like *fear* and *afraid*, but also by synonyms like *terrified*, *scared*, *scary*, *anxiety*. For what concerns the emotion of loneliness, instead, not many instances that connected it to the state of being alone were found. On the contrary, looking at the list of collocates for the search term *lonel** revealed that several other states and feelings are more relevant to the emotion of loneliness than the state of being alone. Alone, at position #7 in the list of collocates, was preceded by *isolated*, *depressed*, *lost*, *sad* and *angry*. It can, therefore, be assumed that the emotion of loneliness is not entirely connected to the state of being alone.

Finally, going back to the list of collocates for the search term *alone*, the collocate *time* was analyzed. Most of the cases in which *time* was a collocate of *alone* referred to the expressions “time alone” and “alone time”. To understand whether the experience of spending time alone has a negative or positive connotation, the concordance lines were

analyzed. It was noticed how time spent alone tends to be something wanted and needed, something valuable and important, that should be defended. Moreover, spending time alone is often the solution to emotional problems and the way to reach happiness.

The conclusions of this chapter can be compared to the conclusions of Chapter 3, which explained how, in the individualist cultures like that of the United States, the negative feelings connected to being alone, i.e. loneliness, are far more common than the positive feelings, i.e. solitude. Moreover, the characteristics of loneliness found in the corpus AdviceColumns_US (represented by the adjectives *isolated*, *depressed*, *lost*, *sad* and *angry*) also appear in the study performed in Chapter 3. As for solitude, the conclusions drawn from the searches in AdviceColumns_US can also be compared to the conclusions of Chapter 3. One of the characteristics of solitude in individualist countries was the fact that it had to be experienced in *moments* or *periods*: the experience of solitude is positive, but it only has a limited duration. AdviceColumns_US shows the same idea: being alone can be positive and a way to resolve an emotional problem, but only if a limited amount of time is spent alone.

Conclusion

The present thesis revolved around the ideas of *loneliness* and *solitude*. With two different corpus-based studies, it tried to analyze the concepts of *loneliness* and *solitude* and the emotions connected to the state of being alone in the United States.

Chapter 1 tried to illustrate the importance of the concepts of *loneliness* and *solitude* in American culture throughout the centuries. To do so, a section was dedicated to the development of groups and social relations in the history of the United States. Fischer (2010) argues that the American culture has always had a voluntaristic character: it values relationships with groups and communities through which each person can succeed, but it also believes in the individuals as independent persons able to achieve their own personal success. The main section of the chapter reviewed two centuries of American literature, and analyzed works having loneliness or solitude as a major theme. In an attempt to prove the importance of those themes in literature, works from both nineteenth century and twentieth century authors were selected. Moreover, the selection included works from different genres and styles. A brief final section was dedicated to current American society. Starting from Riesman's sociological study *The Lonely Crowd*, originally published in 1950s, the section gets to recent surveys that have showed how Americans are becoming lonelier and losing contacts with the people around them.

Chapter 2 examined the relationship between language and culture and gives a review of previous works employing corpus methodology in the study of cultures. In doing so, it tried to prove that aspects of cultures can be studied by studying their languages. This chapter discussed the disciplines of Cultural Linguistics and Corpus Linguistics, giving theoretical and historical information about them. Moreover, it discussed some of the typical methodology used in Cultural Linguistics (like questionnaires and field notes) and studies where, on the contrary, corpus methodology was employed in the analysis of cultures.

Chapter 3 presented the first of the two corpus-based studies. Drawing from Geert Hofstede's cultural dimension of Individualism, the ideas of *loneliness* and *solitude* in

individualist and collectivist contexts were explored using the corpus GloWbE. In particular, the study in this chapter was divided in two parts. The first part analyzed the frequency of the two words and of the adjectives *lonely* and *solitary* in the 20 sub-corpora of GloWbE. Generally, a higher frequency of the couple *loneliness-lonely*, compared to *solitude-solitary*, was noticed. The frequency patterns were not always remarkable or very telling, except in one case: out of the 20 sub-corpora, the one of Sri-Lanka showed the highest frequency of the words *solitude* and *solitary* and the lowest frequency of the word *loneliness*. It might be interesting to examine the reasons for this contrast in a future study. The country of Sri-Lanka was not included in Hofstede's research, and therefore it was not possible to include it in the second part of the present study. This part aimed to analyze the possible differences and similarities of *loneliness* and *solitude* across individualist and collectivist cultures. Three countries for each category were selected from Hofstede's Individualism index, namely the United States, Australia and Great Britain as individualist countries and India, the Philippines and Pakistan as collectivist countries. The analysis of the respective collocates revealed some similarities in the idea of *loneliness* between individualist and collectivist countries (the six sub-corpora each had *isolation*, *boredom* and *pain* as their collocates), while differences were noticed for what concerns the word *solitude*. In particular, the individualist countries seem to consider *solitude* as a state with a limited and finite duration (with the emergence of the collocates *moments* and *periods*).

Chapter 4 presented the second corpus-based study. The emotions connected to the state of being alone in contemporary American culture were analyzed in a corpus of advice columns. The first part of the chapter tried to explain the role of advice columns in America, both today and historically, in an attempt to show why they constitute good material for the study of cultures. The chapter then moved on to the description of the corpus and of its collection. Three different columns were included (*Dear Sugar*, *Love Letters* and *Ask Polly*), which covered the decade from 2009 to 2018. A corpus search for the term *alone* was run in AntConc. After manually removing concordance lines where the word *alone* appeared in fixed expressions (like *let alone* or *leave it alone*) or was used as a synonym for the word *only*, the semantic prosody of the remaining hits was analyzed. The majority (46%) of the instances of *alone* were deemed Neutral/Unclear. 40% of the

instances was considered to be Negative, while only 14% of the instances was considered to be Positive. The analysis then moved to the list of collocates of the word *alone*, to look for evidence sustaining the semantic prosody results. Among the first 20 collocates, most seemed to be neutral, but 3 had a negative connotation: *afraid*, *lonely* and *fear*. The state of being alone resulted to be connected with the emotion of fear, for the presence of the collocates *afraid* and *fear*, but also of synonyms like *terrified*, *scared*, *anxiety*. For what concerns the emotion of loneliness, on the contrary, a strong correlation did not emerge from the concordance lines of the collocate *lonely*. Moreover, an analysis of the collocates for the search term *lonel** revealed that the state of being alone is only one, and not the primary (it is collocate #7), of the elements of loneliness. Finally, a fourth collocate of the word *alone*, namely *time*, *was* analyzed in order to understand whether the time spent alone has a negative or a positive connotation. The analysis of the collocate *time* revealed that it is almost always used in the expressions *time alone* and *alone time*. The analysis of the concordance lines gives the picture of the time spent alone as something needed and craved, as something that is valuable and precious, and that should be guarded. Moreover, spending time alone is frequently the solution to emotional problems, like sadness. The idea of spending time alone, therefore, seems to be positive.

The results from Chapter 4 seem to be in line with the results from Chapter 3, especially for what concerns the idea of *solitude* and *alone time*, which can be compared. In both studies, the ideas of *solitude* and of *alone time* are positive, highly sought states, and in both studies, they are characterized by a limited duration.

Future research might focus on the analysis of the adjectives *lonely* and *solitary* across individualist and collectivist cultures. Possible interesting results might emerge about who experiences being lonely or solitary, in what way and for what reasons. Moreover, although the corpus of advice columns revealed interesting insight into the idea of being alone, it should be noted that the tendency towards negativity in the word *alone* might be due to the fact that readers turn to advice columns when they have a problem. Therefore, future studies could focus on analyzing the emotions connected with being alone in different genres, and test the results obtained in this study.

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