

**Constructing British and European identities in Brexit Britain: a
critical linguistic analysis of press, political, and personal
discourses**

Tamsin Parnell

Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

November 2022

Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	6
1.1	Introduction	6
1.2	The contextual background to Brexit.....	7
1.3	Identity and Brexit	13
1.4	Research questions and thesis outline	19
2	Literature Review	22
2.1	Introduction	22
2.2	Discourse	23
2.2.1	Defining discourse	23
2.2.2	Defining critical discourse analysis (CDA)	25
2.2.3	Faircloughian CDA and the Discourse-Historical Approach.....	26
2.2.4	Discourse and ideologies.....	29
2.2.5	Recontextualising discourse.....	30
2.2.6	Discourse and power.....	31
2.2.7	Discourse and identity.....	33
2.2.8	Sociolinguistic approaches to identity	35
2.3	Discourse, identity, and the nation	38
2.3.1	Discourse, nations, and nationalism.....	38
2.3.2	Discourse and national identity.....	40
2.3.3	Discourse and Brexit-related political identities	41
2.4	The discursive construction of British, European and EU identities	42
2.4.1	British (supra)national identity: union through war	42
2.4.2	Identifying with Europe in the UK	44
2.4.3	Defining European identity	45
2.4.4	Political constructions of British identity: debates, speeches, and policy papers.....	47
2.4.5	British newspaper constructions of British identity	50
2.5	Constructing Europeanness in the Eurosceptic British press and politics	53
2.5.1	Political constructions of Europe and the EU	53
2.5.2	British media constructions of Europe and the EU	55
2.5.3	Metaphorical constructions of the UK-Europe relationship in British press and politics.....	56
2.6	Constructing “Extra-European” identities in politics, the press and public opinion ..	58
2.6.1	Constructing the USA in relation to the UK-EU relationship.....	58
2.6.2	Depicting the Commonwealth and its relationship with the UK	60
2.6.3	Representing immigration in the British press.....	61
2.7	Constructing Britain and Europe in public opinion	62
2.7.1	The interplay between politics, press and public opinion	62
2.7.2	Public constructions of British identity.....	66
2.7.3	British citizens’ representations of Europe and the EU	69
2.7.4	Performing Brexit-related identities.....	70
2.7.5	Articulating discrimination after the EU referendum vote	70
2.8	Chapter conclusion.....	72
3	Methodology	73
3.1	Introduction	73
3.2	Collection of the media corpora	73
3.2.1	Choosing specific newspapers	76
3.2.2	Collecting the newspaper data	78
3.2.3	Downsampling the data.....	80
3.3	Composition of the media corpora	84

3.3.1	Representativeness of the subcorpora	84
3.4	Collection of the government subcorpora.....	87
3.4.1	Production processes of government documents.....	88
3.4.2	Rationale for collecting government data	91
3.5	Lay accounts of Brexit and identity: data collection.....	93
3.6	Corpus linguistics.....	99
3.6.1	Corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis (CA-CDA)	99
3.6.2	CA-CDA of media and political discourses.....	102
3.6.3	Diachronic corpus-assisted discourse analysis.....	103
3.6.4	Key semantic domain analysis.....	104
3.7	The corpus-assisted discourse analytical framework	107
3.7.1	Introduction: a tripartite analytical framework	107
3.7.2	Macro-linguistic analysis: analysing semantic domains related to national identity in the media and government corpora.....	108
3.7.3	Meso-level analysis: diachronic mapping of concordance lines.....	111
3.7.4	Micro-linguistic analysis: social actor and action representation	112
3.8	Narratives in oral interviews.....	113
3.9.1.	Defining narratives: personal experience and identity	113
3.9.2.	Existing studies of narratives of personal experience focusing on identity	115
3.9.3.	Big and small stories	116
3.9.4.	Story genres: an alternative approach.....	118
3.9.5.	Identifying and analysing stories: a thematic approach to identity construction	122
3.9	Conclusion.....	124
4	From Unity to Disunity: Pro-Brexit newspaper representations of the UK, Europe, and the EU	125
4.1	Introduction	125
4.2	Constructing Britain and Europe in the early post-referendum years (2016-2017).....	125
4.2.2.	The Alive semantic domain.....	127
4.3.	Constructing Britain and Europe in the later post-referendum years (2018-2019).....	140
4.3.1.	The Polite semantic domain	140
4.3.2.	The No Respect semantic domain	147
4.4.	Conclusion.....	170
5	Best friends and allies? Constructing Britain and Europe in UK government documents	175
5.1.	Introduction	175
5.2.	Britain, Europe, and the world in UK Government documents: a diachronic analysis ..	176
5.2.2	The Alive semantic domain.....	177
5.2.3.	The Personal Relationship: General Domain	202
5.3.	Conclusion.....	220
6	‘I still felt British’: Discursive constructions of Britain and Britishness in public opinion.....	223
6.1.	Introduction	223
6.2.	Political identities: Stories about Brexit, Britain, and the EU	225
6.2.1.	Nostalgia.....	225
6.2.2.	Division and inequality.....	232
6.3.	National identities: Stories about being British in the time of Brexit.....	239
6.4.	Conclusion.....	262

7 Concluding Discussion.....	267
7.1 Introduction	267
7.2 Shared representations of Britain and EU-rope.....	267
7.2.1 A discourse of difference.....	267
7.2.2 British decline.....	269
7.2.3 British division	270
7.3 Differences in representations of Britain and EU-rope	274
7.3.1 British victims and EU bullies, or best friends and allies? The UK-EU relationship	274
7.3.2 The nation and national identity	277
7.3.3 The myth of the tolerant Briton	279
7.3.4 A great global trading nation?	280
7.4 Conceptualisations of Brexit.....	282
7.5 A shared narrative?.....	284
7.6 A new national identity narrative? Brexit as a destabilising force	287
7.7. Methodological reflections.....	290
7.8. Avenues for future research	295
7.9. Concluding comment	297
References.....	299
Appendix A: Corpora composition	342
Appendix B: Transcription conventions.....	344
Appendix C: Selected extracts for stimulus task	345
Appendix D: Example informed consent form	347
Appendix E: Interview plan	348

Abstract

Identities, particularly national identities, played a decisive role in the United Kingdom's European Union membership referendum of 2016 (Ashcroft and Bevir, 2016; Browne, 2017). In fact, Koegler, Malreddy and Tronicke (2020) argue that no recent political event has had as much influence on British narratives of national and transnational identities as Brexit. This thesis is the first to diachronically explore the role of discourses of British and European identities in the Brexit process across three data sets: pro-Brexit newspapers, UK government documents, and interviews with individual Leave and Remain voters.

Using a unique combination of corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis and a discourse analysis of narratives, the thesis investigates how Britain and Europe are discursively constructed and positioned in relation to each other in the three data sets. It questions what national identity narratives for Britain are identified across the data sets, and what their democratic implications are.

The analyses reveal that there is a complementary narrative of national division and decline that pervades the three data sets, which poses a threat to British identity at a time when the construction of a collective identity is likely to be paramount. The image of Brexit Britain that emerges is of a politically, socio-economically, geographically divided nation. This representation is not only a direct contradiction of the great global trading nation narrative that the Vote Leave campaigners – and later the UK Government – promised, but it is also at odds with what one might expect given the purposes of the institutional texts: to present an argument in favour of Brexit Britain.

Ultimately, the findings suggest that the transition from pre- to post-Brexit Britain was a crucial period of destabilisation for institutional and lay national identity narratives. They also illustrate that the next few years are likely to be just as important: the UK is forging its post-Brexit place in the world amid declining levels of trust in politicians (Curtice and

Montagu, 2020), increasing devolution anxiety in England (Henderson and Wyn Jones, 2021), and calls for a second Scottish independence referendum. The mid-2020s are likely to be a tumultuous time for Britain, and a stable national identity narrative which resonates with citizens will undoubtedly be important to political officials to fend off threats to the domestic Union and to attract international partners. The question will be if, and how, the UK can progress from a widespread narrative of national disunity and decline to one of unity and influence.

*To Grumps,
who always took a keen interest in my education*

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the continued support of my mum, who has allowed me to run half-baked ideas by her and has been there through tears of frustration and joy. I am indebted to her for everything and will be forever grateful for her encouragement. I am also eternally grateful to my grandmother, who made sure I attended school every day and supported my education – without you, I would not have developed the love for education that I have today. I would also like to thank my boyfriend, Connor, for his endless patience and sacrifices while I finished my thesis, for always being there to listen when things felt overwhelming, and for reminding me that it is important to have a life outside of academia. Additionally, I would like to thank my cats, Daisy, Willow, and Jasmine, for the cuddles that have kept me company while writing this thesis.

There are few words of thanks that could adequately express my gratitude towards my supervisors, Dr Kevin Harvey, Dr Daniel Hunt, and Dr Jennifer Birks for their kindness and support over the past three years. I would like to thank them for building me up when my confidence was lacking, always championing my research, and not losing faith in my ability to finish on time when I took on yet another project! I am deeply thankful that Daniel saw the potential in my thesis idea when I first presented it to him as an MA student and supported me to apply for the PhD. I am also very grateful for Kevin's support as I pursue postdoctoral research avenues. Finally, thanks must also go to Midlands4Cities for the financial support that enabled me to complete this thesis.

Publications based on the work in this thesis

Parnell, T. (2023). The representation of migrant identities in UK Government documents about Brexit: a corpus-assisted analysis. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 22(1): 46-65.

Parnell, T. (2023). Humiliating and dividing the nation in the British pro-Brexit press: A corpus-assisted analysis. *Critical Discourse Studies*. 20(1): 53-69. [Published Online First in 2021].

Parnell, T. (2022). Unravelling the Global Britain vision? International relationships and national identity in UK Government documents about Brexit, 2016-2019. *Discourse & Society*. 33(3): 391-410.

1 Introduction

The EU is already planning its next power grab. The EU commission has already published its plans for the next EU treaty in the Five Presidents' Report. This will transfer a huge amount more power to Brussels – including over our taxes. The UK stands to lose out hugely – we will lose even more control and money and our public services like the NHS will be under even more strain. The Eurocrats are just waiting to get our referendum out of the way before pushing ahead with the new treaty to take even more money and power. This is our last chance to take back control – there is no status quo on offer (Vote Leave, 2016: n.p.).

1.1 Introduction

British politicians, journalists, and citizens continue to talk about Brexit¹ and its effects some six years after the United Kingdom (UK) voted to leave the European Union (EU). At the time of writing (January 2022), Conservative MP Jacob Rees-Mogg has become Minister of State for Brexit Opportunities and Government Efficiency. This role will see him try to outline the benefits of leaving the EU for the UK. The appointment comes just weeks after the release of a report published by the UK government which 'sets out how the UK is capitalising on the benefits of Brexit' (Cabinet Office, 2022: n.p.). In one respect, this thesis shares an aim with the UK government: it seeks to consider the implications of Brexit. However, its focus is directed towards the effect of Brexit on the representations of British and European identities. It considers these identity representations as they appear in pro-Brexit British newspapers,

¹ 'Brexit' is a blend of *Britain/British* and *exit*. It was first used in 2010 but increased in usage around 2016 when it was used to refer to Britain's withdrawal from the European Union (Mair, 2019).

political documents, and interviews with people who live or have lived in Nottinghamshire. Fundamentally, the thesis illustrates that Brexit is a site of discursive contestation within which debates play out about who “we” are and who “they” are. In other words, it contends that ‘different understandings of the various national identities based in the UK are [...] part of the story of Brexit’ (Ashcroft and Bevir, 2016: 356). The thesis traces diachronic shifts in the representation of British and European identities as the Brexit process extends. It explores the relationship between identity representations and their socio-political contexts, considering their potential democratic consequences. To begin, the thesis explores the contextual background to Brexit: where are we now, and how did we get here? This information, which constitutes a timeline and contextual point of reference for readers, is paramount for understanding the texts and surrounding contexts that will be analysed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

1.2 The contextual background to Brexit

The criticisms levelled at the EU during the official Vote Leave campaign of 2016 were not new. British discontent with the idea of a European union was voiced as early as 1973 when the United Kingdom joined the Common Market, and the Eurosceptic² sentiment persisted through to June 1975, when Labour leader Harold Wilson held the first referendum on whether the UK should stay in the then European Community. Although the Yes campaign prevailed in 1975 and the UK remained part of the Community, some British politicians continued to be sceptical of European integration. For example, in 1988 the then British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher delivered her famous Bruges speech, in which she rallied against a ‘super-

² Harmsen and Spiering (2004: 16) argue that ‘the most common British usages of the term “Eurosceptic”’ imply ‘an opposition to UK membership of the European Union and its antecedents, rather than a milder lack of enthusiasm for the project’. They posit that British Euroscepticism goes beyond opposition to European integration and is ‘rooted in a deeper sense of a (Franco-German dominated) Continent as ‘the Other’ (2004: 16).

state exercising a new dominance from Brussels’ (Thatcher, 1988: n.p.). Echoes of this fear of European domination could be heard from the mouths of Leave-backing politicians almost thirty years later, when they warned that ‘the EU is already planning its next power grab’ (Vote Leave, 2016: n.p.).

As the European project established its goal of ever-closer union in 1993 by introducing EU citizenship through the Maastricht Treaty, the UK negotiated opt-outs: notably, politicians refrained from joining the euro and adhering to a “social chapter” of integration. Although this established a precedence for the UK’s role as the EU’s “awkward partner” (George, 1990), it did little to quell the Eurosceptic sentiment burgeoning on the backbenches of the House of Commons. A similar inability to silence the Eurosceptic faction of his party afflicted the then British Prime Minister David Cameron in 2013. Growing public support for the Eurosceptic United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) was affecting the polls, and Cameron could no longer ignore the concerns about the EU that were dividing his party, the Conservatives. In his so-called Bloomberg speech, delivered in January of that year, Cameron announced his intention to hold a second referendum on the UK’s EU membership if the Conservatives won the 2015 General Election. His party was elected, and he fulfilled his promise.

On 22 February 2016, Cameron announced the date for the EU referendum to the House of Commons. The public would vote on 23 June of that year. Before this announcement, he had been engaged in a series of renegotiations with the EU to reach a more favourable deal for the UK that would allow it to remain part of the Union. The renegotiated deal was criticised for failing to secure the concessions Cameron had demanded, particularly in limiting free movement (Glencross, 2016). In the following months, political campaigns vied for public attention and support. Britain Stronger in Europe, the official Remain campaign group supported by David Cameron, sought to persuade voters to remain in the EU based largely on the claim that it would be better for the British economy (Zappettini, 2019). Meanwhile, the

official Vote Leave campaign, spearheaded by Conservative MPs Michael Gove and Boris Johnson, and Labour MP Gisela Stuart, told the public that leaving the EU would save the UK £350 million a week, ensure the country had control over its borders, and allow the UK to produce and apply its own laws (Vote Leave, 2016). Those who supported remaining in the EU accused Leavers of lying about the money the UK would save by leaving. This accusation was later supported by the independent fact-checker Full Fact, which concluded that the £350 million figure was incorrect (Full Fact, 2017). Those who wanted to leave accused Remainers of embarking on “Project Fear” by catastrophising the effects of withdrawing the UK’s membership (see, for example, Habib, 2019; Elphicke, 2019). After weeks of intense campaigning, Britons went to the polls.

On 24 June 2016, the public in Britain awoke to the news that by a slight margin, the nation had voted to leave the EU. Both the campaigns and the result revealed ‘deep disunity among citizens and widespread distrust of authority’ (Wincott, 2019: 15). The UK’s countries were divided: while Wales and England had voted to leave, Scotland and Northern Ireland had opted to remain. Remain votes were particularly prominent in London: ‘seven out of the 10 areas with the highest share of the Remain vote were in London, including Lambeth, Hackney and Haringey’ (BBC, 2021a: n.p.). In terms of regions, the West Midlands had the ‘highest vote share for Leave’, followed closely by the East Midlands (BBC, 2021a: n.p.). As the UK began a three-year period of negotiations to consolidate a process that had yet to be attempted by any country, Scotland’s First Minister Nicola Sturgeon declared that Brexit could precipitate another Scottish independence referendum (BBC, 2016a).

As a result of the referendum, David Cameron resigned, contrary to his promise to remain in office. Standing outside 10 Downing Street, he declared that the UK needed ‘fresh leadership’ to guide it through its withdrawal from the EU (BBC, 2016b: n.p.). He was succeeded in July 2016 by Conservative MP and former Home Secretary Theresa May. May

wrote to the European Council President Donald Tusk on 29 March 2017 to trigger Article 50 – the legal mechanism for leaving the EU – setting in motion the UK’s withdrawal. To secure a stronger mandate for her Brexit plans, she called a general election on 18 April 2017, with the date set for 8 June. Expecting a majority, May’s hopes were dashed when the election resulted in a hung Parliament (that is, no political party won a majority) just two weeks before the first round of UK-EU negotiations began.

The first UK-EU negotiation took place on 19 June 2017. Over the next year, the UK and the EU would meet countless times to discuss the terms of Britain’s withdrawal, with both sides releasing statements to the media and public after each round. On 26 June 2018, the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill received Royal Assent and became an Act of Parliament. Although this gave the illusion that progress was being made, there was internal division over the UK’s approach to negotiations. On 9 July 2018, Brexit Secretary David Davis resigned, telling BBC journalists he felt the UK was ‘giving away too much and too easily’ to the EU (Walker, 2021: 32; BBC, 2018a). Conservative MP Dominic Raab took his place on the same day. However, Raab’s tenure was to last only four months: he resigned in November, a day after the publication of the Withdrawal Agreement that May had negotiated and published with EU leaders. Raab stated that he opposed May’s deal. Several other ministers, including the then Junior Brexit Minister Suella Braverman, resigned alongside him.

In January 2019, May’s plans were set back further by an amendment which meant that if the Government lost a meaningful vote on her Withdrawal Agreement in mid-January, she would have to present an alternative “Plan B” deal within three days. (A meaningful vote is a unique parliamentary vote that offers Parliament a more ‘proactive’ role than it typically would have in ratifying international agreements [UK Parliament, 2018: n.p.]). When the meaningful vote on May’s deal took place, the Government suffered a substantial defeat, losing by a majority of 230. She presented her “Plan B” Brexit deal to the House of Commons on 21

January 2019, outlining six key issues that were at the centre of cross-party talks about the UK's withdrawal. These issues included concerns about the possibility of leaving without a deal, a second referendum, the Northern Ireland backstop, and the political declaration. A second meaningful vote took place on 12 March. The Government once again lost; a majority of 149 voted against the deal. As Parliament did not support May's deal, an extension to the withdrawal process became inevitable.

The first extension was announced on 15 March 2019. A day later, May wrote in the *Sunday Telegraph* that it would be patriotic for MPs to vote in favour of her alternative Brexit deal. Despite her pleas for patriotism, the Prime Minister wrote to request an extension to the Article 50 period until 30 June 2019. On 21 March, after eight hours of talks, the European Council agreed to an extension until 22 May 2019 if the Withdrawal Agreement was approved by MPs in a week, or 12 April 2019 with further indications of a way forward if the Agreement was rejected. As the deal was rejected, 12 April became the new exit day. The second extension to the withdrawal process came on 5 April, when May asked Donald Tusk to move the exit day to 30 June 2019. The UK and EU27 agreed that an extension of Article 50 would last until 30 October 2019, with the possibility of an earlier withdrawal if both sides ratified an agreement before then. With this extension guaranteed, Theresa May announced her resignation. In her departing speech, she told the public that it would 'always remain a matter of deep regret' to her that she had 'not been able to deliver Brexit' (Walker, 2021: 60). After winning the Conservative Party leadership race, former Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson became the UK's third prime minister since the EU referendum had been announced.

Johnson faced several challenges on the road to delivering Brexit. One of the most significant challenges was Labour MP Hilary Benn's Bill, presented with support from other politicians on 2 September 2019. The Bill established two deadlines. It set 19 October 2019 as the date by which Johnson would have to pass a Withdrawal Agreement, convince MPs to

agree to a no-deal Brexit, or request yet another extension from the EU. If the latter became a reality, the proposed deadline for leaving the EU would be 31 January 2020.

On 9 September, the Benn Act became law. The same day, Boris Johnson officially prorogued Parliament. The prorogation was intended to last until the state opening of Parliament on 14 October 2019. However, just two days after Parliament prorogued, the Court of Session in Scotland ruled that the Prime Minister's decision to suspend Parliament was unlawful. On 17 September, the Supreme Court in London began a three-day hearing into a case brought by activist Gina Miller, who argued that the suspension of Parliament in the current uncertain climate was an 'unlawful abuse of power' (Walker, 2021: 66). A week later, the Supreme Court justices passed a unanimous judgement that the decision to advise Queen Elizabeth II to prorogue Parliament was unlawful because it frustrated Parliament's ability to 'carry out its constitutional functions without reasonable justification' (Walker, 2021: 67). Although Boris Johnson condemned the judgement, Parliament sat again the next day.

Following the prorogation controversy, Independent MP Sir Oliver Letwin filed an amendment to withhold MPs' approval of Johnson's Brexit deal until the legislation to enact it was passed. This amendment would automatically trigger the Benn Act, forcing the Prime Minister to request an extension of Brexit until 31 January 2020. On 19 October 2019, the deadline that the Benn Act had established, the Letwin amendment passed by 322 votes to 306. The same day, the Prime Minister wrote to Donald Tusk to formally ask for an extension. He made clear that his correspondence was a legal formality and that he did not want an extension. To illustrate his discontent, he did not sign the photocopy of the request he was obliged to send and included a personal letter to Tusk explaining why he did not want to extend Article 50. Nevertheless, on 28 October, the European Council announced that an extension until 31 January 2020 had been granted.

Johnson held a general election on 12 December 2019. Unlike the previous election, the Conservative Party won a significant majority (365 seats), giving Johnson a mandate for his Brexit deal. Over the next month, his deal was debated in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Amendments were accepted, and the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill became an Act on 23 January 2020. The Act was the legislation that would implement the agreement negotiated by the UK and the EU. Accordingly, on 31 January 2020 at 11 pm, Britain officially left the European Union and entered a transition phase, which ended on 1 January 2021. The effects of Brexit did not end there; since exit day, there have been stumbling blocks between the UK and the EU in negotiating a trade deal (BBC, 2020) and in making Coronavirus vaccines available (BBC, 2021b). There will undoubtedly be further challenges and transitions as the UK and the EU navigate their new relationship, particularly around the border in the Irish sea, which continues to be an area of friction between both sides.

1.3 Identity and Brexit

The tumultuous period of political activity surrounding Brexit has been widely documented in national newspapers. Each political event has also been duly recorded by the government on its website. At each stage of the process, discussions about national identity have been omnipresent. By national identity, I mean a kind of collective social identity that is discursively constructed and relational (Triandafyllidou, 1998), ‘a common complex of ideas, concepts or perception schemes’ that are intersubjectively shared and internalised through socialisation processes (de Cillia, Reisigl & Wodak, 1999: 153) (See Section 2.3.2). Within these discussions of national identity, the government has set out its vision for a “truly Global Britain” (Raab, 2019), Scottish politicians have discussed a second independence referendum (Carrell, 2019), and national and regional news outlets have written about the need to address

national identity in the UK context (e.g., Cockburn, 2018; Winder, 2018; ITV Central, 2020). Questions of identity and belonging have also arisen at an individual level, as minority ethnic social groups have faced discrimination and calls to “go home” (Home Office, 2019; Keith, 2019). Through these discussions of nationhood and belonging, an already emotive political process has drawn greater significance for national identities in the UK.

Koegler, Malreddy and Tronicke (2020) argue that no recent political event has had as much influence on British narratives of national and transnational identity as Brexit. Browne (2017: 89) agrees, claiming that the ‘underlying causes of the Leave vote’ can be ‘found in the issue of identity – national identity, regional identity and in the individual sense of self worth [sic] and identity’. In this thesis, I understand identity to mean who people construct themselves to be in relation to how they construct others (see Section 2.2.7). Part of the discussion about identity and Brexit has been taken up by researchers who have sought to characterise who was more likely to vote Leave or Remain and why the nation, when taken as a whole, opted to leave the EU. Studies have found that geography and education were key factors influencing the way that a person voted in the referendum (e.g., Green, 2017; Hobolt, 2016; Jump and Michell, 2021). According to YouGov (2016), 70% of voters whose educational attainment is GCSE or lower voted Leave, while 68% of degree holders voted Remain. Age was also an important factor: 64% of voters over the age of 65 voted Leave, while only 36% voted Remain (YouGov, 2016). For under-25s, the pattern was reversed: 71% of voters from this age group elected to remain in the EU (YouGov, 2016). In sum, there were clear educational, geographical, and age-related divisions in the way British people voted in the EU membership referendum.

Another common, identity-related interpretation of the Leave vote is that it reflected national discontent and division; it was a ‘vote against London, globalisation and multiculturalism’, in the words of Calhoun (2017: 57). The nation in this interpretation is not the UK, despite the ramifications of Brexit for all its constituent countries. Rather, it is England:

the country which contributed the highest proportion of Leave votes in the referendum (Calhoun, 2017). According to this view, England is divided between cosmopolitan centres with high investment such as London, and areas which have been left behind economically and politically, such as ‘the vanished industry of the North’ and the Southwest (Calhoun, 2017: 59; Jennings and Stoker, 2016; Hobolt, 2016). The referendum reflected these socio-economic divisions – with London voting Remain and most English counties voting Leave (YouGov, 2016) – but also cemented them. As Gifford (2017: 15) recognises, ‘Europe was used to reinforce and essentialise those divisions and to create new ones’. That is, following the referendum, attitudes towards Europe became the basis for supposedly new divisions in the UK. With those “new” divisions came new nouns to describe people based on their attitudes towards the referendum: “Brexiters”, “Remainers” and even “Remoaners” (Charteris-Black, 2019). The identities of Remainder and Leaver have now developed into a political cleavage in the UK, with Britons expressing greater allegiance to these identity labels than traditional political parties (Kelley, 2019).

While the interpretation of Brexit as an expression of national discontent has weight, it is also true that campaigners and members of the public communicated concrete concerns about the inner workings of the EU and the effect these had on British identity. For example, immigration was such a key concern in the referendum campaign that Geddes (2017: 18) asserted in an early analysis of the referendum that ‘if about one thing, the 2016 referendum was about immigration’. In the year before the referendum campaign, British newspapers had been reporting consistently on a “migrant crisis” in Europe. Thousands of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants had been arriving in EU countries, and for the year ending June 2015, the net migration of EU citizens and non-EU citizens to the UK had increased by a statistically significant amount (ONS, 2015). The long-term international migration figure for the UK in the year ending 2015 was +336,000, an increase of 82,000 on the previous year (ONS, 2015).

The Vote Leave campaign drew on the rising immigration figures in 2016, asserting that a vote to leave the EU would mean ‘we can control immigration’ (Vote Leave, 2016: n.p.). Such assertions represented rising immigration as a problem with EU membership and a Leave vote was pitched as the means through which Britain could avoid increasing its net migration further. As the Vote Leave campaign motto implied, then, Brexit was partly a vote for the UK to ‘Take Back Control’ of immigration from the EU (Vote Leave, 2016: n.p.). Although the immigration argument has been condemned as an expression of racism and xenophobia (Khalili, 2017), it was also sometimes rooted in economic concerns. White British school leavers – referred to as identity conservatives by Ford and Sobolewska (2020) – worried that immigrants would accept lower wages than they could afford, inevitably pushing (white) British workers out of the job market (Hearn, 2017). Fenton (2012) refers to this phenomenon as resentful nationalism. The argument that white, working-class British workers were the core drivers of the Leave vote is, however, contested (Bhambra, 2017): ‘Leave voters among the elite and middle classes were crucial to the final [EU referendum] outcome’ (Virdee and McGeever, 2018: 1803).

The motto ‘Take Back Control’ pointed to a second, related concern about the EU that was voiced during the referendum campaign: that the EU compromised Britain’s sovereignty, a central tenet of its national identity narrative (Vote Leave, 2016: n.p.; Mautner, 2001). Sovereignty refers to Parliament’s position as the ‘supreme legal authority in the UK’ and its power to ‘create or end any law’ (UK Parliament, n.d.: n.p.). The pro-Leave argument was that the UK’s EU membership jeopardised its parliamentary sovereignty because the European Court of Justice could supersede British law when it contradicted European laws (Ringeisen-Biardeaud, 2017). The only way to regain British sovereignty, campaigners argued, was to leave the EU. This proposition was made both by journalists and politicians. For example, the Business Editor of *The Telegraph* argued that ‘the Brexit vote is about the supremacy of

Parliament’ (Pritchard, 2016: n.p.), while Conservative MP Boris Johnson claimed that voting to Remain would cause the ‘erosion of parliamentary democracy in this country’ (Johnson, 2016: n.p.). The Vote Leave campaign reiterated the sovereignty argument in its online briefing, where it labelled as ‘fact’ the declaration that ‘EU law is supreme over UK law’ and that this situation ‘stops the British public from being able to vote out those who make our laws’ (Vote Leave: 2016: n.p.).³

Claims about political sovereignty were closely tied to a third concern voiced in the EU referendum: that the EU is bureaucratic, which runs counter to the popular construction of the UK as a democracy. A month before the referendum, *The Telegraph* published an opinion piece with the headline, ‘The EU bureaucrats cannot cope with democracy’ (Telegraph, 2016: n.p.). Around the same time, the Leave campaign referred to the EU model as ‘1950s bureaucratic centralism’ and ‘this bureaucracy over which we have so little influence’ (Vote Leave, 2016: n.p.). When talking about EU bureaucrats, politicians were largely referring to the European Commission, whose officials are not directly elected but are proposed by national governments (BBC, 2016c). Accusations regarding the EU’s undemocratic bureaucracy intensified concerns for sovereignty, as it was not just European laws taking precedence over British laws, but also unelected European officials making decisions for Britain. Through these acts, the EU allegedly undermined the UK’s position as a democracy.

Together, the three related concerns of immigration, sovereignty, and bureaucracy reveal that in addition to expressing national discontent, the Leave vote reflected concerns about the power dynamic in the UK-EU relationship. In other words, at the heart of Brexit were contested representations of Britain and Britishness and Europe and Europeanness, as well as concerns over how the two pairs of identities related to one another both at the level of international relations and at the local level of individual encounters.

³ See Rone (2022) for an insight into the role of sovereignty in citizen campaigns and street protests about Brexit.

Although identity has been a core concern throughout the Brexit process – and has been dissected quantitatively by scholars of political science to determine who voted for which outcome – its (re)production and performance have surprisingly not been the subject of many qualitative studies. Among the plethora of existing Brexit-related projects, there *has* been some linguistic work considering national identity within the domains of political debate (Wenzl, 2019), nation branding (Wenzl, 2020), and political cartoons (Lennon and Kilby, 2020). For example, Wenzl’s (2019) study reveals that the construction of national identity between Leave and Remain supporters in the Conservative party did not vary substantially, as Remain-voting politicians depicted Britain as culturally distinct from the EU. Similarly, her analysis of nation branding uncovers that Remain voters’ representations of Britishness perpetuated the ‘same cultural narratives about Britishness as the Leave side’ (Wenzl, 2020: 73). Meanwhile, Lennon and Kilby (2020) find that in political cartoons, Brexit is repeatedly framed as a domestic issue rather than one which the UK and the EU must work together to address. In addition to these studies, there is also an emerging body of sociological literature that examines interviews with immigrants to assess the impact of Brexit rhetoric on their feelings of belonging (Lahuerta and Iusmen, 2019; Guma and Dafydd Jones, 2018; Tyrrell et al., 2018; Vathi and Trandafoiu, 2022).

A smaller number of geographical and sociological studies have interviewed Britons to examine their performance of identities during discussions about Brexit (for instance, Bromley-Davenport, MacLeavy and Manley, 2018; Davies, 2021). In their study of older, working-class white men in Sunderland, for example, Bromley-Davenport et al. (2018: 808) rightly conclude that ‘we need to unpack how different types of voters are borne from individual lived experiences and perceptions’ and not assume that ‘the country is comprised of just two types of people – Leavers and Remainers’. Until this thesis, however, there has been no single study that considers the diachronic representation of both British and European identities and their

interrelations within the press, politics, and public opinion. There is a great need for such a panoptic study, given that the EU referendum result was largely based on ‘whether [voters took] a more cosmopolitan or relatively insular view of Britain’s place in Europe’ (UCL, 2021: n.p.), a personal perspective which is undoubtedly influenced by media outlets and politicians who have long communicated the inner workings of the EU system to British citizens (Oberhuber et al., 2005).

1.4 Research questions and thesis outline

The present study examines government texts, pro-Brexit newspaper articles and interviews with members of the public. It is the first of its kind to consider how citizens, politicians and journalists discursively construct Britishness and Europeanness in relation to Brexit and how their representations of these identities converge or diverge. In doing so, it aims to chart the negotiation of British and European identities across three salient sites of political discourse over time and to understand the relationships between them. The empirical contribution of this thesis therefore derives from discursively exploring identity mobilisation in relation to Brexit (which is a socio-political issue), building on and taking forward the large body of work on the subject (see, *inter alia*, Zappettini and Krzyżanowski, 2020).

The aims of the study pose challenges in terms of both the scope and volume of data and the need to account for the complex ways in which national and supranational⁴ identities are negotiated. To achieve the necessary breadth and depth, the combination of corpus linguistics and (critical) discourse analysis is adopted (see Chapter 3 for definitions of these terms). While (critical) discourse analysis affords a means of understanding the social and ideological discourses refracted through the different data in this study, corpus linguistic methods provide

⁴ ‘Supranational’ refers to a unit that transcends national boundaries.

the opportunity to systematically interrogate large volumes of government and media data. Critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics have often been combined to study identity construction in media discourses (e.g., Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008; Zottola, 2021), but these methods are seldom combined with an analysis of interviews with citizens. In other words, within critical discourse analytical studies, there is a tendency to (unintentionally) exclude the voices of “ordinary people” from the analysis (Slembrouck, 2001). As well as providing empirical findings about identity construction during the Brexit process, then, this thesis contributes methodologically to the area of corpus-assisted critical discourse studies.

Drawing closely on the socio-political context outlined above, the three analysis chapters in this thesis examine the discursive construction of supra-national identities in the context of Brexit in pro-Brexit newspapers (Chapter 4), UK government documents (e.g., policy papers, speeches) (Chapter 5), and semi-structured interviews with UK citizens (Chapter 6). These three analytical chapters are anchored around two core research questions:

- (1) How are Britain and Europe discursively constructed and positioned in relation to each other in pro-Brexit newspapers, government documents, and semi-structured interviews with British citizens?
- (2) What national identity narratives for Britain are identified across the data sets, and what are their democratic implications?

The study is divided into seven chapters, three of which are analytical. Chapter 2 is concerned with defining the theoretical concepts that underpin the thesis, such as discourse, power, and ideologies, as well as the nation, identity, and Britishness. It goes on to survey the existing literature that inspects the representation of Britain and Europe in the British press, politics,

and public opinion. Chapter 3 considers the collection of the three data sets and outlines the methods through which the data is analysed: corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis, and a discourse analysis of narratives.

Chapter 4 is the first analytical chapter. It investigates the discursive construction of British and European identities in five pro-Brexit national newspapers using corpus-assisted critical discourse analytical methods. The analysis reveals a shift from the representation of British unity to widespread disunity as the Brexit process extends. Chapter 5 complements Chapter 4 methodologically, as it offers a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis of the construction of national identities in UK government documents. The linguistic dissection of the documents uncovers a change in the way that Anglo-European relations are envisioned, from unity through shared hard and soft power, to disintegrating trust.

In Chapter 6, a discourse analysis of narratives produced in fifteen semi-structured interviews provides a view of individual constructions of Britishness and Europeaness. It demonstrates that there are multiple, co-existing imagined national communities (Anderson, 2006) and that the experience of being British depends on the places and spaces occupied by characters. The thesis draws to a close in Chapter 7 with a discussion of the similarities and differences between the findings across the data sets, the methodological advances of the approaches taken to the data, and some concluding remarks on possible avenues for future research. The core conclusion of the thesis is that there is a consistent narrative of national division that pervades the three data sets, which poses a threat to British identity at a time when the construction of a collective identity is likely to be paramount.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the key theoretical concepts with which this thesis is concerned and discusses the existing research into British, European, and extra-European (the EU's term for non-EU countries) identities on which my study is founded. To this end, the chapter is resolved into two main parts: Sections 2.2-2.3 provide definitions of discourse, critical discourse analysis, power and nationhood and outline the social constructionist approach through which national and supranational identities are understood throughout the thesis. Sections 2.4-2.7 more closely reflect the organisation of the thesis's analysis chapters and explore the existing academic literature that addresses how politicians, news sources, and individuals living in the UK and Europe construct national and supranational identities. Throughout these sections, I aim to synthesise an array of historical, linguistic, political, and sociological research to provide a thorough consideration of the ways in which national and supranational identities have been examined over the past three decades. In doing so, I explicitly identify how this thesis builds on existing research, providing a more comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the representations of Britishness and Europeanness in the pro-Brexit press, governmental discourses, and interviews with members of the public than has previously been conducted.

2.2 Discourse

2.2.1 *Defining discourse*

Definitions of discourse abound in a variety of disciplines, from linguistics to social psychology, to cultural theory. As each definition differs, the term can seem confusing (Fairclough, 1995) and fuzzy (van Dijk, 1997). In linguistics, discourse has been understood variously as language in use (Brown and Yule, 1983), language in action (Blommaert, 2005), and language above the level of the sentence (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975). Within the critical discourse analytical tradition, discourse refers not just to situated language use, but to social practice, too (Burr, 2015; Fairclough, 2015). In other words, discourse is ‘a socially constructed knowledge of some social practice’ (van Leeuwen, 2008: 6).

In this thesis, ‘discourse’ is interpreted as a highly loaded term with multiple meanings, that refers not just to ‘groups of signs’ but to ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak’ (Foucault, 1969/2002: 54). The definition that is closest to my understanding of discourse is taken from Burr (2015: 74-5): ‘a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events’. Discourse producers depict the material, mental and social worlds from a particular ideological perspective (Fairclough, 2003; Fairclough, 2011). Each discourse constitutes only one ‘particular version’ of the world; competing discourses produce divergent representations of processes, objects, and identities (Burr, 2015: 32). In other words, ‘around any given object or concept there are likely to be multiple ways of constructing it, reflecting the fact that humans are diverse creatures’ (Baker, 2006: 4). As Mills (1997: 17) notes, discourses ‘do not exist in a vacuum but are in constant conflict with other discourses and other social practices’. Brexit is one example of a process subjected to various representations: it is a site of discursive

contestation whereby discourse producers within and outside of the UK construct different images of Britain and its withdrawal from the EU (Adler-Nissen, Galpin and Rosamond, 2017).⁵

In discourse-analytical studies, ‘discourse’ has a secondary meaning; it refers to the language associated with a particular text genre, such as newspaper articles or political speeches (Fairclough, 2011; Partington, Duguid and Taylor, 2013). Newspaper articles are a type of media discourse, which is a manufactured interaction that is broadcast and oriented to non-present readers or viewers on a mass scale (O’Keeffe, 2012). Political speeches are part of political discourse, a single, uncontested definition of which does not exist. Political discourse is often interpreted as ‘the text and talk of professional politicians or political institutions [...] at the local, national, and international levels’ (van Dijk, 1997: 12). However, as van Dijk (1997) notes, politicians are not the only people involved in politics; in a democracy, citizens also act politically. With this caveat in mind, a broad definition of political discourse would include the text and talk of all people involved in political processes when their talk relates to political actions, such as legislating, protesting, or voting (van Dijk, 1997). As this definition highlights, context is integral to identifying discourses: the text and talk of politicians only constitute political discourse if they relate to the domain of politics. The definition also recognises that discourses are language-in-action (Gee, 2001). That is, discourses go beyond the language as a static element of a text, to incorporate the ways in which ‘semiotic instruments are actually deployed’ and work together to produce meaning in society (Blommaert, 2005: 3). In this thesis, both the primary and secondary meanings of ‘discourse’ will be applied; context will differentiate between the two uses.

⁵ See Brusenbauch Meislová, Koller, Kopf et al. (2021) for an introduction to a special issue on representations of Brexit from outside of the UK.

2.2.2 *Defining critical discourse analysis (CDA)*

Critical discourse analysis is an analytical practice that investigates how social inequality is represented, constructed, and legitimised both explicitly and implicitly in discourse (Wodak, 2001a; van Dijk, 2015). It is concerned with the interplay between relationships of power, discrimination, history, and ideology as they are constructed in language and social practice (Wodak, 2001a). There is no single way of doing critical discourse analysis, as is demonstrated by the different approaches taken by eminent CDA scholars Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk and Ruth Wodak. Although these authors conduct critical analysis differently, they share the view that language both shapes and is shaped by society (Machin and Mayr, 2012).

Critical discourse studies are ‘committed to political intervention and social change’ (Machin and Mayr, 2012: 4). The adjective ‘critical’ alludes to the intention to denaturalise language to reveal taken-for-granted assumptions (Machin and Mayr, 2012), and to take an explicitly political stance on the data (Wodak, 2001a). It also reflects the role of CDA in asking *how* and *why* discourse works in a particular way (Fairclough, 2015). CDA studies share three underlying assertions: that ‘discourse is structured by dominance’, that every discourse is ‘situated in time and space’, and that powerful groups, such as politicians and news organisations, legitimate dominance structures through their ideologies (Wodak, 2001a: 3). At the core of these three principles is an interest in the roles of context and power. Given the interest in power and dominance that underpins CDA, the analytical focus is typically on institutional discourses or language produced by people with socio-political power, such as political and media actors.

2.2.3 *Faircloughian CDA and the Discourse-Historical Approach*

Despite the shared ground in CDA studies, there are clear distinctions in the way that notable scholars approach CDA. For instance, Faircloughian CDA is fundamentally interventionist; it envisions CDA as a step towards social emancipation because it raises awareness of how language contributes to domination (Fairclough, 2015). Fairclough (2015) argues that CDA should try to change the social reality in which discourse is produced and posits that this change depends on explaining and understanding how domination is upheld through discourse (Fairclough, 2015). Fairclough (2015) views his focus on explanatory critique – going beyond a critique of the text to explain relations between discourse and other social systems – as the primary difference between his version of CDA and other versions. He argues that explanatory critique provides a link between normative (text-internal) critique and transformative action that will change social reality (Fairclough, 2015).

An alternative version of CDA is the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), developed by Ruth Wodak and her colleagues. DHA has three interrelated elements: a text-immanent critique which identifies inconsistencies, contradictions, and paradoxes within discourse; a socio-diagnostic critique which uncovers the manipulative character of discourse by recourse to socio-political context; and a prognostic critique which tries to improve communication (Wodak, 2001b). Fairclough (2015) finds fault with the prognostic critique of DHA; he argues that because it only seeks to improve communication, it fails to drive a change in the social reality that contributes to discourse production. Arguably, however, subscribing to the view that discourse and social practice are dialectical, as Fairclough (2015) does, would imply that a shift in discourse involves a shift in social practice and so inevitably results in a change to social reality. The difference between the objectives of DHA and Faircloughian CDA is exemplified by Wodak's (2001b: 65) claim that CDA 'is not concerned with evaluating what

is right or wrong' compared with Fairclough's (2010: 7) assertion that critique 'focuses on what is wrong with a society [...] and how "wrongs" might be "righted" or mitigated'.

DHA is interdisciplinary and advocates collecting as much context as is available to interpret the data under analysis (Wodak, 2001b). Context is considered at four levels in DHA: the immediate co-text; intertextual and interdiscursive relationships between the data under analysis and other genres and discourses; extralinguistic variables and institutional frames; and broader socio-political and historical contexts (Wodak, 2001b). The collection of these different types of contextual information reflects the historical facet of the analysis: the focus is on placing discourse in its socio-political context and considering these text-external factors (Wodak, 2001b).

Much like other critical discourse analytical studies that employ key semantic domain analysis (Potts, 2015; Prentice, 2010; see Section 3.6.4), this thesis is aligned more closely with the DHA version of CDA than Fairclough's version of CDA. The analysis stresses the importance of contextual influences on discourse. It considers the interdiscursive relationship between earlier Eurosceptic discourses and the texts under analysis, as well as the influence of contemporary political events on the construction of national and supranational identities. Importantly, it also aligns more closely with DHA's focus on text-immanent, socio-diagnostic, and prognostic critiques than, for example, Fairclough's emphasis on transformative action (Wodak, 2001b; Fairclough, 2015).

This thesis is concerned with the contradictory nature of national identity construction and the socio-political influences on it, as well as with encouraging critical awareness of how discursive exclusion can contribute to social exclusion. However, I do not claim to be able to transform conceptualisations of national identity through the thesis. Rather, I hope that by highlighting and understanding the complexities of national identity construction, I can encourage critical reflection on the language used by institutions and individuals when

representing their national identities and the potential socio-political ramifications of their language use. Despite the closer alignment with DHA, the thesis does not adopt the DHA's categories of analysis, nor does it always explicitly use DHA terminology. Nevertheless, it does subscribe to the general DHA process of establishing central themes, investigating discursive strategies, and examining the linguistic realisation of those strategies (Prentice, 2010).

Despite the differences in the CDA approaches outlined above, there are shared methods for conducting micro-linguistic analysis. This is because critical discourse analysis grew out of Critical Linguistics, which itself drew upon Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Jahedi, Abdullah and Mukundan, 2014; Halliday, 1985). SFL is a complex system which identifies three types of meaning: the experiential, where language is used to talk about the world; the interpersonal, where language is used to interact with others; and the textual, where language is organised to fit its context (Thompson, 2013). As CDA studies are interested in representations of the world and social relationships, they often draw on the experiential meta-function, commonly examining transitivity patterns (Thompson, 2013). For example, there have been studies of transitivity patterns in headlines about the Battle for Tripoli in two newspapers (Seo, 2013), representations of non-protesters in a Greek newspaper (Stamou, 2001), and the construction of contemporary history in Chile and Spain (Oteíza and Pinto, 2008). CDA studies also frequently draw upon frameworks of social actor and social action representation, which provide socio-semantic resources to examine how people and processes are constructed in discourse (van Leeuwen, 1995; 2008). One example of an effective corpus-based critical discourse analytical study that adopts van Leeuwen's (1995; 2008) frameworks is Mulderrig's (2011) work on New Labour's educational governance.

2.2.4 Discourse and ideologies

Critical studies of discourse often examine ideologies, another term which has different interpretations depending on scholar, discipline, and study. According to Mills (1997: 28), discourse and ideology have been ‘defined in dialogue with and in reaction to’ one another. A socio-cognitive, discursive approach to ideologies defines them as a type of cognition shared by social groups which constitutes their belief systems and contributes to their social practices and shared representations of other groups (van Dijk, 2003). In other words, ideologies form the basis of group knowledge; they regulate and legitimise the values, truth criteria, opinions, and attitudes of a group (van Dijk, 1998). Importantly, ideologies are reproduced in social practice and are ‘acquired, confirmed, changed and perpetuated through discourse’ (van Dijk, 2006: 115). Examining the discourses that a social group produces, according to this understanding, reveals its shared beliefs about the characteristics of other groups and helps to understand how people relate to one another. Socio-cognitive approaches recognise that ideologies operate beyond the social group; they can be political ‘systems of ideas, values or prescriptions’ that have ‘the function of organising or legitimating the actions of the group’ (van Dijk, 1998: 13). That ideologies can be political systems highlights that they do not just structure relationships within social groups; they also organise relations between, *inter alia*, nations and members of a nation.

Critical discourse analysis adopts a similar understanding of ideologies. Fairclough (2015: 32), for example, states that ideologies are ‘representations of aspects of the real world’ that are ‘necessary to sustaining existing social relations and relations of power’. His definition elucidates the relationship between ideology and discourse: discourses are ideological because they manifest and reproduce representations of the world that maintain dichotomies of inclusion and exclusion, power and powerlessness. Fairclough’s (2015) use of the verb

‘sustaining’ reflects the intention in CDA to perform a critique of “common sense” representations of social relationships to reveal how discourses contribute to and exacerbate marginalisation. Despite the critical approach often taken to ideologies, it is worth emphasising van Dijk’s (1998) assertion that they are not inherently negative. Some ideologies can run counter to the status quo; these are ideologies of opposition or resistance (van Dijk, 1998).

In this thesis, I interpret ideology as ‘a socially and politically dominant set of values and beliefs which are not “out there” but are constructed in all texts especially through language’ (Carter and Nash, 1990: 21). Within this conceptualisation of ideology, the researcher explores how ideologies ‘impregnate a society’s modes of thinking, speaking, experiencing and behaving, are therefore a necessary “condition” for action and belief within a social formation and hence are crucial in the construction of personal identity’ (Carter and Nash, 1990: 21). I select this definition because I believe it usefully unites socio-cognitive and critical discursive approaches while highlighting the roles that language plays in conveying ideologies and ideologies play in the construction of identities.

2.2.5 Recontextualising discourse

Producing discourse often involves re-contextualising an argument, discursive practice, or social practice by extracting it from its original context (“decontextualising” it) and placing it in a new context (van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999). Recontextualisation is an intrinsically ideological process, as one group appropriates a particular discourse from another group whose ideologies and intentions are often different (Fairclough, 2011). The recontextualisation process is based on discursive scripts: knowledge about or visions of the way that a social practice occurs, which are tied to ideas about why the practice happens and whether it is good or bad (van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999). Discursive scripts are often accompanied by

stereotypes: shared cultural ways of representing social groups which are commonly drawn upon to distinguish an ingroup from an outgroup (Billig, 1995). Stereotypes involve attributing the behaviour of group members to their group membership (Koller, 2012). As a result, they are typically metonymic, with the characteristics of a small section of a social group representing the whole (Koller, 2012).

Van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999) illustrate the process of recontextualisation in their study of the letters sent to immigrants by the German government, rejecting their requests for family members to join them. In these texts, German officials represent the daily social practices of immigrants according to an “immigrant way of life” script that contends that immigrants do not integrate into the social fabric of the host country, even though they should (van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999). The social practice of immigrants engaging with other people from immigrant communities is recontextualised as evidence of a lack of integration and used to legitimise tougher immigration policies to ensure that an “immigrant way of life” does not clash with a “national way of life” (van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999). As one script can underpin textual representations in different contexts, the media could share this “immigrant way of life” script and so represent the social behaviour of immigrants in the same way as the government (van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999). If citizens are continually exposed to this script in institutional discourses, they could begin to accept the ideologies it perpetuates and consequently support tougher immigration policies.

2.2.6 Discourse and power

As the example above reveals, discourse is inextricably linked to power (Fairclough, 2015). Indeed, ‘power is partly discourse, and discourse is partly power’; the two ‘flow into each other’ (Fairclough, 2010: 4). Fairclough (2015) distinguishes between power *in* discourse and

power *behind* discourse. Power in discourse refers to the ‘exercise of power in unequal encounters’, whereas power behind discourse is the ability to ‘shape and constitute “orders of discourse” or what discourses and genres are available’ (Fairclough, 2015: 27). Power, in the case outlined by van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999), is discursive, political, and ideological; the German government has the institutional power to ‘project [its] practices as universal and “common sense”’ (Fairclough, 1989: 33).

Recontextualising social practices enables the German government to legitimise its immigration policies and enact power over immigrants, whose voices are not represented in the dominant script. As government officials are elected by the public in a democracy, the government’s ideological perspective is assumed to reflect the views of most of the public. Through its discursive representations, the government decides who belongs in the country and who does not, which shapes the social fabric of the nation. For people in positions of social power, legitimisation of the status quo is beneficial (Burr, 1995); a right-wing political party with anti-immigration policies garners support if anti-immigration ideologies are accepted by citizens, for example. However, for those with little social power, such as immigrants who want their family members to join them, prevailing discourses can lead to discrimination and even repatriation (van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999).

Power relations in discourse are not always explicit; in fact, they are very often hidden and naturalised (Fairclough, 2010). For example, media discourse producers, including journalists and editors of newspaper articles, exercise power over their readers by deciding what should be included in or excluded from news articles, how events and people should be represented, and which ideological position should be presupposed for the audience (Fairclough, 1989). In the case of editors excluding news, their power corresponds to a disproportionate access to information that, if presented to readers, could lead them to take a different view of current affairs. Given this dialectic of discourse and power, critical studies of

discourse are concerned with deconstructing how language is used, either explicitly or implicitly, by socially powerful institutions to influence the beliefs and behaviours of individuals and groups (Fairclough, 2015; Partington et al., 2013). In this thesis, I am interested in critically deconstructing how people and institutions use language to create specific versions of (supra)national identities and who they include in or exclude from these collectives.

2.2.7 *Discourse and identity*

Early sociolinguistic work tended to subscribe to an essentialist view of identity (Preece, 2016), which contends that identity is inherent and stable (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006). However, this static view of identity has more recently been rejected in favour of a social constructionist understanding of identity as ‘fluid, fragmentary, contingent and [...] *constituted in discourse*’ (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006: 17, original emphasis). According to the constructionist interpretation, there is no absolute, internal self that constitutes the reality of who a person is. Rather, there are multiple possible understandings of the self that are produced and projected through discourse. As Hall (1996: 4) puts it, ‘identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being’. They are produced within specific ‘historical and institutional sites’ (Hall, 1996: 4). Hall’s (1996) use of the verb ‘process’ aligns with sociolinguistic views of identity (see Section 2.2.8), which position identification as a process.

Attempting to provide the broadest possible understanding of identity, Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 6) offer the definition of ‘who people are to each other’. However, identity is not solely about external perception: it is also a conceptual understanding of oneself in relation to the social world (Greenfeld and Eastwood, 2009). Perhaps, then, a more accurate definition of identity would be who people construct and understand themselves to be, in relation to how

they construct and understand others. This definition indicates that identities emerge out of a process of negotiation between a sense of self and other. Each version of a constructed self is context-dependent; as identities are multiple and multifaceted, different aspects of an individual's sense of self can become significant in different contexts (Smith, 1991). For example, a person might construct gender identities, professional identities, and national identities for themselves at different stages of their lives. Which identities become salient at any given moment depends on the context: professional identities are most relevant at work, while national identities might be more relevant during an international sporting event or when recounting experiences of war. Each person has 'a portfolio of possible identities that can be invoked at any moment' and 'by orienting to a particular identity, participants are making that identity relevant' (Clifton and Van de Mierop, 2010: 2450). However, 'constraint is a feature of identity' and there are 'context-dependent limitations on the range of identities that can be appropriately invoked' in any given instance (Handford, 2014: 42).

The idea that there are various aspects of selfhood that relate to and shape one another is termed intersectionality (Collins and Bilge, 2020). Intersectionality aims to account for the complexity of human identities and their dependence on context. In simple terms, intersectionality holds that different dimensions of a person's identity interact to produce a sense of self (Collins and Bilge, 2020). Different identities can create situations in which a person is doubly or triply disadvantaged socially and politically because the identities they perform diverge from an established socio-cultural norm (Collins and Bilge, 2020). In this way, intersectionality is closely tied to hegemony: the social power of a group based on domination and leadership (Gramsci, 2006). Intersectionality and hegemony reveal that identities do not exist in a vacuum but are constrained by the socio-political and cultural norms of a society or nation state. This is significant in the context of national identity because it recognises that

people have different experiences of being British or living in Britain because they have different intersectional identities.

Identities are not only created by individuals for themselves: they are often constructed by institutions and people with socio-political power for those who lack socio-political power. These are ‘ascribed identities’ (Blommaert, 2005: 251). Ascribed identities are not ideologically neutral: labels are chosen for their connotations (O’Doherty and Le Couteur, 2007), and lexical choices can be politically motivated (Goodman and Speer, 2007). Given the socio-political power of public institutions like the media and the government, identity representations in discourse produced by journalists or politicians are often projected as “common sense” (Fairclough, 1989). This introduces a problematic dynamic: people whose identities are associated with a lack of socio-political power, such as immigrants and asylum seekers, often lack the resources to construct their own identities publicly in the way that they would wish to be understood. As a result, in the absence of close encounters with people from these social groups, public knowledge about these identities hinges upon universal discourses of “common sense” projected by more powerful people in their discursive representations of others (Fairclough, 1989). Identity thus becomes an area of discursive contestation, as people and institutions with different socio-political agendas compete to establish universal, “common sense” identities.

2.2.8 Sociolinguistic approaches to identity

In line with the move away from essentialism towards non-essentialism in linguistic approaches to identity, there has been a shift in the way that sociolinguists understand the role of language in identity construction. As Preece (2016: 5) notes, sociolinguists no longer see ‘language as discrete entities that mark the ethnic, cultural and/or national identities of

particular groups of people in an unproblematic way'. Instead, language is viewed as 'part of a repertoire consisting of linguistic and other multimodal resources for communicative and identity work' (Preece, 2016: 5). As Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz (1982: 1) state in Gumperz's seminal collection on language and social identity, 'we customarily take gender, ethnicity, and class as given parameters and boundaries within which we create our own social identities' but 'the study of language as interactional discourse demonstrates that these parameters are not constants that can be taken for granted but are communicatively produced'.

Documenting this shift retrospectively, Drummond and Schlee (2016) divide variationist sociolinguistic approaches to language and identity into three waves. First-wave work, such as Labov (1966) and Trudgill (1974), linked social categories to linguistic features, an approach which has been criticised for 'reductive theorising around identity, in simplistic purposive accounts of identity-as-motive' (Coupland, 2008: 268; Drummond and Schlee, 2016). Second-wave research also considered language variation and change, but rather than focusing on macro-level sociological categories such as age and gender, it focused on 'locally relevant groupings' (Drummond and Schlee, 2016: 52). Within this wave came the concept of communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991), which were defined by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992: 464) as 'an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short, practices – emerge in the course of this mutual endeavour.' This approach to language and identity focused on 'how people use language in different contexts to construct different identities by investigating shared repertoires, values and practices' (Drummond and Schlee, 2016: 52).

Third-wave work moves from interpreting linguistic features as indexing social categories to indexing *social meanings* (defined as stances, personae, and social types [Moore and Podesva, 2009: 448-450]) (Drummond and Schlee, 2016). The underlying idea of third-

wave projects is that ‘exploring the social meaning of a feature can help us understand the role language plays in identity construction’ (Drummond and Schlee, 2016: 53). Eckert (2012: 87) establishes a theoretical foundation for the third wave that argues that (a) variation ‘constitutes a robust social semiotic system’, (b) the meanings of variables gain ‘more specific meanings in the context of styles’, and (c) variation does not only reflect but also constructs social meaning.

Bucholtz and Hall (2005) sits within third-wave variationist sociolinguistics. Conceiving of identity as a ‘relational and socio-cultural phenomenon that emerges and circulates in local discourse contexts of interaction’, Bucholtz and Hall propose a sociolinguistic framework for analysing identity as ‘constituted in linguistic interaction’ (2005: 585-6). The authors outline five principles for identity construction in interaction. The first principle is emergence, which positions identity not as pre-existing discourse but as the ‘emergent product’ (ibid.: 588). Meanwhile, the positionality principle holds that, in addition to sociological identity categories at the macro-level, such as age and gender, identity emerges discursively through temporary roles and orientations assumed by participants in interaction. The third principle is indexicality. An index refers to a linguistic form that depends on interactional context for its meaning; broadly speaking, indexicality ‘involves the creation of semiotic links between linguistic forms and social meanings’ (ibid.: 594). Indexicality operates on all levels of linguistic structure, including overt category labels, implicature, and presupposition (see Chapter 3 for more on indexicality). Principle four, relationality, contends that identity is relational and intersubjectively constructed not just along the lines of similarity/difference, but also along the dimensions of genuineness/artifice and authority/delegitimacy. The final principle, partialness, argues that identity is a partial account; it constantly shifts in different contexts and through interaction.

Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) framework underpins the approach to identity that I take in Chapter 6, where identity is understood to emerge through the interaction of the interview through indexical processes. The approach to identity in Chapter 6 also borrows from the subdiscipline of discursive psychology the idea that place attachment (e.g., attachment to the nation or the locality) is not 'a deep-seated, internalized emotional affinity' but is 'linguistically *constructed* as individuals, together, formulate the everyday meanings of person-in-place relationships (Di Masso, Dixon and Durrheim, 2013: 75, italics in original). This theoretical assumption fits with the broader social constructionist approach to identity taken in the thesis.

2.3 Discourse, identity, and the nation

2.3.1 Discourse, nations, and nationalism

Much like defining discourse, defining the nation is notoriously difficult (Anderson, 2006). While acknowledging this difficulty, Smith (1992) offers the working definition of a human population that shares a historical territory, memories, culture, and laws. The population to which Smith (1992) refers is an imagined political community; it is impossible for each person in a national territory to know one another and yet they believe there are many others with whom they share land and fundamental values (Anderson, 2006). The imagined national community is constructed, negotiated, and renegotiated through discourse; language reifies an otherwise abstract idea (Billig, 1995). The discourse of the nation is often one of territory – “the homeland”, “our soil” – which naturalises the relationship between people and place and provides a tangible referent for the concept of nationhood (Malkki, 1992). National discourse is also underpinned by a sense of timelessness, based on the retelling of a shared history, the elaboration of a shared present, and the vision of a collective future (Bennett, 2018). As nation-

building is, in part, a discursive act, there is no single, undisputed national frame: there are multiple, sometimes competing, constructions of the nation that differ depending on the discourse producer and the production context (Billig, 1995). Some have more cultural reach and weight than others, but it is nevertheless the case that though constructions of a nation share a focus on time and place, there are subtle differences in the way that the government, the media, and citizens talk about and evaluate their country.

The ideology that posits that the world is naturally split into nations that demarcate different groups is called nationalism (Billig, 1995). Nationalism can be defined as an ‘ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential nation’ (Smith 1991: 73). The nationalist perspective holds that (a) the world is divided into nations, each of which has its own unique culture and history, (b) individuals belong to a nation and their loyalty to the nation overrides all other allegiances, and (c) nations must be ‘united, autonomous, and free to pursue their goals’ (Triandafyllidou, 1998: 595). There are several strands of nationalism, all of which conceptualise national membership in different terms. Civic nationalism, for example, assigns membership to an individual based on citizenship and shared institutions (Greenfeld and Eastwood, 2009). That is, it ‘conceives of people’s belongingness to a nation as dependent on their adherence to national political institutions and laws’ (Filsinger et al., 2021: 657). In contrast, ethnic nationalism allocates membership to people based on characteristics that derive from an imagined shared descent (Greenfeld and Eastwood, 2009). On the one hand, nationalist sentiment can be flagged implicitly through deictic words – pronouns such as ‘we’ and adverbs such as ‘here’ – which construct an ingroup with the homeland at the centre. On the other, it can be marked through explicit discursive constructions of nationhood. The former is labelled banal nationalism, while the latter is ‘hot’ (Billig, 1995). Hot nationalism characterises nation-building discourse at times of political change; nationalist

discourse relating to Britain's renegotiation of its relationship with the EU, for example, is 'hot'.

2.3.2 *Discourse and national identity*

A successful nation relies on its members sharing a sense of national identity (Schlesinger, 1991). As previously mentioned, national identity is a form of collective social identity that is discursively constructed (de Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak, 1999). It refers to a complex pattern of meanings and values related to a group whose borders are defined by the state; these meanings and values underlie the attitudes of citizens towards each other and those outside of the group (Duchesne and Frogner, 2008). Put another way, de Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak (1999: 153) draw on Bourdieu to argue that national identities are a form of *habitus*, 'a common complex of ideas, concepts or perception schemes'. The collective conception of national identity is strengthened by a belief in united ideals, values and goals which differentiate one nation from all others and add emotional weight to group belonging (Henderson and McEwan, 2005; Bellucci, Sanders and Serricchio, 2012). Collective national identities are durable and can outlast the apathy of many individual members through mass political organisation (Smith, 1992). That is, as nation-building institutions conceptualise public opinion in terms of mass consensus, they can ignore dissident voices and generalise support for a particular version of national identity even when discontent affects a sizeable part of the population (Smith, 1992).

Building a collective sense of national identity involves delineating what a nation is not as well as what it is (Benhabib, 1996; Triandafyllidou, 1998). This process involves demarcating a national Other – an outgroup – based on the political concept of borders (Wodak et al., 2009; Nortio et al., 2022). The Other usually appears as one of three types: friendly, non-radical or radical (Gibbins, 2014). A friendly Other is constructed in terms of solidarity and

partnership, while a non-radical Other is depicted through mild differentiation (Gibbins, 2014). The radical Other, in contrast, is subjected to a clear dichotomisation that reveals a nexus of superiority versus inferiority (Gibbins, 2014). As collective national identities are fluid and context-dependent, Others are never fixed identities; the construction of a particular nation as a type of Other depends on socio-political context. National identities ‘have political implications’ and are often used in ‘political mobilisation’ (Wincott, 2019: 22).

A useful distinction has been made in studies of nationhood between identity and belonging; although the two concepts are interrelated, there is a difference in emphasis between them (Anthias, 2008). Identity involves narratives of self and other, myths of origin, presentation, and labelling (Anthias, 2008). In contrast, belonging refers to the experience of being accepted into the social fabric of a nation, the ways in which ‘social bonds and ties are manifested in practices, experiences and emotions of inclusion’ (Anthias, 2008: 8). I will adopt this distinction in my analysis of citizens’ stories about national identity and belonging in Chapter 6.

2.3.3 Discourse and Brexit-related political identities

Very little qualitative research has been conducted into the Brexit-related political identities of Leaver and Remainder. One exception is Brusenbauch Meislová’s (2022) work on the discursive construction of affective polarisation in Brexit Britain. The author theorises that Brexit-related identities are ‘specific forms of social identities’ that are ‘just like national identities’ in that they are discursively (re)produced through language (Brusenbauch Meislová, 2022: 100). Leaver and Remainder identities are constructed through an ingroup/outgroup dichotomy (Brusenbauch Meislová, 2022). In other words, the categories of Brexiteer and Remainder ‘sit together in a paired relationship’ (Meredith and Richardson, 2019: n.p.). Within the discursive construction of Leaver identities in Remainders’ comments on news websites, Brexiteers are

often associated with gullibility, ignorance, and a lack of intelligence (Meredith and Richardson, 2019). They are framed as older people who are nostalgic and backwards-thinking (Meredith and Richardson, 2019). Conversely, Remainers are constructed by Leavers in comments as scaremongers who are out of touch with reality (Meredith and Richardson, 2019).

2.4 The discursive construction of British, European and EU identities

2.4.1 British (supra)national identity: union through war

According to Lennon and Kilby (2020: 117), Britishness is ‘an overarching identity of civic and political status, subsuming a series of regions, nations and ethnic groups, set against a backdrop of Protestant culture, recurrent war and an increasingly multicultural empire’. A collective British identity was forged between the Act of Union in 1707, which joined Scotland to England and Wales, and the beginning of the Victorian age in 1837 (Colley, 1992). During this period, Britain was engaged in a series of wars with France; English, Welsh and Scottish people united first against this continental Other and later against the people they colonised, as opposed to through cultural or political consensus (Colley, 1992). Alongside a new British identity, the older national identities of English, Welsh and Scottish continued to exist; rather than overwriting its national components, British identity sat above them as a *supranational* identity (Colley, 1992; McCrone, 1997). In 1800, the Acts of Union joined Britain with Ireland, a configuration which was modified by the 1922 Irish Free State Constitution to produce the United Kingdom of Britain and Northern Ireland (Marshall, 1996). As the Irish secession demonstrates, Irish identities persisted despite the creation of a supranational UK identity. As a result, there are two levels to British identity: four separate nations with individual customs

and histories, and a common British political identity that provides the framework within which the nations interact (Parekh, 2009).

The British identity narrative is rooted in history and has long placed Britain in opposition to Europe. First, the Reformation, the Industrial Revolution and Victorian values helped to shape Britain as liberal, democratic, globally influential and detached from the Continent (Maccaferri, 2019). Then the Suez crisis of 1956 precipitated a post-imperial narrative of national decline (Maccaferri, 2019). In contemporary Britain, ‘the number of UK citizens identifying as “British only” or British (in combination) is decreasing’ (Manners, 2018: 1224). Nevertheless, the UK government’s post-Brexit national identity narrative of Global Britain – a plan to demonstrate that ‘the UK is open, outward-looking and confident on the world stage’ (UK Government, 2019: n.p.) – continues to position Britain as the core national unit in the UK. Although it is *English* nationalism that is most closely associated with Euroscepticism, then, the nationalist sentiment is couched in the language of Britishness (Wellings, 2010; Leith and Sim, 2022). It is partly for this reason that I examine *British* identity in relation to Brexit in this thesis, rather than English identity (see Henderson et al. [2016] for a consideration of Brexit and Englishness).

That English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish identities existed prior to the creation of a UK category, and that they persisted alongside it, means that British identity is often considered precarious in comparison to its constituent parts (McCrone, 1997). It is rendered weaker still by two factors: the loss of the British Empire and the martial activity that united its constituent countries against international others, and the development of the EU (Colley, 1992; McCrone, 1997). Membership of the EU complicated the act of defining Britain against a continental Other (Colley, 1992). As small European nations became viable, the EU offered Britain’s constituent nations the opportunity to detach themselves from the UK and become independent member states (Gamble and Wright, 2009). At the time of writing, this option is viewed as

desirable by the Scottish National Party (SNP) and its leader, the First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon (Macnab, 2019).

Competing discourses of nationhood have long existed in the UK because of the complex dynamic between the constituent nations. Indeed, ‘during the past hundred years, the notion of Britishness has been endlessly debated, constructed and deconstructed’ (Julios, 2008: 160). As regions can be resources of identity for the nation (Aughey, 2007), constructions of Britishness can be contested in different places and spaces within the UK. As Wincott (2019: 22) puts it, ‘British identity seems to operate in a different way in England, as opposed to Wales and Scotland’. Which discourses of Britishness carry the most cultural weight at any given time therefore depends on socio-political context. While politicians speak of a shared British character – ‘an island nation: independent, forthright, passionate in defence of our sovereignty’ (Cameron, 2013: n.p.) – devolution, an increasing appetite for Scottish independence, and divergent attitudes towards EU membership produce discourses that contradict and even reject a homogenous British identity.

2.4.2 Identifying with Europe in the UK

As the case of Britishness reveals, a person can identify simultaneously with a nation and a supranational entity (Duchesne and Frogner, 2008). However, the relationship between these levels of identification is complex and depends, among other factors, on the nation and supranational identity involved (Duchesne and Frogner, 2008). In the case of identification with Europe, Eurobarometer surveys reveal that while a member of the EU, the UK was the only state in which most respondents who felt proud of their country did not feel proud of being European (Duchesne and Frogner, 2008). Indeed, Carl, Dennison and Evans (2019: 282) go as far as to state that ‘Euroscepticism [was] stronger in the UK than in most other EU

countries’. As the UK consists of four countries, homogenising attitudes towards the EU conceals nuances between the different countries. In fact, English people expressed less support for the EU than their Scottish, Welsh, and Northern Irish counterparts, conceiving of it as a threat to their national identity (Carey, 2002). Given the different levels of identification with the EU among UK countries, the interplay between national and supranational identifications seemingly produced scepticism towards the EU in some parts of the UK. This scepticism and a ‘weak sense of European identity’ in Britain were, according to Carl et al. (2019: 282), ‘key contributor[s] to the Brexit vote’.

2.4.3 Defining European identity

Both the acronym ‘EU’ and the noun ‘Europe’ are ‘poorly defined’ terms with various meanings (Risse, 2004: 7). It is not surprising, then, that in the media discourses of European nations, the noun ‘Europe’ is used vaguely without a clear distinction between its geographical (Europe as a continent) and political (European Union) referents (Williams and Piazza, 2012). In fact, the terms ‘Europe’ and ‘EU’ are often conflated, not just in media discourses but in political language and citizens’ speech (Koller, Kopf and Miglbauer, 2019). Given the blurred lines between Europe as a geographical unit and Europe as a constellation of political alliances, there is little clarity about what European identity is and indeed whether one exists both within and outside of the UK (Smith, 1992).

The Treaty on European Union, the first to delineate EU citizenship, declares that every person holding a Member State nationality is an EU citizen (Carey, 2002). This definition of EU citizenship constructs European identity as the sum of several national identities which are aggregated based on geographical closeness and membership of a political union (Smith, 1992). Although the EU claims that there are shared values among EU nations that lend

themselves to an overarching, supranational identity – ‘inclusion, tolerance, justice, solidarity and non-discrimination’ (European Commission, 2019: n.p.) – there is no shared understanding of what it means to be European or even how to talk about European history across EU member states. For example, the Italian print media consistently describes European history in terms of post-Second World War events; it focuses on the creation of an institutional Europe and its present and future much more frequently than the UK press (Marchi and Partington, 2012). Conversely, European history is constructed in terms of conflict in the UK press, even in pro-EU newspapers like *The Guardian* (Marchi and Partington, 2012). Discourses of European identity also diverge in early evening television news across the UK, France, and Italy: while French broadcasters, and, to a lesser degree, Italian broadcasters, express a common European “we”, the BBC and ITV consistently place Europe outside of British identity (Thornborrow, Haarman and Duguid, 2012).

The lack of consensus about what Europe and European identity are also afflicts political discourses at the national level. Political debates about Europe in the German Lower House presuppose a European entity, positioning it as an ‘ontological certainty’ with a common culture, history, and values (Good, 2001: 152). In contrast, British politicians locate Europe at a distance from the UK and typically only discuss shared values in the context of the EU’s present political and economic arrangements (Good, 2001). At the level of citizens’ discourses, some Britons have shown a greater concern that the EU poses a threat to their national identity than Spanish or German participants (Diez Medrano, 2003). Although at the supranational level of EU institutions, then, European identity is conceptualised as an aggregation of the values shared by EU nations, each European country understands Europe, Europeanness and European history differently. The effectiveness of ‘European’ as a form of collective identity consequently varies across EU countries and seemingly depends on how each nation conceives of itself.

2.4.4 Political constructions of British identity: debates, speeches, and policy papers

As a united British identity was forged during historical conflict (Colley, 1992 and see Section 2.4.1), it is perhaps unsurprising that history plays a key role in political constructions of Britishness. During parliamentary debates, politicians retell select episodes from British history to support their construction of Britain as an independent and democratic nation. In parliamentary debates on Brexit, for example, intertextual links to the Churchillian discourse of ‘Britain-as-an-island-nation’ are used to justify a British predilection for freedom and sovereignty and to distinguish the nation spatially, temporally, and ethically from the EU. For instance, Cap (2019: 72) quotes right-wing politician Nigel Farage who argues that ‘Britain is different; our geography puts us apart. [...] The roots go back seven, eight, nine hundred years with the Common Law’ (Farage, 2013). Wodak (2018) reveals that a geographical discourse of difference is similarly woven into David Cameron’s (2013: n.p.) so-called Bloomberg speech, in which he announces his intention to hold an in-out referendum on Britain’s EU membership: ‘our geography has shaped our psychology; we have the character of an island nation – independent, forthright, passionate in defence of our sovereignty’. Britain’s geographical separateness from mainland Europe is evoked by politicians to symbolise its fundamentally different values. The intertwined themes of history and geography are used to personify Britain and imbue its identity with morality and democratic ideals, constructing a homogenous, stable Britishness that has endured for centuries (Wenzl, 2019). Using history to characterise Britain as a longstanding democracy allows Eurosceptic politicians to conceptualise deeper European integration as weakening Britain’s independent identity and its withdrawal from the EU as preserving the nation’s sovereignty.

Two periods of British history recur in political constructions of the nation: the British Empire (McCrone, 1997) and the Second World War (Cap, 2019). These periods are often

ideologically intertwined: an imperial attitude of British superiority underpinned post-war thinking and continues to pervade British self-perception today despite the loss of Empire (Marquand, 1995). Although Britain's historical actions are morally problematic, politicians often frame its history positively; they ignore its exclusion of outsiders and erase its racism from public memory, feeding a myth of the British value of decency (Bennett, 2018). For example, Zappettini (2019: 146) identifies a document from the Department for International Trade which evokes a favourable historical reading when it claims that Britain has 'a long and proud history as a great trading nation' (Department for International Trade, 2017: 5). This document alludes to the nation's identity during its Empire and, by stating that 'we want to maximise our trade opportunities globally [...] by boosting our trading relationships with old friends and new allies,' promises that the UK will return to this role after Brexit (Department for International Trade, 2017: 5; Zappettini, 2019: 146). The positive recontextualisation of British imperial history demonstrates that it matters less that a nation's values are accurate than that the members of the national community believe that they are (Henderson and McEwen, 2005).

Boris Johnson's construction of the 2016 EU membership referendum as 'our country's Independence Day' similarly draws on colonial discourses to position Britain as a victim of EU tyranny while ignoring the nation's history of perpetuating colonial violence (Charteris-Black, 2019: 77). By representing the UK as a colonised nation in need of freedom rather than as a coloniser, Johnson subverts the narrative of British imperial power and hails a return to Britain's so-called independence. Positioning Britain as a victim of EU bureaucracy contradicts its representation as a powerful nation, creating a conflicting narrative between its influential past (and potential future) and its alleged current subjugation by the EU (Wenzl, 2019). Koegler, Malreddy and Tronicke (2020: 588) interpret this "reverse-colonisation" rhetoric as 'symptomatic of repressed anxieties surrounding empire nostalgia and narcissistic shame'.

In addition to narrating its history, politicians construct representations of contemporary Britain. Bolt (2022) argues that in David Cameron's speeches between 2006 and 2015, the discursive construction of British values rested on generosity, tolerance, openness, and open-mindedness. Equally, Räikkönen (2019) claims that in parliamentary debates about the UK's role in the EU between 1973 and 2015, the UK was represented in five ways: as a leader, a willing member, insecure of its role, a reluctant member, and an isolated member.

In the national identity discourses of Eurosceptic politicians prior to the EU referendum, two predominant national frames were used to represent the UK: the Sovereign Nation and the Invaded Nation (Charteris-Black, 2019). In the Sovereign Nation scenario, Britain symbolises freedom, democracy and autonomy, and national identity is conceptualised in terms of citizenship (Charteris-Black, 2019). In the Invaded Nation frame, sacred entities are under attack and need defending, typically from the EU's open border policies (Charteris-Black, 2019). Both representations of Britain foreground the NHS as a sacred national institution that must be defended, and construct the British Army as threatened by the inevitable creation of an EU-wide force (Charteris-Black, 2019). In discursive constructions of contemporary Britain, then, national institutions metonymically symbolise the nation; a threat to an institution is a threat to the country. Indeed, 'institutions are a recurring *topos* in the rhetoric of Britishness', and, within that, the NHS is commonly linked to British values (Atkins, 2022: 221).

During Brexit negotiations, the need to navigate the shifting relationship between Britain and the EU led to tension between discourses of British exceptionalism⁶ and European collaboration in policy documents. Theresa May drew on discourses of British exceptionalism in her Brexit-related speeches, positioning a narrow national audience of Leave voters as

⁶ British exceptionalism is 'the self-perception' that the UK is 'a unique, special nation' (Isentyeva and Dunkel, 2022: 1).

constituting the British people while framing Remain voters as citizens of nowhere (Atkins, 2022). In contrast, other policymakers depicted Britain as continuing a *European* tradition of democracy and wanting to maintain a special relationship with the continent. This was visible, for example, in the claim that ‘the UK has a deep, historic belief in the same values that Europe stands for: peace, democracy’ (Zappettini, 2019: 150). While retelling British history is central to political constructions of the nation, then, the values that differentiate Britain from other countries are somewhat text- and context-specific.

2.4.5 British newspaper constructions of British identity

Defining Britain by its history is not just a discursive practice that characterises political discourses – British tabloid newspapers are constantly engaged in a reinterpretation of national history (Conboy, 2006). The tabloids use the anniversaries of select episodes of British history to construct courage as a British value. For example, the sixtieth anniversary of D-Day is marked by articles remembering, among other national heroes, the ‘bravest Brit on [the] beach’ (Conboy, 2006: 72). Retellings of the Second World War are often used to criticise the nation’s present state through a narrative of national decline: contemporary Britain compares unfavourably to a historical golden age as journalists ask, ‘they died to keep us free... are we as brave?’ (Conboy, 2006: 83). The Battle of Trafalgar is also used to critique contemporary Britain in the tabloid press: although Nelson’s ‘victory laid the foundations for the Royal Navy’s sovereignty of the world’s ocean’, the navy is now ‘forced to beg private sponsors for funding’ to mark its anniversary (Conboy, 2006: 85). In this discursive frame, contemporary Britons are depicted as less patriotic than their ancestors.

As these examples show, the tabloid history of Britain is framed in terms of conflict with continental Europe; through a narrative of British martial victory at Trafalgar and in the

Second World War, Europe is implicitly constructed as an enemy that is no match for Britain's military prowess (Daddow, 2006). History is not only pervasive in *tabloid* news – it played an equally important role in British broadsheet and middle-market newspapers in the build-up to the EU referendum, leading Maccaferri (2019: 19) to conclude that in 'Brexit discourse, historical arguments and historical categories played a focal role'.

The positive reinterpretation of British history extends to the media's recontextualisation of national events that are critical of the nation's past. Commenting on the 2012 Olympics opening ceremony, newspapers ignore the ceremony's complex and conflicting portrayal of industrialisation as involving both triumphs and subjugation, and instead frame the event as showcasing Britain's achievement in contributing to modernity (Thomas and Antony, 2015). Journalists from *The Telegraph* interpret the ceremony as revealing the British values of 'courage', 'creativity' and 'imagination', which are represented as persisting through history and characterising contemporary Britain (Thomas and Antony, 2015: 496). Compared to other countries' opening ceremonies, journalists from *The People* argue that Britain's ceremony is more individualistic, historical, humorous, and self-deprecating – a reflection of stereotypically British values (Thomas and Antony, 2015). In newspaper constructions of Britain, then, the past is an idealised locus of British exceptionalism (see Maccaferri, 2019).

The construction of Britain in terms of its relationship with Europe also pervades contemporary representations of the nation. In the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Mirror*, Britain has been characterised by its irreverence and its ridiculing of EU regulations (Henkel, 2018). These actions symbolise Britain's refusal to accept European bureaucracy, as the *Daily Mail* exemplifies in its Euromyth⁷ claim that 'we laughed when they tried to ban prawn-flavoured

⁷ Euromyths, as they have been labelled by the European Commission, are news stories, often published by the right-wing British press, which report on EU activities or directives which seemingly 'defy "common sense"' (Stanyer, 2007: 134). The exaggerated or invented stories typically focus on 'trivial matters' (Henkel, 2021: 10) or 'petty rules' (Stanyer, 2007: 134), such as the curvature of bananas or the banning of certain flavours of crisps. They are not solely the fare of tabloids but are also found in broadsheets (Cross, 2008; Martin, 1996).

crisps' (Henkel, 2018: 88). While the EU is framed as severe and obsessively interfering, Britain is defiant in its humour. The prevalence of food in Eurosceptic discourse is, as Mautner (2001) argues, significant: it is a familiar aspect of daily life to which all British readers can relate. By selecting the example of prawn-flavoured crisps, the *Daily Mail* ensures that its construction of a national ingroup ("we") unites the broadest possible cross-section of readers.

The nation is also constructed as superior to EU Member States who have adopted the euro as their currency, with readers being warned that Britain will be forced to 'bail out euro zone lame ducks' (Ichijo, 2008: 66). It is not just Europe against which Britain is pitted; in tabloids, a collective labelled 'Brits' or 'Britons' is positioned in a dichotomy against a general and collective 'foreign' Other: 'fed-up Brits are leading a backlash against foreign call centres' (Conboy, 2006: 49). In the lead-up to the 2016 EU referendum, the positive construction of Britain was accompanied by representations of a nation that had lost its essence due to its EU membership; the *Daily Express*, for example, asserted that 'we need to be saying "we want our country back"' (Khabaz, 2018: 503). British exceptionalism in the press, then, is seemingly context-dependent; the nation is contradictorily depicted as both inherently superior to other nations and as threatened with decline by the EU's attempt to reduce its sovereignty.

The Eurosceptic press offers a vision of British values that centres on three recurring themes: sovereignty, pragmatism, and global trade (Mautner, 2001). A belief in the importance of sovereignty is a key symbol of British national identity (Mautner, 2001). The nation's aversion to pooled sovereignty can be explained by the significance of this characteristic to its identity: for Britain, losing sovereignty means losing the national essence entirely. Pragmatism, as a further characteristic of the British national character according to the Eurosceptic British press, is the basis upon which Britain distinguishes itself from Europe (Mautner, 2001). In 2001, for instance, *The Daily Telegraph* argued that Britain's 'limited view of the EC's future is more practical than the grand schemes of some of our partners' (Mautner, 2001: 14). In this

Eurosceptic narrative of Britishness, practicality protects the nation from delusions about the potential of the EC. Finally, Britain is constructed as a ‘truly global nation’ with ‘huge trading links’ (Teubert, 2001: 74). This international outlook is contrasted with a Eurocentric EU that ‘is not global’ but ‘regional’ in outlook (Teubert, 2001: 74). That these three British characteristics are so often evoked as the antithesis to European attributes suggests that national values are drawn upon by the press to emphasise why Britain should not be grouped with other European nations: it is and always has been, Eurosceptic journalists claim, fundamentally different.

2.5 Constructing Europeanness in the Eurosceptic British press and politics

2.5.1 Political constructions of Europe and the EU

In Eurosceptic British political discourses, the EU is often portrayed as undemocratic and overbearing. During parliamentary debates about Europe, Eurosceptic politicians represent the EU as an economic failure that is suffering from ‘high unemployment [and] taxes’, and as an undemocratic super-state that cannot succeed because ‘there is no European public opinion; no European national identity’ (Ichijo, 2008: 54). In Brexit-related parliamentary debates, an undemocratic EU is depicted as an oppressive force (Wenzl, 2019). As Wenzl (2019: 41) shows, politicians render this identity linguistically through passive constructions, claiming that ‘we are being told to sign up’ to an unfavourable deal, ‘we are told that we have a lot of influence in the EU’ and ‘we are driven in the EU vehicle towards ever-closer union’. These constructions imply that the EU controls Britain’s future and strips the nation of its power. By obscuring the agent that drives ‘us’ in the ‘EU vehicle’ (Wenzl, 2019: 41), for example, politicians avoid acknowledging that the UK participates in EU decision-making processes and instead suggest that the nation has no part in directing the Union’s trajectory. Even David

Cameron, who states in his speech on Europe that he ‘want[s] a relationship between Britain and the EU that keeps us in it’, characterises the EU as undemocratic with a growing ‘gap between the EU and its citizens’ (Cameron, 2013, n.p.; Wodak, 2018: 18). Negative representations of the EU thus appear even in the discourse of (Conservative) politicians who are pro-EU and support the UK’s EU membership (Wenzl, 2019).

British political discourse also includes representations of European citizens, typically as immigrants coming to settle in the UK. Eastern European nationals are often foregrounded in this narrative and constructed negatively as a threat to Britain. For example, Cap (2019: 75) shows that right-wing politician Nigel Farage depicts Bulgarians and Romanians negatively as descending on Britain after EU policies grant them entry: ‘the Government takes orders from the European Union and is throwing open our borders to more than 30 million Bulgarians and Romanians’ (Farage, 2014a: n.p.). Farage labels Bulgaria ‘the EU’s poorest country’, emphasising an economic divide between EU member states, and constructs a scenario in which Britain will lose control of its ‘borders, identity [and] also the welfare state’ if the nation continues to follow EU immigration rules (Farage, 2014b; Cap, 2019: 75). Farage argues that the EU threatens British national identity by allowing non-British people, namely Eastern Europeans, into the UK to settle. The implication is that rather than expanding the category of ‘Britishness’ to account for socio-political change, the presence of non-British people in Britain weakens a homogenous national identity.

The negative representation of specific European nationalities is, however, text-specific; in contrast to Farage’s political speeches, UK administration texts about immigration do not foreground specific nationalities and avoid overtly hostile arguments about immigrants coming to the UK (Pérez-Paredes, Jiménez and Hernández, 2017). The Government’s need to manage international relationships presumably leads to an ostensibly more neutral depiction of European countries and citizens than can be found in individual politicians’ speeches.

2.5.2 *British media constructions of Europe and the EU*

The British press occupies the unique role of mediator between politicians and the public: it recontextualises the EU's political processes for and to its readers (Oberhuber et al., 2005). Given that newspaper discourse is not ideologically neutral, the information newspapers disseminate about the EU reflects their attitudes towards the Union. As a large section of the British mass media has been on a trajectory towards Euroscepticism for many years, the proportion of readers now consuming Eurosceptic discourse outweighs those consuming neutral or positive messages (Daddow, 2012). That is not to say that all British newspapers are Eurosceptic – the *Guardian*, for example, is openly pro-EU. Nevertheless, as the Reuters Institute demonstrates in its study of 2,378 referendum-focused articles, there was a 'dominant pro-Brexit bias' in the British national press prior to the 2016 EU membership referendum (Levy, Aslan and Bironzo, 2016: 16). Pro-Leave articles constituted 41% of the Reuters Institute's sample compared to 27% with a pro-Remain stance; six out of the nine national newspapers in the study expressed a dominant pro-Leave position (Levy et al., 2016). As such, although newspapers are no longer the only source of information about the EU for citizens, what most newspaper-reading Britons know about the EU and its institutions is likely to be bound up in Eurosceptic arguments (Diez Medrano, 2003).

Several qualitative studies have examined the representation of the EU in British print media. For example, Hawkins (2012: 565) finds that in coverage of the negotiation of the Lisbon Treaty, the EU is framed as a 'hostile, quasi-imperial power which poses an existential threat to the United Kingdom' or as a bargaining forum from which the UK is excluded. Similarly, in a diachronic corpus study of newspaper editorials about the EU, Hardt-Mautner (1995) identifies a narrow set of keywords around which the discourse is structured, including the nouns 'bureaucracy', 'federalism' and 'sovereignty'. As the dataset includes articles from

the pro-EU *Guardian* and *Daily Mirror*, as well as the more Eurosceptic *Daily Telegraph* and *The Sun*, these keywords seemingly cut across positive and negative discourses about the EU. That said, Räikkönen (2022) finds that in left-wing newspapers such as *The Guardian* and *Daily Mirror* between 2005 and 2015, EU-related issues are more often reported from a European perspective than in right-wing newspapers.

Taking a more manual approach to analysing Eurosceptic media constructions of the EU, Daddow (2012) identifies the repetition of the nouns ‘independence’, ‘super-state’, ‘subsidiarity’ and ‘Eurocrats’. These salient words point to a discursive differentiation between Britain and the EU along the axes of democracy/bureaucracy and independence/integration. The words are enmeshed in two recurrent representations of the EU: ‘Brussels’ as a collection of European elites who are remote and bureaucratic, and European interests as at odds with national interests (Oberhuber et al., 2005). European institutions, such as the European Commission and the European Court of Justice, are frequently depicted as overbearing and as interfering in British political and legal issues (Dugalès and Tucker, 2012; Zappettini, 2019). By positioning EU institutions and elites in ‘Brussels’, the British press foregrounds the EU’s geographical distance from the UK (Dugalès and Tucker, 2012). This geographical focus enables Eurosceptic journalists to present the application of EU regulations in the UK as an unwelcome encroachment on national sovereignty from a geographically, culturally, and politically remote group of elites (Dugalès and Tucker, 2012).

2.5.3 *Metaphorical constructions of the UK-Europe relationship in British press and politics*

Politicians and journalists use metaphors to make the nuances and fluctuations of international relationships more accessible to the public (Musolff, 2017). In the build-up to the EU

membership referendum in the UK, Vote Leave campaigners repeatedly employed metaphors to conceptualise the UK-EU relationship. Boris Johnson depicted the relationship between the nation and the Union in terms of a competitive race, arguing that ‘our nation [is] racing ahead economically’ with ‘no need of the failing European Union’ (Charteris-Black, 2019: 187). Through this metaphor, Johnson represented the UK as self-sufficient and prosperous and the EU as preventing the country from progressing. Johnson also drew on the conceptual metaphor of THE NATION AS A PERSON to depict the EU as ‘surgically severing’ part of the UK and ‘amputat[ing] Northern Ireland’ during backstop negotiations (Charteris-Black, 2019: 191). Through this image of extreme physical violence, Johnson positioned the EU as the UK’s murderer and conceptualised the UK’s constituent countries as parts of the national body.

Personifying the nation is a versatile discursive strategy that also underpins positive metaphorical representations of the UK-EU relationship. David Cameron used the NATION AS A PERSON metaphor to frame the UK and the EU as friends in a 2013 speech (Yang, 2018), for example. After the referendum, when the British government began Brexit negotiations with EU leaders, Leave-backing politicians also referred to European nations as Britain’s ‘friends’ and ‘neighbours’ (Charteris-Black, 2019: 213-221). This metaphor has similarly been adopted by British newspapers, which frequently conceptualise European countries as Britain’s ‘partners’ and ‘neighbours’ after the referendum (Charteris-Black, 2019: 221-224). Although these relationship metaphors express more distance than the European Commission’s metaphor of the ‘European family’, they represent a desire to foster a positive relationship with the EU during Brexit negotiations (Charteris-Black, 2019). Seemingly, then, metaphors can be used to conceptualise the UK-EU relationship positively or negatively depending on the socio-political agenda of the discourse producer; the need to establish a mutually beneficial Withdrawal Agreement leads to more positive representations than could largely be found in pre-referendum discourse, even among Eurosceptics.

2.6 Constructing “Extra-European” identities in politics, the press and public opinion

2.6.1 Constructing the USA in relation to the UK-EU relationship

Discourses about the UK-EU relationship do not only feature these two social actors. Rather, they are enmeshed in wider discussions about international relationships and globalisation. One nation that occupies a central role in these discussions is the United States of America (USA). There is a long-established discursive tradition of referring to the interaction between the UK and the USA as a special relationship (Gibbins, 2014). This conceptualisation underpins representations of the UK-USA relationship in debates about Britain’s membership of the European Economic Community (EEC) and, later, the EU. Prior to the 1975 EEC referendum and during debates about the 1993 Maastricht Treaty, politicians defined the USA-UK relationship as a security alliance that would protect both nations from a post-Cold War Russian threat (Gibbins, 2014). A similar construction of the relationship as a defensive alliance against a mutual threat appeared in parliamentary debates about Britain’s 2001 campaign in Afghanistan; politicians repeatedly constructed the USA as Britain’s closest ally by arguing that the nation was in ‘complete solidarity with our friends and allies in the United States’ (Ichijo, 2008: 14). At this time, the relationship between the UK and the USA was constructed in terms of interdependence: the USA needed the UK just as much as the UK depended on North America (Ichijo, 2008). This interdependence was not represented as limiting Britain’s sovereignty but as boosting it, because the USA had status as a world power yet continued to rely on Britain (Ichijo, 2008). However, by 2009 when the Lisbon Treaty was introduced, the USA was constructed by some UK politicians as one of several global alliances; India, for example, was depicted as another potential avenue for British trade with its growing economy and use of English (Gibbins, 2014). Although this discourse represents a shift in the importance

of the UK-USA relationship to Britain, the underlying idea that the UK and USA are allies remains constant.

Britain's "special relationship" with the United States has been somewhat problematised by its EU membership. The UK is often conceptualised as a bridge between Europe and the USA, forced to balance two seemingly incompatible relationships (Gibbins, 2014). In debates about the 1975 EEC membership referendum, politicians with anti-membership views constructed the USA as a transatlantic alternative to a European alliance, rather than as a complementary international relationship (Gibbins, 2014). This representation suggests that Britain must choose between two allies whose ways of life are conflicting. George Orwell previously took this line in his essay on English national identity, when he argued that 'our potential allies are not the Europeans but [...] the Americans' – much like the anti-EU membership politicians in 1975, Orwell viewed potential alliances with Europe and America as irreconcilable and argued in favour of a transatlantic union (Orwell, 1941: n.p.). More recently, the right-wing *Daily Mail* newspaper has constructed the UK's relationship with the United States more favourably than its membership of the EU (Daddow, 2006).

A discourse of difference between the USA and Europe also permeates citizens' discourses. Participants from Italy, Finland, Great Britain, and France in Antonsich's (2008) study construct the USA as the antithesis to Europe; they associate the United States with extreme neoliberalism and pit this against an image of Europe's more humane economic model. On a socio-political level, respondents construct the EU as a beacon of human rights and diplomacy, and the USA as relying too much on military force (Antonsich, 2008).

2.6.2 *Depicting the Commonwealth and its relationship with the UK*

The Commonwealth, a voluntary association of 54 ‘independent and equal countries’, is another key international player in discourses about the UK-EU relationship (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2021: n.p.). The presence of the Commonwealth in these discourses has ebbed and flowed since 1975. In the lead-up to the 1975 EEC membership referendum, both pro-membership and anti-membership politicians constructed the Commonwealth in terms of fading importance for Britain – as a ‘diminished concern’ (Gibbins, 2014: 61). Despite the sense of dwindling importance, politicians drew upon the Commonwealth as a symbol of Britain’s capacity to forge extra-EU relationships. By 2000, the Commonwealth was experiencing a renaissance in Eurosceptic discourse, as politicians and the press listed the Commonwealth alongside the USA in discussions about the UK’s most important international relationships (Teubert, 2001). For example, Eurosceptics argued that Britain should ‘reinforce ties of friendship and culture with all the Commonwealth and American peoples’ and that ‘we do indeed have more in common with the people of the Commonwealth and the USA than we have with the continental Europeans’ (Teubert, 2001: 71). The association of the Commonwealth with the USA suggests English-speaking alliances are evaluated more favourably by Eurosceptics than European ones; language, in the vision of the so-called Anglosphere (Kenny and Pearce, 2016), is valued above geography.

The positive evaluation of the Commonwealth continued in press discourse surrounding the 2016 EU membership referendum, where Brexit was depicted as reigniting the Commonwealth (Chabe, 2016). During the build-up to the vote, Brexiteers used the metaphor of the nation as a family to refer to Commonwealth nations where English is spoken (Charteris-Black, 2019). Some Eurosceptics argue that the Commonwealth offers an alternative family to the EU based on a moral foundation of loyalty, as Commonwealth citizens fought for Britain

when their nations were British territories (Charteris-Black, 2019). The common construction of the Britain-Commonwealth relationship as a close kinship bond has been perceived as a discursive strategy that allows the UK to subtly reinforce its influence over former British territories despite the demise of its empire (Gibbins, 2014).

2.6.3 *Representing immigration in the British press*

Another salient topic in the British press' treatment of international relationships, and one which has been subject to much academic investigation, is immigration. The media's immigration-related discourse is commonly enmeshed in a semantic field of criminality (through nouns like 'gangs'), and in terms of unstoppable movement through metaphors of natural disasters, such as 'flood' (Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008). Through this discursive practice, people coming to settle in the UK are framed as a threat to the nation. The Brexit campaign saw a shift in the way that EU citizens were represented in *The Express* from ingroup members to outgroup members (Parnell, 2016); in Brexit-related tabloid coverage, British people were positioned in a dichotomy with EU immigrants who were depicted as depleting British resources (Zappettini, 2021a). Before the 2016 referendum, economic migrants were framed negatively by the UK national press; this was initially supplanted by a representation of EU nationals as economic assets immediately after the referendum, but by the end of 2016, migrants were once again framed as invaders and exploiters (Morrison, 2019). The negative representation of EU citizens in news stories was particularly prevalent in regional newspaper coverage, according to Walter (2019).

The immigrant-as-threat frame is not unique to the media: it was also employed by the official Vote Leave campaign prior to the 2016 EU referendum when addressing the potential accession of Turkey to the EU. The accession was constructed as a threat to Britain by

politicians who claimed that millions of Turks would descend on the country and strain its public services (Vote Leave, 2016). Migration is commonly employed by the press and politicians as part of a “political rivalry discourse”, in which migrants are reduced to no more than statistics that prove the failure of a particular party or policy (Baker et al., 2008).

Immigration-related topics do not just involve representations of people from other nations – they are also invoked to characterise a British ingroup in some political discourses. Scepticism towards immigration has been presented as a positive characteristic of British identity, with immigration control represented as an idea rooted in the core British values of fair play, tolerance, and hospitality by Conservative politician Michael Howard, for example (Capdevila and Callaghan, 2008). Through immigration-related discourse, then, outgroup nations and their nationals are implicitly constructed as enemies, and ingroup citizens are encouraged to view anti-immigration ideologies as fundamental to their national identity.

2.7 Constructing Britain and Europe in public opinion

2.7.1 The interplay between politics, press and public opinion

As the above sections illustrate, discourses of national identity are presented to the public through the mass media and the government, both of which disseminate narratives about the nation with which citizens identify (Hall, 1996). These narratives include memories which connect the past with the present and national symbols and rituals which represent shared experiences (Hall, 1996). As discourse and social practice are dialectical, the media and the government do not just discursively construct international relationships and national identities – they reify them through law and social practice (De Cillia et al., 1999; Diez Medrano, 2003). For example, the Home Office defines the boundaries of a national homeland through its

discourses and practices, while the Foreign Office institutionally and legally, as well as discursively, delineates international Others (Law, 2001). The legal documents produced by these ministerial departments formally delimit the categories of national self and other and provide the framework within which Britain interacts with other nations. Without engaging with citizens, it is not possible to measure the extent to which government and media representations of national identity enter individuals' conceptualisations. Nevertheless, the representations of nations and international relationships in media and political discourses reveal how a national community is *encouraged* to conceptualise itself by nation-building institutions.

Politicians' institutional power, representative status and expert knowledge have been said to furnish them with privileged access to the media to such an extent that they act as primary definers of news (Eldridge, Kitzinger and Williams, 1997). However, the primary definers model has been widely criticised; the relationship between politicians and journalists is much more complex than mere regurgitation, as government sources frequently speak in disparate voices and journalists have access to other sources of information that contradict official political lines (Eldridge et al., 1997). That politicians act as sources for journalists about national and supranational issues, then, does not mean that politicians' versions of events dominate media representations. Indeed, the different linguistic strategies available to journalists when they report speech enable them to offer varying degrees of commitment to the claims politicians make (Bednarek, 2016). Similarly, news articles that include quotes from politicians are often accompanied by comment and analysis which frame the news according to a newspaper's socio-political agenda (Kuhn, 2007). Through this practice of recontextualisation, official views can be bolstered or undermined at the same time as they are presented to the public. Just as politics is mediatised, the media is politicised: politics and the press are intertwined.

In addition to providing the public with political information, the press sets the agenda for public debate: the visibility of an issue in the media influences the public's perception of its importance (Dearing and Rogers, 1996). The salience of an issue in the press is determined by the media's selection processes, which are based on the news values of, *inter alia*, negativity, proximity, and follow-up: more negative news and local stories are likely to be prioritised, and once a story appears in the media it is likely to be followed up (Bednarek and Caple, 2017; Harcup and O'Neill, 2017). Articles in British newspapers also present dominant social norms, values, and attitudes to citizens through framing devices; by socialising readers into these structures, journalists contribute to the legitimisation of a political system (Kuhn, 2007). For example, the repeated presupposition of consensus that a policy is bad or good for the public might lead to public acceptance of this attitude.

Although the press has the potential to influence a vast number of people, readers do not always passively accept media discourses (Schrøder, 2018). As texts are polysemic, they are open to various readings; audiences might adopt different positions towards, or readings of, a text (Hall, 1973). A reader might accept the frame in which a message is encoded, adopting a dominant-hegemonic position, or they might accept the dominant framework but negotiate its application at a local level, adopting a negotiated position (Hall, 1973). Alternatively, a reader might challenge a discourse wholesale, taking an oppositional position (Hall, 1973). These decoding options illustrate that members of the public are active readers; meaning is not confined solely to a text but is partially constructed by a reader, whose interpretation is influenced by personal experience and identity (Eldridge et al., 1997). Miller's (1995) focus group study of media discourse about conflict in Northern Ireland demonstrates the influence of personal experience: while some British participants accept the media's (mis)information about the circumstances surrounding the death of three IRA members, those with experience of Northern Ireland use their knowledge to counterbalance media information.

Despite readers having the ability to deconstruct the messages presented to them in the press, studies suggest that people do absorb some elements of media discourse. For example, British citizens given the task of writing a news bulletin about warfare in Palestine, with images from TV news footage as stimuli, reproduced the content and structure of news bulletins and adopted the language of statements presented by journalists as “official” accounts despite also being given a contradictory narrative (Philo, 2007). In 52 focus group interviews about the media’s representation of AIDS, researchers found similarities between the media and the public’s linguistic expressions (references to mixing body fluids) and imagery (the “face of AIDS”) (Kitzinger, 1995). It is worth noting here that one of the differences between these examples and Miller’s (1995) study is *personal* experience: those with personal experience use it as a mediating factor (alongside other sources of information and prior political beliefs). As such, acknowledging that an audience actively decodes meaning does not suggest that the media has no influence over the public, but it does mean that generalisations about the influence of media discourse on an unthinking public are likely to be inaccurate (Eldridge et al., 1997).

Zappettini (2019: 3), citing Delanty and Rumford (2005), notes that ‘no single institutional or civic actor is exclusively capable of controlling the process of identification with European referents’. As a result, he argues, ‘while normative aspects must be taken into account in the construction of Europe(anness), a wider variety of actors has also to be acknowledged’ because ‘an emerging European identity is best interpreted as a dynamic interplay between structural and agentic forces made up of institutions, citizens and global actors’ (Zappettini, 2019: 3). Similarly, Krzyżanowski’s (2010) research on European identities demonstrates that ‘identities emerge discursively as a combination of the individual, the social, the agentic and the structural dimensions of society’ and so are driven by both individual experiences and collective visions (Zappettini, 2019: 3). This is arguably as much the case for Britishness, which is an overarching supranational identity (McCrone, 1997), as

for Europeanness. The idea that European and British identities emerge through a combination of top-down and bottom-up constructions provides the rationale for considering media, political and individual constructions of identity and their commonalities and differences in this thesis. The approach recognises that in the networked public sphere (Friedland, Hove and Rojas, 2006), there is a non-linear interplay between media, institutions and the public rather than simply a top-down impingement on individual self-identification. In other words, as Hall's (1973) various readings of a text demonstrate, there is no simple one-to-one relationship between media and political discourses and individual identification. As a result, to provide a holistic understanding of the discursive construction of national and supranational identities in Brexit Britain, it is necessary to account for both top-down and bottom-up constructions and how they interrelate.

2.7.2 Public constructions of British identity

Although Smith (2016) postulates that the UK's vote to leave the EU destabilised a sense of Britishness, several interview studies with British participants about their sense of national identity conducted prior to the EU referendum suggest that a single homogenous 'Britishness' was not felt at a personal level even before the vote. When asked about what they think is typically British, white English participants reproduce a stereotype of the typical Briton as 'tea-drinking' and 'monarchy-loving' but argue that they do not fit this profile (Condor, 2000). Focus group participants across East Anglia identify individual freedom and mutual respect as British political values, and politeness, moderation, and self-deprecation as cultural values (Jarvis, Marsden and Atakav, 2019). However, some participants problematise the idea of "British values" by labelling it an elusive, context-dependent, and ideologically driven phrase, often tied to a xenophobic discourse of difference (Jarvis et al., 2019). When the discussion of

British national identity is explicitly grounded in the context of devolution, as in Skey's (2011) study, English participants express a tension between feeling uncomfortable with xenophobic English attitudes and wanting to reassert an English identity amid what they perceive to be growing Welsh and Scottish nationalism. These studies suggest that while Britons are aware of national cultural stereotypes, they are sometimes uncomfortable with the characteristics they include and reject the idea that there is a single, homogenous Britishness.

History and legend also have a place in citizens' discussions of national identity, demonstrating that the retelling of select episodes of national history is not just a discursive practice employed by journalists and politicians. Leave-voting Britons on Twitter likened Leave advocate and right-wing politician Nigel Farage to King Arthur 'risen from his slumber at the time of greatest need' (Charteris-Black, 2019: 73). By drawing on the national legend of King Arthur, tweeters imbued Farage with the values of chivalry and power and positioned him as a symbol of a very narrow version of national identity. In this case, Farage's Eurosceptic, anti-immigration, right-wing ideologies were made to symbolise a chivalrous, powerful, masculine national culture. This discursive practice indicates that contemporary political figures can symbolise a specific type of national identity for some citizens (Tranter and Donoghue, 2021).

In the context of Brexit, British nationals living in Europe after the EU referendum viewed the Leave vote as an expression of xenophobia and insularity; they expressed shame towards these attitudes and argued that they do not share them (Higgins, 2018). Survey research conducted by Benson, Zambelli, Craven and Sigona (2022) found that the UK's withdrawal from the EU has significantly impacted feelings towards the UK among British ex-pats: 80% of the sample surveyed said Brexit had affected their feelings a great deal or a lot. Open-text responses indicated a sense of shame, disappointment, and disconnectedness towards the UK (Benson et al., 2022). The study reveals that the changing international relationship between

the UK and the EU is influencing the way that British migrants conceptualise their national identities.

Although existing studies of citizens' conceptualisations of Britishness are illuminating, recent sociological research highlights an ongoing deficit in this area: a failure to consider how racial hierarchies of Britishness affect feelings of belonging (Thomas and Antony, 2015). Two separate studies examining attitudes towards Brexit among British people of colour living in EU Member States and white English people living in the UK reveal a difference in interpretation. Benson and Lewis's (2019) interviews with British people of colour reveal that participants conceive of the Leave vote and surrounding discourse as evidence of British racism and understand this as part of an ongoing xenophobia problem in the nation. As one participant claims, 'it was so obvious that [the referendum] was going to unleash all kinds of awful xenophobia that had just been simmering for years and of course it did' (Benson and Lewis, 2019: 9). Meanwhile, Higgins' (2018: 281) white English participants agree that the Leave vote reveals racist attitudes in Britain, but they view this as a new phenomenon in a country that they no longer recognise; one participant states that they 'find it difficult to recognise [their] own country now ... the attitude and the racism is so difficult to comprehend'. Although these studies do not explicitly address national identity, they illustrate the implications of recruiting only white English participants when examining national identity ideologies at the level of the individual. Experiences of living in Britain differ between white people and people of colour; any research that involves only white English participants must acknowledge that the findings only reflect a specific experience of Britishness (Benson and Lewis, 2019).

2.7.3 *British citizens' representations of Europe and the EU*

There are remarkably few qualitative projects that address British citizens' perceptions of Europe and the EU. One exception is Diez Medrano's (2003) interview study, in which British participants suggest there is a uniqueness to their culture which renders it distinct from a homogenous European culture (see also Duchesne, Frazer, Haegel and Van Infelgom, 2013). In the words of one of Diez Medrano's participants, 'we feel that the Europeans are so different from us' (Diez Medrano, 2003: 214). Although responses like these reflect a discourse of difference, participants in Diez Medrano's (2003) study do not express an attitude of superiority towards a distinct European culture. Given the belief in Britain being culturally distinct from Europe, it is perhaps not surprising that some British participants express fear towards seemingly unstoppable EU integration and discuss feelings of powerlessness against an undemocratic bureaucracy (Ichijo, 2008). One participant in Ichijo's (2008: 117) study of attitudes towards the EU, for example, states that they 'have picked up the view that the EU is an overly bureaucratic [...] institution'.

Although there are few *interview* studies that examine British perceptions of the EU, Ruzza and Pejovic (2019) analysed pro-Brexit British Facebook users' comments on posts by the European Commission and the European Parliament in the week after the EU referendum. The authors found that the posters represented the EU in terms of a democratic deficit, framed it as a "super-state", and focused on its supposed corruption. Within these representations, posters discursively constructed a populist cleavage between "ordinary people" and so-called elites, including European leaders (Ruzza and Pejovic, 2019).

2.7.4 *Performing Brexit-related identities*

Emerging sociological studies have begun to analyse the way that British individuals discursively construct their political identities in relation to Brexit. For instance, working-class people who did not vote or who voted Leave in East London and Nottinghamshire exhibit a strong sense of being left out of the processes of globalisation in interview responses (Mckenzie, 2017). This finding illustrates that ‘macro-stage political events’ like the EU referendum can be ‘illuminated’ by addressing ‘micro experiences on the ground’ (Mckenzie, 2017: 199). In her research, Davies (2021) finds that when British families talk about Brexit, the UK media’s construction of Britain as a divided nation is not always borne out (Davis, 2021). However, Andreouli’s (2020) work finds that Remain voters tend to accuse Leave voters of prejudice, suggesting that division is articulated in some contexts. Together, these three studies usefully illustrate that the ‘domestic sphere’ is an important ‘realm where Brexit is discussed and lived’ (Davies, 2021: 13). Chapter 6 of this thesis adds to the growing body of research that explores Brexit from the personal perspective of the individual.

2.7.5 *Articulating discrimination after the EU referendum vote*

Outside of academic research, several newspaper articles have revealed that non-British people living in the UK have feared discrimination since the Leave vote. The fear of discrimination is not unwarranted: reported incidents of racially motivated hate crimes in England and Wales have risen year-on-year, with 78,991 incidents recorded in 2018/2019 (Home Office, 2019). The Home Office attributes the increase largely to improvements in crime reporting by the police, but it also explains that there was a perceptible spike in hate crimes after the EU referendum in 2016 (Home Office, 2019). There is not just *fear* of discrimination in the UK,

then: evidence shows that incidents of discrimination are rife. Discriminatory incidents are not just documented in police statistics – they are also reported by journalists; for example, in 2019 *The Courier*, a Dundee newspaper, reported that the message “Polish go home” had been spray-painted at two different locations in the city (Keith, 2019). Together, police statistics and newspaper articles reveal consistent patterns of discrimination that have seemingly increased since the EU referendum.

At the time of writing, news outlets continue to address anxieties over the discrimination of EU citizens living in the UK. For example, *The Guardian* reported in January 2020 that European Parliament ministers were worried about provisions for EU citizens living in the UK (Rankin, 2020). Concerns were raised after then Home Office minister Brandon Lewis told a German newspaper that EU nationals risked being deported if they failed to apply for special status (Rankin, 2020). In the same month, *Euronews* reported that EU citizens were being told by British people that they had overstayed their welcome in the UK (Da Silva Marques, 2020). Going back further, *The Guardian* reported on a 2019 survey by Opinionium which found that 71% of the 1,006 ethnic minority people that they interviewed had faced discrimination (Booth, 2019). The figure had risen from 58% before the referendum vote in 2016 (Booth, 2019).

The statistics translate into lived experiences of fear and discrimination. Though little academic research has been conducted on narratives of discrimination after the EU referendum, stories are beginning to emerge. Reporting on their research with Polish immigrants in Southampton, Lahuerta and Iusmen (2019) explain that their participants experienced increasing objective and subjective vulnerability. That is, their interviewees had experienced more hate-based incidents (objective vulnerability) and felt a greater sense of fear as a result (subjective vulnerability). Underpinning all these incidents is a concern with who belongs – and should belong – in the UK in legal, political, cultural, and social terms. The discrimination

is not just racially motivated, as the official hate crime recording suggests, but is tied to discourses of *national* inclusion and exclusion. Academic research has yet to uncover how Britons respond to stories of discrimination towards minority social groups in the context of Brexit – this is a possible area for future research.

2.8 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, I provided a theoretical overview of the concepts of discourse, power, and ideologies, which are at the core of the critical discourse analytical approach that I take to the data in this thesis. I introduced the ideas of the nation and identity, specifically national identity, through the lens of social constructionism as multiple, context-dependent and constituted in discourse. I went on to elucidate the collective identities of Britishness and Europeanness. Following the theoretical considerations, I explored existing empirical research that has examined the discursive construction of Britain and Europe in the press, politics, and public opinion over the past thirty years.

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I outline the processes of data collection undertaken in the thesis. I provide a rationale for the collection of government documents, pro-Brexit newspaper articles and interviews with members of the public by describing the mediatisation of political discourses and the politicisation of media discourses. I detail the creation of the media and government corpora, and the downsampling methods I used to compile the annual subcorpora. I go on to explain in detail how the fifteen interviews with members of the public were carried out.

Following the focus on data collection, I introduce the analytical framework developed and adopted in this thesis. I provide an overview of corpus-assisted (critical) discourse analysis. I identify traditional methodological approaches in corpus linguistics and offer examples of existing studies of media and political discourse that have adopted these methods. I then outline the analytical framework used in the first two analytical chapters: a key semantic domain analysis, performed in conjunction with a micro-linguistic analysis of textual examples. After, I consider the method used to examine the interview data: a discourse analysis of narratives. I argue that both methods used in the analysis (corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis and discourse analysis of narratives) are underpinned by a methodological commitment to social constructionism and are therefore complementary methods.

3.2 Collection of the media corpora

The diffusion of Brexit discourse means that there are several types of media data I could have analysed in this thesis. The sheer diversity of genres available to analyse is evident in the variety of existing Brexit-related discourse studies, which range from analyses of Wikipedia

pages (Kopf, 2019), through citizens' Twitter accounts (Bouko and Garcia, 2019), to vox pops on news programmes (Miglbauer and Koller, 2019). Newspaper data has not been neglected either; there have been entire books dedicated to Brexit-related themes across the UK national media (Buckledee, 2018) and book chapters addressing discourse in specific newspapers, such as the *Guardian* (Lutzky and Kehoe, 2019). However, there has been no sustained study of how newspapers constructed British and European identities in the periods between the EU referendum and Britain's withdrawal from the EU in January 2020. This absence was one factor that influenced my decision to focus on national newspaper data rather than other text types.

The intention to interview members of the public about their interactions with institutional discourses of national identity was a second factor that informed the decision to analyse traditional media data. It was important to select a text type that would be familiar across age groups. News consumption on the internet via social media is much lower among those over 65 than it is for those aged 16-24 (Ofcom, 2017), making social media data an inappropriate data type for a project interested in the opinions of older members of the public. While younger people are more likely to consume news via social media, they also use the websites or apps of traditional media outlets and so will be familiar with the genre conventions of a written news article (Ofcom, 2017). I considered television broadcasts to be less ideologically insightful than newspaper data because there is no regulation against partisan reporting in newspapers, whereas the broadcasting industry has strict regulations that demand impartiality (Ofcom, 2021). As a result of their greater editorial freedom, newspapers were able to conduct their own campaigns in the lead-up to the EU referendum, intending to influence their readers at a time of democratic decision-making. Some pro-Brexit newspapers also explicitly took credit for the referendum result the day after the vote. For example, the *Daily Express* openly labelled its pro-Leave campaign as a victory the day after the EU referendum vote. The newspapers'

persuasive discourses and the way in which they drew on national identity are worthy of sustained analysis, not least because they highlight how certain identities are mobilised to support a specific socio-political agenda.

Reach and readership figures for national newspapers provide their own case for examining newspaper data. Each year, Ofcom produces a report on news consumption in the UK. The 2016 report contains figures for the combined print and digital monthly readership of newspapers (see Table 1), while the annual reports covering 2017/18 and 2018/19 offer weekly figures (see Table 2). Readership levels, though diminishing, remain strikingly high for most national newspapers and, in fact, Maccaferri (2019: 10) notes that ‘3 million more national newspapers were sold during the last month of the referendum campaign’. Maccaferri (2019) interprets this figure as evidence that the British public turns to newspapers at times of national crisis, such as Brexit.

Publication	Print and digital readership of newspapers in 2016/17 (thousands; monthly)
<i>Daily Mail and MailOnline</i>	30,141
<i>The Sun and The Sun Online</i>	25,804
<i>The Daily Telegraph and Telegraph Online</i>	21,677
<i>Daily Express and Express Online</i>	11,026
<i>Daily Star and Daily Star Online</i>	6,433

Table 1: Monthly readership of the national newspapers featured in this thesis in 2016/17 (combined print and digital) (Ofcom, 2017).

Publication	Print and digital readership of newspapers in 2017/18 (thousands; weekly)	Print and digital readership of newspapers in 2018/19 (thousands; weekly)
<i>Daily Mail and MailOnline</i>	9,356	9,623
<i>The Sun and The Sun Online</i>	5,610	5,017
<i>The Daily Telegraph and Telegraph Online</i>	5,083	4,828
<i>Daily Express and Express Online</i>	2,582	1,802
<i>Daily Star and Daily Star Online</i>	1,483	1,649

Table 2: Weekly readership of national newspapers featured in this project in 2017/18 and 2018/19 (combined print and digital) (Ofcom, 2018; Ofcom, 2019).

3.2.1 Choosing specific newspapers

The decision to focus solely on Leave-backing newspapers was based on several factors. First, as this project examines the relationship between three different data sets, I judged that there would be too much data to analyse in micro-linguistic depth if both pro-Brexit and pro-Remain newspapers were scrutinised. While corpus linguistics facilitates the analysis of large quantities of data (see, for example, Jaworska, 2018), including pro-Remain newspapers would introduce a further facet of comparative analysis, between pro-Brexit and pro-Remain discourses, in addition to comparisons between the three types of data. This would render the analysis too complex to cover thoroughly within one single thesis chapter. In other words, a comparative

analysis between Leave-backing and Remain-supporting newspapers' discourses of national identity could (and should) fill an entire thesis.

Secondly, a Reuters Institute study found that two-thirds of British national newspapers had a pro-Leave dominance in their articles around the time of the referendum, suggesting that Leave discourses were in the majority in the media (Levy et al., 2016). Newspapers with a pro-Leave dominance also had the highest readership levels, meaning pro-Leave constructions of Britain and Europe were the most dominant, widely accessible, and widely accessed representations for newspaper-reading Britons (Levy et al., 2016). Equally, Swales (2016) found that five pro-Brexit newspapers had the highest number of Leave-supporting readers, suggesting an echo chamber effect whereby readers' beliefs were reinforced by media representations. Although analysing texts with smaller audiences has value, this project is concerned with the media discourses that had the greatest potential reach. As analysing both Leave and Remain texts is not practical in the space available and Remain articles alone would represent a minority discourse, Leave-backing newspaper articles appeared by this measure to be the obvious choice for analysis.

Thirdly, although analysing Leave discourses only provides a partial overview of media constructions of Britain between the periods of the EU referendum and Brexit, a comparison with government data can illustrate the ways in which ministers drew upon Leave-backing discourses in their constructions of post-Brexit Britain. This is especially interesting given that one of the leaders of the Vote Leave campaign, Boris Johnson, eventually presided over the UK-EU deal that was approved by Parliament and used to enact the UK's withdrawal.

After the decision was made to focus on pro-Brexit national newspapers, I selected specific newspapers based on their editorial stance towards Brexit. *The Express* was unequivocal in its attitude towards the EU referendum; after the result was announced, it claimed that '[the] world's most successful newspaper crusade [had] end[ed] in victory for

your *Daily Express*' (Daily Express, 2016: 1). *The Sun* was equally transparent, urging its readers to 'BeLEAVE in Britain' and 'Vote to quit EU on June 23' (The Sun, 2016: 1). Meanwhile, the *Daily Mail* demanded, 'If you believe in Britain, vote Leave' (Daily Mail, 2016: 1). *The Daily Telegraph* pitched a Leave vote as an expression of hope for the future of the country: 'In supporting a vote to leave the EU, we are not harking back to some Britannic golden age lost in the mists of time but looking forward to a new beginning for our country' (The Telegraph, 2016: 1). Finally, the *Daily Star* covered its front page with a bulldog wearing a Union Jack hat alongside the headline: 'Now let's make Britain great again' (Daily Star, 2016: 1). These newspapers were not the only publications adopting a pro-Brexit stance: the left-wing newspaper *Morning Star* also backed Brexit. However, this newspaper was excluded from the dataset because it is tied to a specific political party, which renders it distinct from the selected newspapers. It also has a much smaller readership.

3.2.2 Collecting the newspaper data

Articles from the five national newspapers (*The Sun*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Star*) and their online counterparts were downloaded from the online news repository Nexis. News and comment articles, alongside letters to the editor, were selected for analysis because they contribute to the newspapers' overall constructions of UK and European identities. Although letters are written by readers and submitted to the newspaper, they are subjected to editorial processes in much the same way as commissioned pieces. That is, they are selected for inclusion in the publication and headlines are added by editors to establish a sense of coherence between the different submissions. These processes mean that the letters become part of the editorial product of the newspapers and are unlikely to represent opinions that are oppositional to the publications' ideological positions.

During the data collection process, the decision was made not to collect live blogs from the newspapers' websites. This was because each time a live blog was updated, it appeared as a separate article in Nexis. Collecting each iteration of a live blog would skew any type of linguistic analysis focused on collocations or phraseology, as it would seem that collocations and phrases were repeated across texts when repetitions would be from different versions of the same article. I manually checked each article to ensure it was not a live blog before downloading (e.g., by searching for time stamps or evidence of updates in the body of the article). Any live blogs that slipped through were deleted after the initial data collection.

The search criteria for selecting articles stipulated that each piece had to include 'Britain' or 'British', 'Europe' or 'European' and 'Brexit', 'nation' and 'people' somewhere in the text. I chose to focus on 'Britain' and 'British' because I was interested in discourses of (supra)national identity that transcended the constituent countries of the UK, and although *English* nationalism is associated with greater Euroscepticism, often this is framed through the language of Britishness (Wellings, 2010; Leith and Sim, 2022). The decision to include 'Europe' and not 'EU' was made on two grounds. First, a preliminary search revealed that only having 'EU' as a search term excluded discourses about Europe as a continent, which are central to identity discussions because they are closely tied to ideas of culture. Second, 'Europe' is often used to refer to the EU in political, press and individual discourses (Koller, Kopf and Miglbauer, 2019), so talk about the 'EU' would undoubtedly surface in articles that also mention 'Europe'. The noun 'Brexit' ensured that the political context was consistent with the government data, to which the media data would be compared. The decision to include the nouns 'nation' and 'people' was based on the need to limit the texts to those that focused on national identities amid broader discourses about political agreements, negotiations, and politicians. 'Nation' was a specific choice based on the unique, supranational identity of Britishness (McCrone, 1997). As there are four constituent countries in the UK, the noun

‘country’ with its geographical connotations would have presented articles that focused on individual countries. Given the tendency towards Anglocentrism in political discourses about the UK (Mycock and Hayton, 2012), that country would likely be England. This would be problematic as, of course, the EU referendum had ramifications for all UK countries.

The articles that were collected had been published between 22 February 2016, when the EU referendum date was first announced in Parliament, and 12 December 2019, the date of the general election organised by Boris Johnson (see Chapter 1 for political context). Beginning with the parliamentary announcement ensured that articles published during the referendum campaigns, both political and newspaper-led, were included in the data sets, which made it possible to track shifts in the discourses of national identity pre- and post-referendum.

The data collection endpoint was more difficult to determine. Originally, I had intended to collect data until the extended exit date of 31 October 2019. However, as the date neared, Johnson announced his intention to hold a general election in December and it seemed reasonable to extend the data collection to this date as it would likely shape the context of interview responses by participants. By the general election date, it was not clear that the UK would leave the EU on 31 January 2020, so I decided to cap the data collection at the general election. Even when the UK did leave, the intention to take two months of data from each year (see Section 3.2.3) precluded collection of the articles published up to 31 January 2020, as it would provide only one month of data from 2020. As a result, the general election date remained the data collection endpoint.

3.2.3 Downsampling the data

When the data were collected, the entire media corpus amounted to seven million words. After a preliminary key semantic domain analysis (see Section 3.6.4) of this corpus, I identified two

principal problems with the data. The first was that it was extremely difficult to identify how political events related to changes in the salience of semantic domains across the Brexit timeline without segmenting the data. To be able to map the relationship between political events and discursive shifts, a top-down diachronic segmentation into months and years would be necessary (Marchi, 2018).

Secondly, the corpus was judged to be too large to support the level of micro-linguistic analysis that I wanted to perform. That is, although corpus linguistic methods enable researchers to identify patterns in corpora as large as 140 million words (Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008) – and indeed much larger – I wanted to be able to manually thematise concordance lines and then perform a micro-linguistic analysis of examples, highlighting discursive strategies. With a corpus of seven million words, the most key semantic domains had thousands of concordance lines; to analyse these at a micro-linguistic level, I would have had to select a random sample from across the entire three-year period which would again make the mapping of discourses onto specific events more difficult. Even splitting the corpus into annual subcorpora would produce too many concordance lines to reliably categorise manually. Reducing the size of the annual subcorpora would result in fewer concordance lines, which would enable me to perform a thematic analysis on all the example concordance lines rather than a random sample. This, in turn, would allow me to say something concrete about identity construction around several politically significant events in the Brexit timeline, rather than generalising based on a random sample from the entire year.

To reduce the corpus size while maintaining its representativeness, I counted the number of relevant articles published each month across the years and selected the two months from each year that had the greatest number of published articles. Figure 1 illustrates the publication output of the articles across the data collection period.

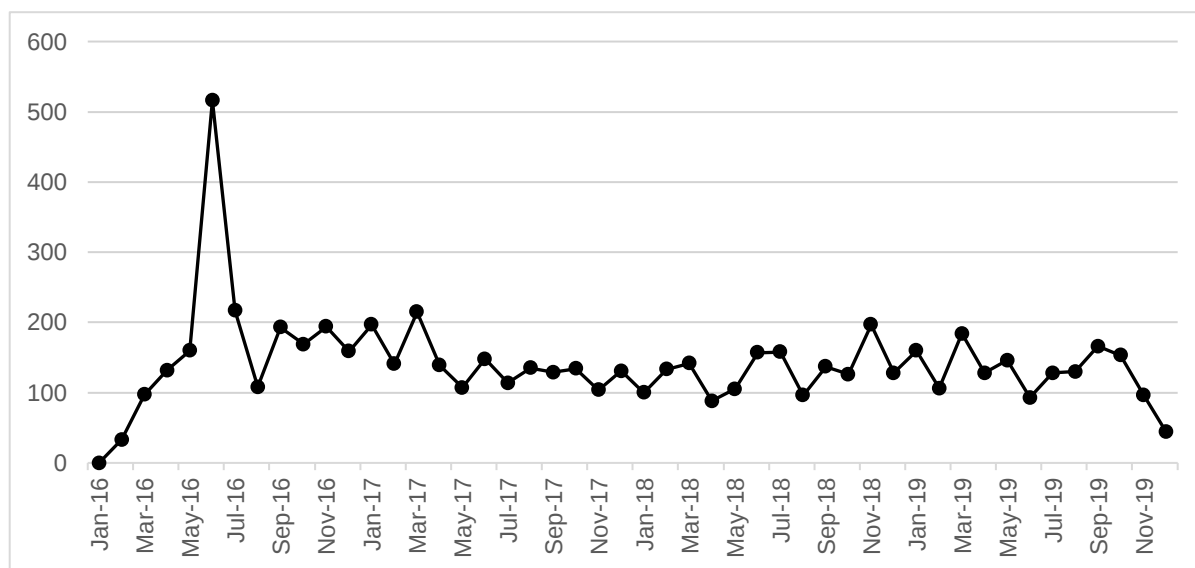


Figure 1: Output of pro-Leave newspaper articles across the data collection period

When I had identified the two peak months from each year, I created four annual subcorpora, with each subcorpus including the two months of peak output data from that year. When the peak months were mapped onto events in the Brexit timeline, it revealed, unsurprisingly, that months with the highest output of data corresponded to key political events. Table 3 below shows the months included in each annual subcorpus, alongside the number of articles and words, and the political events that occurred during each month. While the number of words in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 subcorpora is remarkably balanced, the 2016 subcorpus is twice the size. This is not surprising: the EU referendum took place in June 2016 and the higher number of articles and words reflects increased reporting around the referendum. In total, across the four annual subcorpora, 2,205 articles and 1,647,707 words of media data were analysed.

Annual subcorpus	Peak months	Number of articles	Number of words	(Key) political events
2016	June, July	733	666,734	The EU referendum and the immediate aftermath
2017	January, March	609	332,140	Jan: Supreme Court says government needs primary legislation to trigger Article 50; government publishes Withdrawal Bill draft. Mar: Article 50 is triggered.
2018	July, November	513	332,262	July: Government publishes White Paper on relationship with EU; David Davis resigns. Nov: Dominic Raab resigns.
2019	March, September	350	316,571	Mar: Extension to withdrawal process announced and approved. Sept: Benn Act is presented and becomes law; Boris Johnson prorogues Parliament; Supreme Court judges that Boris Johnson's decision to prorogue Parliament is unlawful.

Table 3: Breakdown of annual subcorpora into months, articles, words, and political events

3.3 Composition of the media corpora

3.3.1 Representativeness of the subcorpora

The decision to exclude live blogs from the newspapers' websites slightly affected the representativeness of the data because the *Telegraph Online* and *MailOnline* frequently used live blogs in their Brexit-related reporting. Excluding live blogs meant that the contributions these two publications made to the corpora were smaller than their actual output during the data collection period. In turn, this made the contribution of *Express Online* seem greater than it would be if live blogs from the *Telegraph Online* and *MailOnline* were considered.

Although the decision to exclude live blogs somewhat affects the representativeness of the data, in that it amplifies the voices of some publications while diminishing others, it is less detrimental to the validity of the analysis than skewing the statistical results by including terms that only achieve keyness (see Section 3.6.1) because of duplication in the corpus compilation. It is possible to account for the effect of excluding live blogs by explaining that the analysis is representative of media output during peak months rather than the entire period, adding the caveat that the *Telegraph Online* and *MailOnline* are underrepresented. However, it would be difficult to account for the effect on the statistical analyses if live blogs had been included. Equally, excluding live blogs means the data is representative of the printed versions of the newspapers, which do not include live blogs. Given that older people are less likely to access news online (Ofcom, 2017), if I were to include live blogs, I could be analysing data that a section of the audience is less likely to see. Excluding live blogs does not have the same exclusionary effect.

The decision to exclude live blogs is not the only factor that affected the representativeness of the data. As mentioned above and revealed in Figure 2 in Appendix A,

compiling separate subcorpora comprising two peak months from each year means that some publications make a greater contribution to the downsampled corpora relative to the original, seven-million-word dataset. However, this provides a revealing insight into the Brexit-related publishing patterns of the newspapers. Several of the publications whose articles made the smallest contributions to the overall media corpus are overrepresented in the annual subcorpora. This overrepresentation demonstrates that the publications which focused less on Britain, Europe, and Brexit in general tended to write more about these topics around key events in the Brexit timeline, whereas other publications with higher outputs appeared to publish a steady stream of articles over the three-year period. The publications that are consistently overrepresented are *Daily Star*, *Daily Star Online* and *The Sun*. The *Daily Star* and the *Daily Star Online* constitute 0.18% and 1.11% of the overall media corpus, respectively. However, their contribution to the annual subcorpora ranges from 0% to 0.52% in the case of the *Daily Star* and 0.56% to 4.23% in the *Daily Star Online*. While the overrepresentation of the *Daily Star* is marginal, it is much more significant in the *Daily Star Online*'s contribution to the 2016 corpus. *The Sun* is overrepresented in all the subcorpora by at least 0.23%, although this is only a very minor difference. The *Daily Mail* is also overrepresented marginally in the 2018 and 2019 subcorpora but is representative of overall output in the two earlier years.

The Sun Online is a unique case because it is not present at all in the subcorpora in 2016 and 2017, yet it contributes around 10% in 2018 and 6% in 2019. Based on its contribution to the overall media corpus (3.55%), these subcorpora figures look like stark underrepresentations in the early years and clear overrepresentations in later years. However, the single figure for the overall media corpus is misleading. There are no instances of articles from *The Sun Online* at all in the larger 2016 dataset and only 35 in 2017. This means that the publication's contribution to the 2016 subcorpus is faithful, and its figure for 2017 is only a slight

underrepresentation. The 3.55% figure for the entire corpus masks the fact that it is weighted more towards the later subcorpora; that the two later subcorpora show higher figures is not surprising. However, there is still a slight discrepancy. To contribute 10% to the entire media corpus for 2018, there would have to be 148 articles from *The Sun Online* in 2018. There are only 119, which represents around an 8% contribution. This means that *The Sun Online* is slightly overrepresented in the 2018 subcorpus. Similarly, the 2019 figure for *The Sun Online* overrepresents its contribution to that year's discourse by around 0.5% - again, a minor effect.

Not all publications are over- or underrepresented. The distributions of *The Express*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Telegraph Online*, *MailOnline* and *Express Online* are largely faithful reflections of their contribution to the overall media corpus of seven million words. As *Express Online*, *Telegraph Online* and *MailOnline* contribute the most to the overall corpus, representing around 76% of the overall data when taken together, this means most of the articles and examples are likely to be representative of the general output. Despite their potential limitations, then, the subcorpora offer the most representative images available to date of the discourses of national identity that appeared in Leave-backing newspapers between February 2016 and December 2019. They are worthy of examination because they can provide new insights into the way that these newspapers mobilised national identities to influence the public's political decision-making at key points in the Brexit timeline. The diachronic data segmentation and downsampling methods enable the discourses to be clearly mapped onto political events, allowing the analysis to go beyond the texts to their socio-political ramifications.

3.4 Collection of the government subcorpora

Data from the UK government were collected from three ministerial departments involved in Britain's withdrawal from the EU: the Home Office, the Foreign Office, and the Department for Exiting the European Union (henceforth DExEU). The Home Office was chosen because, as its name implies, it is responsible for delimiting a national homeland and outlining who belongs in it (Law, 2001). Similarly, the Foreign Office was selected as it legally and politically defines which nations and people are different from the national ingroup. As both departments are responsible for representing the UK to national and international audiences, their documents frequently include discourses of nationhood and belonging. In other words, the documents represent the government's public-directed discourse about Britishness and foreignness. The Home Office and the Foreign Office were also involved, alongside the DExEU, in negotiating Brexit deal points and reporting these negotiation details back to the public, so they were partly responsible for constructing a post-Brexit Britain. Given their focus on discourses of nationhood, the documents produced by these departments are likely to reveal the identities being constructed by the government for post-Brexit Britain.

Each of the government's twenty-four ministerial departments has its own webpage on the UK government website. On each webpage, information is organised into roughly six sections: 'Services', 'Guidance and Regulation', 'News and Communications', 'Research and Statistics', 'Policy Papers and Consultations', and 'Transparency and Freedom of Information Releases'. Two sections were collected from each of the three respective ministerial department webpages: 'News and Communications Documents', and 'Policy Papers and Consultations'. The former category included government-written news articles, press releases and speeches. These documents were selected because they represent the government's construction of events that are also likely to be reported on by the media. This allows for a

comparison between the governmental and media representations of national, Brexit-related events as well as an analysis of recontextualisation patterns between the two government text types. The policy papers and consultations were also selected because they represent the government's public-directed discourse about Britishness, offering an opportunity to examine the government's perspective without additional media framing.

Data were selected for inclusion in the government corpus if they had been tagged as related to 'Brexit' on the government's website, and if they had been published by one of the three ministerial departments in either their 'News and Communications' or 'Policy Papers and Consultations' sections between 22 February 2016 and 12 December 2019. All documents were copied from the website and pasted into a plain text document, except for documents which consisted solely of tables. These documents were excluded from the corpus because they do not constitute uninterrupted prose and so were unlikely to be processed accurately by the concordance software. As all available government data were collected aside from the tables, the corpus is representative of spoken and written government-produced discourse about Brexit and national identity during the data collection period.

3.4.1 Production processes of government documents

The two sections from which the data were collected contain a wide variety of documents. Each document has its own format and style which are outlined in a style guide published on the UK government website. The result of these different formats is a complex web of editorial and publishing processes of which the public is not necessarily aware. Table 4 below offers a breakdown of the different document types that contribute to the overall government corpus.

Document type	Frequency	Document type	Frequency
News and communications (NC): Press release	140	Policy papers and Consultations (PC): White Papers, Position Papers and “future framework” presentations	38
NC: Statement	56	PC: Legal texts and impact assessments	33
NC: Speech/editorial	55	PC: Draft agreements and Bill overviews	30
NC: News story	31	PC: Communiques and memoranda	27
NC: Letter	30	PC: Technical information	26
NC: Explainer/factsheet	5	PC: Explainer/factsheet	21
		PC: Report on negotiations and committees	7
		Policy papers and consultations (PC): Skeleton argument	1
		PC: Government response to White Paper	1
	Total: 317		Total: 185

Table 4: Breakdown of text types in the government corpus

As Table 4 illustrates, press releases are by far the most frequent document type published in the ‘News and Communications’ sections of the Home Office, Foreign Office and DExEU’s pages. Press releases, according to the government website, are published ‘unedited’ as they were sent to the media (Government Digital Service, 2020: n.p.). In addition to providing transparency for the public, publishing unedited press releases allows those who are interested to identify the ways in which official government information is recontextualised by the media for public consumption. All official statements by an organisational spokesperson or minister on a newsworthy topic are counted as press releases, except for parliamentary statements, which have their own format and publishing procedure (Government Digital Service, 2020). Within the press release genre, then, several voices are represented, including those of civil servants, organisational representatives, and government ministers. These voices may not reach the public in equal measure, however, because press releases are intended for journalists, who will publish the information in a story that fits their publication’s editorial line.

Statements, speeches, and editorials are also frequently published in the ‘News and Communications’ sections of the departmental websites. These documents are even more complex than press releases: speeches and statements are written by professional speech writers, performed by ministers and then, in some cases, published on the government’s website. Not all speeches are published online; the government’s style guide states that speeches should only be published where there is an expectation that there will be a high level of public interest in everything that was said, rather than an interest in segments of the speech (Government Digital Service, 2020). The speeches on the government website, then, reflect civil servants’ perceptions of what is newsworthy to the national audience. In other words, because of the selection processes, these texts can be viewed as curated for the purposes of an audience and so selected because they express what the government would like the public to know.

In the ‘Policy Papers and Consultations’ section, the most frequent document type is the policy paper, which exists to make a persuasive case in favour of the government’s position. The government’s policy papers are aimed at ‘high-level specialists’ and ‘people who hold the government to account’ (Government Digital Service, 2020: n.p.). It is reasonable to expect, then, that these texts will include more legal and political jargon than the ‘News and Communications’ documents. This is certainly also true for the other frequent text types in this section: legal texts and impact assessments, and draft agreements and Bills. These texts are more likely to be descriptive than persuasive and are less likely to have a public audience.

In total, 501 government documents were collected and analysed, amounting to 1,481,439 words. Table 5 below outlines the number of documents and tokens in each subcorpus.

Annual subcorpus	Number of documents	Number of words (tokens)
2016	30	71,169
2017	178	308,262
2018	194	699,569
2019	99	402,439

Table 5: Breakdown of annual government subcorpora

3.4.2 Rationale for collecting government data

The decision to analyse both government and media data was made because of the interrelatedness of government and media discourses: the media facilitates access to political news. For as long as the media covers political events, there is less need for citizens to trawl through the government’s website to learn about what each ministerial department is doing.

Although no data that measures public consumption of government-produced documents is available, given the extra effort required to locate the information on the government website, it is unlikely that members of the public consistently engage with political news via the government's communication channels. In short, government documents are unlikely to have the same reach and weight as the media coverage of them. This dynamic is termed the *mediatisation of politics*, a phrase which recognises that government discourses are likely to be reported on by the media and are often presented directly to the public through media channels (Moffitt and Tormey, 2014). The awareness of media interest in political stories means that political discourse producers must consider how best to discursively package the main points of their messages so that they reach the public despite media framing. Of course, the relationship between the media and politicians is not one-way but bidirectional, with media discourses also influencing political stories.

Analysing institutional representations of national identity without considering both political and media discourses would mean considering only part of the production and consumption process. That is, examining only one would result in an incomplete representation of the dynamics between institutional and individual discourses of national identity at a critical juncture in British nation-building (Capoccia, 2016). This is especially true in the context of the EU-UK relationship, where politicians 'often respond to Eurosceptic portrayals of the EU in the media, rather than formulating their own' (Rowinski, 2017: 2). Analysing both media and government discourse enables consideration of whether there is a clear institutional line on what it means to be British or European across the UK press and politics, or whether the different institutions construct these identities in divergent ways.

A further consideration in favour of analysing government data is that any institutional data collected for the project would be used as the basis for interviews that would probe public opinion. Collecting this data and presenting it to members of the public offers them the

opportunity to engage explicitly in sustained critical reflection on longer government documents in a way that they might not usually do due to the tendency of the media to report political news in short soundbites.

3.5 Lay accounts of Brexit and identity: data collection

In addition to considering media and political constructions of the nation, this thesis investigates how national identities are constructed in interviews about Brexit with members of the public. I chose to look at personal perspectives towards Brexit and national identity alongside media and political texts because, as Lennon and Kilby (2020: 116) note, ‘regardless of how national identity is socially engineered or politically reworked in elite discourse, it always requires the emotional endorsement of its citizenry’. Equally, as highlighted earlier, Krzyżanowski’s (2010) study demonstrates that identity construction exists at the intersection between individual experiences (bottom-up processes) and collective visions (top-down processes). To understand supra-national identity construction in Brexit Britain, then, it is necessary to consider both institutional and individual discourses.

As part of the ethics approval process, I was required to produce a set of interview questions which became the basis of my semi-structured interview plan (see Appendix E). Given that discussions around national identity and potential marginalisation are emotional and could lead to distress, I committed to explaining the topics of the interview beforehand to the participants and reminding them that they had the right to stop the interview at any point and withdraw their data. I felt that these reassurances would mitigate any risks associated with the research.

Interviews were split into five topics that corresponded with different levels of identification and influences on national identity construction in the Brexit context: the locality,

the nation, EU-rope, the EU referendum, and an institutional stimulus exercise. The first section, the locality, explored participants' connections to the area in which they live to ascertain the discursive construction of regional and local identities and emotional connections to place (see Di Masso et al., 2013 for more on people-in-places discourses). The second section examined participants' expressions of nationality and the degree to which their national identity figures in the way they understand and present themselves. Section three surveyed identification with EU-rope, both as a continent and a political community. Section four considered the motivations for voting the way the participant did in the EU referendum and the materials the participants consulted to make their decisions.

The fifth section, the stimulus task, examined the way that interviewees position themselves in relation to media and government discourses. I selected one text from the government corpus that represented the early optimism of Theresa May's cabinet (see Chapter 5 for an analysis of this text). This was a speech by Theresa May, delivered in 2017, which outlined her vision for post-Brexit Britain. I also selected one text from the media corpus (from *The Telegraph*) which reflected the dominant narrative of division in the newspapers in the later years (see Appendix C for the extracts I selected from both texts; see Chapter 4 for an analysis of this excerpt). The extracts were chosen to be representative of the narratives at different points in the Brexit process but were also carefully selected so that they could be simultaneously interpreted as two sides to the same argument *or* two completely different constructions of the nation. (That is, they could represent unity and division respectively, or both reflect the need for unity because of division). The texts acted as a stimulus for discussions of the kind of nation in which participants lived and would like to live.

Participant recruitment

Initially, I had planned to recruit interviewees by visiting areas within the East Midlands that had voted overwhelmingly to Leave. I had intended to leave leaflets on public information boards and in locations where people were likely to meet, such as churches and town halls. Unfortunately, less than a month after ethics approval was awarded, the UK went into lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, travel was restricted, and face-to-face research became impossible, necessitating a change to online recruitment and online interviews. To make the recruitment process easier, I focused on the smaller localities of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, places that, in some constituencies, voted very firmly to leave the EU (see, for example, Mansfield, where 70.9% of voters opted for Leave).

As an initial stage of online recruitment, I asked admins of locality-based Facebook groups if I could share my call for participants with their members and posted information about the project when that permission was granted. Two people expressed an interest through this recruitment strategy, and only one of the two went ahead with the interview. Recruitment online was challenging, not just because Brexit became a less important topic for discussion than the pandemic (Davies and Carter, 2021), but also because there was an underlying suspicion among potential Leave-voting participants about the intentions of the project. One potential participant displayed hostility and concern towards the project, accusing me of trying to frame Leave voters as racist and xenophobic. These suspicions and the articulation of them on public Facebook posts made recruitment for interviews doubly difficult.

As I live in Nottinghamshire, I decided to post a call for participants on my personal Facebook page. This yielded nine interviewees who were my acquaintances (e.g., people I had previously known at university, and former neighbours). All but one of these interviewees had voted to Remain, meaning that I had only one Leave-voting participant who self-selected to

participate in the interview process. I recruited five further participants through informal networks, such as friends of friends. In total, I interviewed fifteen participants. I chose to cap the interviews at fifteen due to limitations on the amount of time I had to collect the data and the difficulties I had recruiting participants online due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Given that the uptake for participating was so low, it took months just to recruit a single participant, and I required sufficient time to analyse the data. I also did not want to collect data after mid-2021 because of the greater distance from the EU membership referendum and Britain's withdrawal from the EU, which could influence participants' retrospective responses to the process.

As Table 6 below demonstrates, I interviewed five Leave voters and ten Remain voters. Six of my interviewees were female-identifying and nine were male-identifying. All the Leave-voting participants aligned themselves with the Conservatives, while the Remain-voting participants supported a mix of Labour, the Liberal Democrats, and the Green Party. (It is worth noting that this is *not* a representative sample of the complex intersection between Remainer and Leaver identities and political affiliation across the UK – 'preferences to leave or remain do not fit neatly onto the traditional Left/Right' dimension [Woollen, 2022: 98]). Participant IDs were allocated in the order in which the respondents were interviewed.

Participant ID	Vote in the EU referendum	Age	Gender	Political affiliation	National news outlets
Participant A	Remain	35-54	Female	Labour	BBC, Sky
Participant B	Remain	35-54	Female	Labour	<i>Telegraph</i> , BBC, Sky
Participant C	Leave	75+	Female	Conservative	BBC, Sky, <i>The Sun</i>

Participant D	Leave	75+	Male	Conservative	<i>Telegraph</i>
Participant E	Leave	75+	Female	Conservative	<i>Telegraph</i>
Participant F	Remain	35-54	Male	Labour	BBC
Participant G	Remain	25-34	Male	Labour	<i>Guardian</i>
Participant H	Remain	25-34	Male	Greens, Lib Dems, Labour	<i>Guardian,</i> <i>Independent,</i> <i>Times,</i> <i>Telegraph</i>
Participant I	Remain	18-24	Female	Labour, Green	<i>Mirror,</i> <i>Guardian</i>
Participant J	Remain	25-34	Male	None	BBC
Participant K	Remain	25-34	Male	Liberal Democrats	<i>Telegraph,</i> <i>Guardian</i>
Participant L	Remain	18-24	Female	Labour	BBC, <i>Guardian</i>
Participant M	Remain	25-34	Male	Labour	<i>Independent,</i> <i>Guardian,</i> BBC
Participant N	Leave	35-54	Male	Conservative	BBC, <i>Times,</i> <i>Guardian</i>
Participant O	Leave	35-54	Male	Conservative	<i>Daily Mail</i>

Table 6: Participant demographics for interviews

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, face-to-face interviewing was not possible throughout 2020 and the first half of 2021. As a result, all fifteen interviews were conducted online. All but three

of the interviews were conducted over video conferencing software (a mix of Facebook Messenger calls, Skype, Microsoft Teams, and FaceTime). The other three were conducted via audio call due to the participants' lack of familiarity with video conferencing software. I anticipate that there were at least three negative effects of having to conduct interviews online. The first is that older Leave voters, who were less familiar with video conferencing software and the social media site (Facebook) I used for recruitment, were unlikely to either see or self-select to participate in the study. As Jones (2020) notes, some groups of potential participants become invisible to us as researchers because they do not have access to the equipment they need to participate; this, in turn, limits the perspectives and voices captured by the research. The second effect is that I was only able to note paralinguistic features in the interviews that were conducted over video. As a result, I cannot consistently comment on paralinguistic features, such as facial expressions, in my analysis. A final negative effect is that it can be difficult to pick up on 'subtle contextualisation cues over Zoom' (Jones, 2020: 187).

Following the interview, my participants filled in a post-interview survey which provided information about their age, political affiliation, consumption of news and use of social media websites as news sources. Collecting this information allowed me to see whether my participants regularly encountered the pro-Leave discourses I analyse in Chapter 4, either directly or through social media posts. It also enabled me to compare and corroborate patterns with broader quantitative studies which found that older voters were more likely to vote to leave the EU in the referendum (Ashcroft, 2016).

3.6 Corpus linguistics

3.6.1 *Corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis (CA-CDA)*

Having explored the data collection processes, I turn now to the analytical methods applied in this thesis, beginning with corpus linguistics. Corpus linguistics is the study of naturally occurring language use; it involves analysing texts that are stored in a large, electronic database called a corpus (Baker, 2006). As the texts in a corpus are electronically encoded, they can be subjected to complex calculations that reveal patterns in language use within and across different documents (Baker, 2006). There is some debate among linguists as to whether corpus linguistics is a discipline of its own, or whether it is best understood as a methodology (Partington et al., 2013). Advocates of the former position claim that corpus linguistics is a ‘new philosophical approach’ (Leech, 1992: 106), ‘an important concept in linguistic theory’ (Stubbs, 1993: 24), and ‘a theoretical approach’ (Teubert, 2005: 2). According to the latter perspective, corpus linguistics is a ‘new [...] *methodological* paradigm’ (Partington et al., 2013: 7, emphasis in original).

The corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) position adopted in this thesis subscribes to the view of corpus linguistics as a methodology; corpus techniques are used as a way into the data and to extend the scope of discourse analysis beyond a small group of texts (Partington et al., 2013). CADS was first considered by Hardt-Mautner (1995) and later defined as ‘that set of studies into the form and/or function of language as *communicative discourse* which incorporates the use of computerised corpora in their analyses’ (Partington et al., 2013: 10, emphasis in original). CADS is an eclectic approach which allows researchers to draw on as many corpus tools as necessary to provide complete results (Partington et al., 2013). The aim of the approach, according to the authors, is ‘the uncovering, in the discourse type under study,

of what we might call *non-obvious meaning*' (Partington et al., 2013: 11, emphasis in original). While this definition does not appear at odds with the intentions of *critical* discourse analysis, Partington et al. (2013: 10) are emphatic that CADS is not tied to CDA because, 'unlike CDA, it has no overarching political agenda'. Arguably, there is no reason why critical discourse studies that 'incorporate quantitative/statistical methods in the study of discourse types' should not also be considered CADS, given that these studies also aim to uncover "non-obvious" meaning (Partington et al., 2013: 10). In fact, corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis (CA-CDA) could be a subset of CADS, where the political agenda and philosophical roots of social constructionism are supplied by the critical approach to discourse, while the aim remains to uncover non-obvious meaning using corpus methods. Indeed, this would align with Machin and Mayr's (2012: 5) conceptualisation of CDA as denaturalising language to reveal 'ideas, absences and taken-for-granted assumptions in texts'. It would also meet the technological requirements of CADS as outlined by Partington et al. (2013). Nevertheless, to preserve the distinction drawn by Partington et al. (2013), the corpus-assisted CDA approach adopted in this thesis shall be referred to hereafter as CA-CDA.

One of the advantages of using corpus linguistics as a tool for critical discourse analysis, as suggested above, is that it can reveal the "incremental effect of discourse" (Baker, 2006). That is, it can highlight discourse patterns that recur across texts from a particular genre, but which are imperceptible in a manual analysis of only a small number of texts (Baker, 2006). This advantage was recognised in an early analysis of the potential of CA-CDA by Hardt-Mautner (1995: 3), who posited that using computers to support CDA could address the fact that 'what is gained in terms of depth' in qualitative analysis is often 'lost in terms of breadth'. Corpus linguists have, over years of study, developed a set of tools that are commonly used to reveal the incremental effect of discourse patterns: most prominently, keyword analysis, collocation analysis, and concordance analysis.

Keyword analysis involves comparing relative word frequencies from the corpus of interest (the “target” corpus) with frequencies from another, discursively related corpus (the “reference” corpus). Words which occur statistically significantly more frequently in the target corpus than the reference corpus are called positive keywords; they are considered to indicate the “aboutness” of the corpus texts (Scott, 1999). Positive keywords shift depending on the reference corpus and so the keyword list that is generated always belongs to a particular comparison rather than to the target corpus (Pojanapunya and Watson Todd, 2016).

In contrast, collocation analysis examines the phenomenon of words consistently occurring next to or near each other, typically in a narrow span of four or five words on either side of the node word (Kang, 2018). Analysing collocations can reveal semantic preferences, which are the semantic fields with which a word co-occurs (Stubbs, 2001). It can also uncover discourse prosodies – the evaluative patterns surrounding a word or phrase (Baker, 2006). Collocation analysis is one of the most widely used methods in CA-CDA for identifying discourses and semantic prosodies because it is a principled process. The statistical measures of collocational association provide objective evidence for the interrelationships between words and hence the existence of certain discourses, offering a counter to the argument that CDA is often based on “cherry-picking” data to suit a particular agenda.

Concordance analysis, as the name suggests, examines ‘concordances’ – lines of text from the corpus which include a particular search term (Baker, 2006). Concordance lines help to contextualise search terms by revealing the co-text surrounding them; it is this role which gives concordance lines their alternative name, ‘keywords-in-context’ or KWIC (Baker, 2006).

3.6.2 CA-CDA of media and political discourses

Many existing studies of identity construction have adopted one of the three corpus methods outlined above. For example, Gabrielatos and Baker (2008) examined the construction of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK press. Using a corpus of 140 million words from articles published between 1996 and 2005, the authors performed a collocation analysis and an analysis of concordance lines. They pushed the boundaries of these traditional approaches by conducting a diachronic analysis of collocates. The authors focused on collocates that were present in at least seven of their ten annual subcorpora, labelling them ‘consistent collocates’ or ‘c-collocates’. The advent of c-collocates was important for mapping stable collocations – and hence stable representations of phenomena – over time, ensuring that findings were not skewed by collocations that characterised only one or two periods in the evolution of the discourse. C-collocates highlight ongoing discourses and can reflect the conventions of a text type. The CADS approach, in the case of Gabrielatos and Baker’s (2008) work, constitutes an improvement on regular CDA techniques because it offers evidence of the systemic marginalisation of refugees and asylum seekers in newspaper discourse spanning almost a decade. Such concrete evidence, which cannot be dismissed as the work of one newspaper at one point in time, offers a stronger basis for the calls CDA makes for discursive and social transformation.

Although *media* texts are commonly examined in CA-CDA, traditional corpus techniques have also been applied to New Labour’s secondary education policy (Mulderigg, 2003), and the legislative and administration texts produced by UK political officials to inform the public about immigration (Pérez-Paredes et al., 2017). The former study uncovers the subtle ideological undertones of identity construction in two government documents that are not ostensibly about identities. Its diachronic comparison with an education policy from 1958

provides a control for genre-specific discourses, while the comparative corpus methods help to identify discourses that would not be immediately perceptible in a manual text analysis. The use of administrative data in these studies demonstrates that traditional corpus methods can be applied successfully to less overtly evaluative or partisan data to uncover discourses of power and discrimination. National identity construction, while less frequently examined using CA-CDA, has also been analysed in media and political data from several countries, including Canada (Vessey, 2013) and Malaysia (Don, Knowles and Fatt, 2010).

3.6.3 *Diachronic corpus-assisted discourse analysis*

In comparison to synchronic discourse analysis, diachronic discourse-oriented corpus work is still relatively rare (Marchi, 2018). Examining a comprehensive bibliography of corpus-assisted discourse analyses, Marchi (2018) acknowledges that of the diachronic work that does exist, there is an even split between trend-mapping studies which track the development of a chosen phenomenon, and temporal comparison studies which compare two moments in time (Stanyer and Mihelj, 2016). Half of the studies in the first category are from two Lancaster University projects, and nine out of the thirteen from the latter category are part of a single project (Marchi, 2018). This suggests that not only is diachronic corpus analysis a somewhat underused approach, but it is also not particularly diffuse.

There is no single “correct” way of segmenting the data in a diachronic corpus analysis; rather, segmentation should reflect the research aims (Marchi, 2018). The approach taken in this thesis aligns most closely with what Marchi (2018) terms top-down segmentation: the diachronic segmentation of the corpus data into months and years was based on contextual, historical knowledge of the timeline of events (in this case, surrounding Britain’s withdrawal from the EU). In this study, because each annual subcorpus was compared with a single

reference corpus, I was able to account for consistency in discourses across the years in addition to shifts in discursive representations. Accounting for both consistency and difference makes it possible to provide a more nuanced analysis than previous diachronic studies of supranational identity representation, such as the temporal comparison of representations of the EU in three newspapers from 1993 and 2005 (Marchi and Taylor, 2009).

3.6.4 *Key semantic domain analysis*

In addition to the three corpus methods outlined above, there are some corpus tools that are less widely adopted in critical discourse analytical studies. One such tool is key semantic domain analysis, which is available on the web-based programme suite, Wmatrix (Rayson, 2008). Wmatrix itself is well-established software, and key semantic domain analysis has been employed by some discourse analysts in recent years (e.g., Potts, 2015; Prentice, 2010). Nevertheless, in comparison to keyword analysis and collocation analysis, it remains relatively underused.

Key semantic domain analysis works in largely the same way as keyword analysis (Rayson, 2008). It establishes statistically significant, key semantic fields by comparing the relative frequencies of words automatically tagged as belonging to a semantic domain in the target corpus with those in a reference corpus (Rayson, 2008). The semantic domain tool on Wmatrix first tags all the words in a dataset according to their part of speech using the CLAWS tagger developed at Lancaster University (Garside and Smith, 1997). It then uses a tagger called the UCREL Semantic Analysis System (USAS) to assign every word or multiword expression to a semantic field (Rayson, Archer, Pio and McEnery, 2004). There are 21 categories of semantic domains and 232 subcategories, all of which are used by Wmatrix to classify words

into different semantic fields (Rayson et al., 2004). USAS has an accuracy rate of 91% according to its developers (Rayson et al., 2004).

As words are grouped into semantic fields, the key semantic domain tool reveals instances where several words with similar semantic meanings are used consistently. Although in some cases the words in key semantic domains can be key by themselves, semantic domain analysis can also highlight domains comprised of lexical items that may not be sufficiently frequent individually to constitute keywords, but which are cumulatively frequent in the whole corpus. The Wmatrix approach to keyness in semantic domain analysis is two-pronged. It allows researchers to set a cut-off for the log-likelihood value, which is a measure of the confidence that a difference in relative frequencies is not due to error or chance (Gabrielatos, 2018). It also allows users to select an effect size measure, which examines the size of the relative frequency difference between the target and reference corpora (Gabrielatos, 2018). Using the two measures means that the results show a tangible difference between instances of the semantic domains in each corpus – a difference which is highly unlikely to be due to error or chance (Pojanapunya and Watson Todd, 2016).

Early studies that employed key semantic domain analysis often used the tool to uncover broad discourse patterns. For example, key semantic domain analysis was adopted to reveal the semantic categories used most frequently by *Romeo and Juliet* characters in their speech, offering an insight into how a character's role as a love interest, for example, was constructed discursively in the play (Culpeper, 2009). It was also used to uncover metaphors in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and business magazines (Hardie, Koller, Rayson and Semino, 2007). In more recent projects, semantic tagging has been combined with traditional discourse analytical approaches to successfully support a fine-grained linguistic analysis of large amounts of data. For example, semantically tagging collocates of a keyword related to group identities proved an effective downsampling method in Potts' (2015) analysis of

discourses about Hurricane Katrina. The method allowed the researcher to quickly gain access to strategies of social-semantic categorisation, which revealed discourses of racial difference. As Potts (2015: 301) herself acknowledged, her downsampling method ‘enable[d] in-depth analyses of transitivity, attribution and predication strategies’. Potts (2015) illustrated that semantic tagging can be used fruitfully in conjunction with concordance analysis to uncover broad discourse patterns and the linguistic strategies that underpin them. In addition to its use in collocational profiling, the USAS semantic tagger has been adopted in projects with multiple data sets and discourse producers. It has helped to identify less obvious metaphors from a semantic domain of Violence used by cancer patients, their carers, and health professionals, for instance (Demmen et al., 2015).

Semantic tagging does not have to be used as the primary methodological tool in corpus-assisted discourse projects; in the eclectic spirit of CADS, it is sometimes used alongside other corpus methods to triangulate results (Partington et al., 2013). For instance, semantic tagging was used both as a keyness metric and to examine collocations in a study of Islamic extremist discourse (Prentice, Rayson and Taylor, 2012). The tagger was used initially to examine 100 key semantic domains in the discourse. The analysis revealed a tendency to rely on binary categories of evaluation, which the authors viewed as an indication of a ‘polarised way of thinking’ among Islamic extremists (Prentice et al., 2012: 272). This finding challenged the perception from the initial keyword analysis that the texts in the extremist corpus dealt predominantly with negativity. In turn, it demonstrated that key semantic domain analysis can sometimes illuminate discourse patterns in greater detail than can be captured by a keyword analysis alone. The study illustrated the dynamic, flexible nature of semantic domain analysis; it can either form the basis of the analytical method (Potts, 2015) or can be used in conjunction with other tools to add nuance to the findings.

To date (and to my knowledge), only one study of national identity construction has employed semantic tagging: an examination of Scottish nationalist discourse about Scottish independence (Prentice, 2010). This study analysed concordance lines that belonged to key semantic domains to produce a replicable critical discourse analysis of many texts. The author drew on the Discourse-Historical Approach to CDA, specifically in terms of macro-strategies of argumentation, to reveal how posters to a nationalist forum discursively differentiated between Scotland and England (Prentice, 2010). The study demonstrated that key semantic domain analysis, concordance analysis and CDA frameworks can be usefully combined to identify discourses of nationhood.

Despite the obvious successes of semantic tagging in these critical discourse projects, there is a conspicuous absence of diachronic analyses. Given the diachronic focus in this thesis, it was necessary to develop a method that accounted for semantic change (and consistency) over the years. As a result, while the method used in this thesis is similar to previous work in its use of key semantic domain analysis, it expands on existing studies by offering an innovative diachronic element.

3.7 The corpus-assisted discourse analytical framework

3.7.1 Introduction: a tripartite analytical framework

The method developed and used in the CA-CDA sections of this thesis draws on Bednarek's (2009) three-pronged approach to analysing discourse. That is, it has three levels: a macro-level analysis, a meso-level analysis, and a micro-level analysis. The method is intended as a framework for conducting a diachronic study across multiple, temporally organised datasets by combining semantic domain analysis with a micro-linguistic analysis that adheres to the

principles of CDA. The three levels can be visualised as a process, with each level providing greater linguistic detail than the previous section, as indicated in Figure 2:

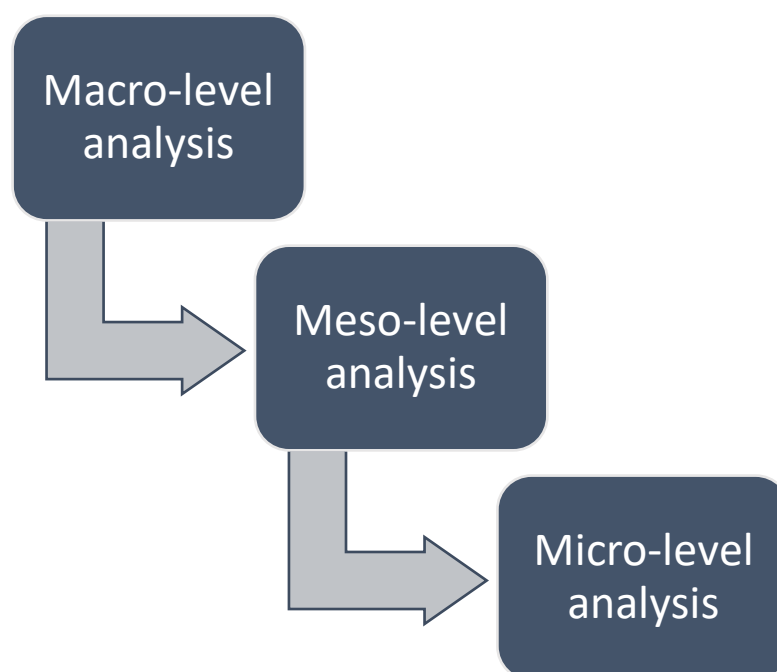


Figure 2: The three levels of analysis can be conceptualised as a process, with each level adding greater detail.

3.7.2 Macro-linguistic analysis: analysing semantic domains related to national identity in the media and government corpora

The macro-level key semantic domain analysis reveals which semantic fields are consistently key across the majority of the annual subcorpora (similar to c-collocates, introduced by Gabrielatos and Baker [2008]). The identification of semantic fields is based on keyness, as indicated by the effect size measure of log ratio, and statistical significance, as reflected in the log-likelihood value.

In the media analysis section of this thesis, two months of data from each year were collected and compiled into four separate (annual) text files. For the government data analysis, all the available texts were divided according to the year of publication and assembled in four separate text files. Each text file was loaded onto the web-based programme Wmatrix separately, producing four annual subcorpora per data set (Rayson, 2008). Working chronologically, each subcorpus was compared to the reference corpus, which was the BNC Written Informative Sampler. The Written Informative Sampler is taken from the larger BNC sampler corpus, which contains two million words (UCREL, 1998). It is the only pre-loaded corpus on Wmatrix that is similar to the target corpora in terms of genre; it consists of 779,027 words, just over a third of which is about public affairs (UCREL, 1998). The written texts in the Written Informative Sampler are taken from a range of sources, including books, newspapers, and magazines (BNC, 2007). I selected the Informative Sampler instead of the BE06, which is also available on Wmatrix, because it includes only informative language. By comparing the media and government corpora to informative writing, I could identify rhetorical or evaluative language. As the BE06 includes fiction, where evaluative language is more frequent, a comparison with this corpus could obscure more evaluative uses of language in my corpora.

When each subcorpus was compared to the reference corpus, a log-likelihood cut-off of 6.63 was imposed and the resulting keywords were sorted according to the log ratio score. A frequency cut-off of five was also imposed to prevent the analysis from focusing on infrequent semantic domains. Both log-likelihood and log ratio measures were considered as they are complementary, offering different perspectives on the data (Pojanapunya and Watson Todd, 2016). The log ratio score is the effect size, which indicates the practical importance of the difference between the two normalised frequency values (Brezina, 2018), while the log-likelihood value reflects the confidence with which the null hypothesis can be rejected

(Gabrielatos, 2018). Combining the two measures results in key terms that are reliably characteristic of the target corpus.

All the semantic domains with a log ratio score above 1.0 were copied into an Excel spreadsheet; the semantic domains for each annual subcorpus were presented in adjacent columns. Semantic domains which only appeared in one or two of the keyness lists were immediately deleted, as the focus was on domains which were consistently key across the data collection period. Once the consistently key domains were identified, a second manual filtering process was undertaken to remove those domains that did not relate to discourses of national identity. This process involved manually examining the concordance lines for each domain to search for nationality-related words; if the concordance lines did not discuss ‘Britain’, relationships between Britain and Europe, or relationships between Britons, then the domain was removed from the lists. For example, the semantic domain *Seen* was consistently key across the four media subcorpora. However, examining the concordance lines revealed that they referred to discourses about ‘noticing’, typically with first-person subjects. For example, in the 2017 subcorpus, there was a letter to the editor which stated, ‘SIR - I have just received my first new 1 coin [sic]. However, I **notice** that it is dated 2016’. I judged examples like this to be irrelevant to representations of national identity and so removed the semantic domain from the list. This manual examination process was crucial for identifying semantic domains which had a title that intuitively seemed unrelated to national identity but which, upon inspection, revealed many national identity-related discourses. For instance, the *No Respect* semantic domain does not, by name alone, appear to be related to discourses of nationhood, but many concordance lines within the semantic domain discussed (inter)national relationships in the media data (see Chapter 4). The semantic domains identified through this process were then organised according to log ratio scores, and the semantic domains with the highest log ratio scores were taken forward to the meso-level analysis.

3.7.3 *Meso-level analysis: diachronic mapping of concordance lines*

‘Meso-level’ is used here to refer to a level of analysis that provides connections between the macro-level identification of semantic domains and the micro-level analysis of examples from the corpus texts (Bednarek, 2009). The manual, meso-level analysis is an inductive process that involves examining the concordance lines from consistently key semantic domains and organising them into discursive themes. All the concordance lines from the semantic domain are copied into the Excel spreadsheet. Each individual concordance line is read through and linguistic patterns surrounding the tagged word(s) are written down. For example, if the words are a series of related verbs, such as ‘deride’ and ‘scorn’, all the subjects of the verbs and all the objects of the verbs are noted. If the tagged words are nominalisations or nouns, such as ‘life’, pre-modification and post-modification are examined to identify whose ‘life’ is being described. Sometimes several words from the same semantic domain form part of a single pattern: the construction of the EU as viewing the UK with contempt could, for example, involve lemmas such as ‘disdain’, ‘contempt’ and ‘disrespect’. In other cases, a particular word might form the crux of a discourse. For instance, the lemma ‘humiliate’ might point to a representation of Britain as humiliated because it is consistently the object of the verb. Examining the subjects represented as perpetrating the humiliation can then reveal sub-discourses within the humiliation theme.

Once the social actor and action patterns are identified, the concordance lines are colour-coded and sorted in Excel so that all examples from a particular theme appear together. The metadata for each concordance line is then added: the year and month of publication, in addition to the newspaper from which the article derives. The normalised frequencies of a pattern, or theme, in each subcorpus are plotted to identify diachronic patterns in the salience of the themes within a semantic domain. For example, within a semantic domain of

‘Evaluation: Good’, a country could be evaluated as ‘great’ fifty times one year and only four the next when normalised to account for differences in the sizes of the annual subcorpora. This quantitative information can be mapped onto key contextual events that influenced the perception of the country to provide an interpretation of the diachronic change.

As outlined above, a manual, meso-level analysis was conducted by organising the concordance lines into themes. The themes identified at this level were not pre-determined but were judged to emerge out of the data. For instance, the most key semantic domain in the media data – No Respect – was deemed to have four themes based on who was positioned as the object of contempt and who was identified as the subject of contempt (see Chapter 4). Each concordance line was colour-coded according to the theme to which it belonged. Once identified, normalised instances of the theme (per 100,000 words) in each subcorpus were put into a line graph to identify patterns in their frequency over the years. Plotting the data in this way revealed shifts in discourses that were not perceptible when the subcorpora were examined individually. Once the diachronic patterns were identified, I examined each concordance line from the themes with the greatest number of instances to reveal how representations of national actors were borne out linguistically.

3.7.4 Micro-linguistic analysis: social actor and action representation

Concordance lines that belong to themes with the greatest number of instances are considered in the micro-level analysis. At this final level, the examples from the texts are subjected to a detailed linguistic analysis of transitivity and socio-semantic patterns. The micro-linguistic patterns are considered in terms of their potential socio-political, democratic consequences. Together, the three levels of analysis provide an overview of how discourse patterns in

discussions of national identity shift diachronically; they provide both breadth and depth while maintaining a qualitative, linguistic focus.

The micro-linguistic analysis of individual concordance lines was based predominantly on van Leeuwen (1995; 2008) and KhosraviNik's (2010) socio-semantic models for social actor and social action representation, and Halliday's (1985) transitivity framework. These models allow for a diverse range of lexical strategies to be involved in the construction of national identity. In my analysis of the linguistic data, I particularly drew on parts of van Leeuwen's (1995) framework that refer to the construction of groups (*assimilation*) and individuals (*individualisation*). For example, I employed analytical categories such as *collectivisation*, which involves homogenising groups of social actors, and *functionalisation*, which means representing social actors in terms of an activity, occupation, or role (van Leeuwen, 1995). I also examined linguistic exclusion, in terms of *suppression* and *backgrounding* (van Leeuwen, 1995). Suppression refers to instances where there is no mention of the social actor anywhere in the text, whereas backgrounding refers to instances where the social actor is not included in a specific representation of action but is mentioned elsewhere in the text and so can be inferred by readers (van Leeuwen, 1995). In these cases, it is often necessary to consult the entire text rather than just the concordance line.

3.8 Narratives in oral interviews

3.9.1. Defining narratives: personal experience and identity

The third analytical chapter of this thesis is concerned with narratives. Narratives are 'texts that recount events in a sequential order' (De Fina, 2003: 11). They are stories where 'past experiences are recollected, where the occurring of events is presented with the help of a verbal

sequence of clause’ (Iqbal, Ahmad and Ullah, 2020: 41).⁸ Specifically, Chapter 6 of this thesis analyses personal narratives, or narratives of personal experience: stories through which speakers construe and perform identities for themselves and others. Personal narratives have captured the interest of researchers across a variety of disciplines. As a result, there are many definitions and conceptualisations of what constitutes a personal narrative (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012). Ochs and Capp (2001: 2) define personal narratives as ‘a way of using language or other symbolic systems to imbue life events with a temporal and logical order, to demystify them and establish coherence across past, present, and as yet unrealised experience’. This definition interprets narrative as a sense-making device that helps narrators to reinterpret real-life experiences. A similar, more recent definition is provided by Cinque, Nyberg and Starkey (2021: 1759), who argue that narratives are ‘devices through which individuals interpret and understand themselves and the social world as they temporally organise different life experiences and events into a story’.

The idea of temporal organisation links back to the minimal definition of narratives as ‘two events, represented in two narrative clauses which are linked temporally and sequentially’ (Thornborrow and Coates, 2005: 3). It also relates to eminent narrative scholar William Labov’s (1972: 359-360) conceptualisation of narratives of personal experience as a method of ‘recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which (it is inferred) actually occurred’. As this definition suggests, Labov, like other researchers in the biographical story tradition, assumed that stories of personal experience captured the temporal structure of pre-existing events. This definition did not allow for narratives that were told in a non-linear fashion, or that related hypothetical incidents (see Georgakopoulou, 2007).

⁸ I use the terms narrative and story interchangeably in this thesis, following Witteborn (2007), although I am aware that not all narrative analysts would conflate the two.

Narrative analytical research has examined both elicited narratives of personal experience (e.g., Labov, 1972; De Fina, 2003), and storytelling in everyday conversations (Ochs and Capp, 2001; Georgakopoulou, 2007). Within these studies, the focus has often been on the construction and performance of different types of identities. This is unsurprising given that narrative is a ‘prime vehicle for expressing identity’ (De Fina, 2015: 351). Early biographical narrative research treated identity in narrative ‘as something revealed through the process of people telling their stories’ (Evans, 2019: 28). However, later analysts have problematised approaches that view narratives as ‘transparent and unmediated records’ for identity (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012: 161), preferring to view identity construction as emergent in discourse (see De Fina, 2003; De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012). Lawler’s (2002: 2) definition of narratives as ‘interpretive devices, through which people represent themselves, both to themselves and others’, is perhaps closer to the interactional view of identities as constructed and performed *through* narrative rather than pre-existing the story. It reflects the general constructionist view that ‘identity is defined in terms of members’ orientation to the context at hand, and as a process activated in relation to different contexts of interaction’ (De Fina, 2003: 18). Narratives can be used to disseminate social prejudice through the creation and contestation of ingroups and outgroups (De Fina, 2003).

3.9.2. Existing studies of narratives of personal experience focusing on identity

Research on narrative and identity has tended to consider the construction of refugee and migrant identities (e.g., De Fina, 2003; Hatoss, 2012), and the performance of identities in a healthcare context (e.g., Carless and Douglas, 2007; Riessman, 2003). A notable divergence from these contexts is Schiffrin (1996), who examines how two Jewish-American women construct their positions in their families. Schiffrin (1996) demonstrates that when we tell

stories, we situate experiences globally (that is, in relation to cultural knowledge and expectations) and locally (by making our past experiences relevant to our here and now). Fewer studies of narrative and identity consider the intertwined performance of national and political identities in narratives (a gap that this thesis seeks to fill). One exception to this is Witteborn (2007), who uncovers how self-identifying Palestinians construct their identities and personal experiences in the United States. Witteborn (2007: 163) finds that speakers ‘expressed what it means to be Palestinian through their authorial roles’, focusing on the importance of social space, division, and being a refugee.

3.9.3. Big and small stories

In sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, narratives have been analysed on the one hand as ‘textually and discursively constituted and organised’, and on the other as a form of interactive social practice (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012: ix). One proponent of the former approach is William Labov, whose work on narrative structures has been hugely influential in the sociolinguistic approach to narrative analysis. Labov’s (1972) work on “big” narratives was part of a larger project on vernacular language variation. He asked participants to report an out-of-the-ordinary experience from their past and collected the resulting elicited narratives of personal experience. During the analysis of the narratives, Labov (1972) identified six elements that, he argued, represented the progression of the story: abstracts (trailers for the narrative), orientations (the setting or context of the narrative), complicating actions (events), evaluations (which tell the reader what to think of the events), resolutions (how the complicating action is resolved), and codas (a formalised ending). To count as a narrative, only the complicating action and resolution are required (Thornborrow and Coates, 2005).

Labov's framework has faced many criticisms. One key argument against the Labovian approach is that the tightly focused structure does not possess the flexibility to account for narratives which might diverge from it – as many have been shown to do (e.g., Georgakopoulou, 2007). In other words, 'narratives dramatically vary according to structure, content type, social function, and interactional organisation' (De Fina, 2003: 14), which the Labovian framework does not adequately recognise. Equally, the Labovian approach focuses largely on the represented action (the story world) rather than the interaction through which stories emerge (the storytelling event) (De Fina and Perrino, 2011), which runs counter to more recent approaches to narrative as interaction. As Koven (2002: 171, emphasis in original) puts it, 'within a Labovian framework, how speakers may adopt *multiple*, subtly differentiated interactional positions within a storytelling is not fully addressed'.

As an antidote to Labov's focus on so-called big stories, Georgakopoulou (2007) created what she terms a "small stories" approach. Small stories, unlike Labovian narratives, are 'a gamut of underrepresented narrative activities' which include 'tellings of ongoing events or hypothetical events, and shared (known) events' as well as 'allusions to (previous) tellings, deferrals of tellings and refusals to tell' (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou, 2008: 381). Types of small stories include projections, which are stories of near-future events, and shared stories, which is an 'umbrella term for stories that are oriented to interactions as familiar either because they have been told in the past or because the events reported in them are known to all or some of the participants' (Georgakopoulou, 2007: 50). The small stories concept is useful because it recognises the diversity of stories that are articulated in informal conversation. However, small stories typically emerge and are analysed in a group context; the approach considers the co-construction of stories among individuals. Indeed, Georgakopoulou's (2007) study examines the storytelling practices of a group of adolescent friends in everyday conversation. As a result, unlike the Labovian narratives of personal experience which are largely monologues, this

framework does not apply neatly to stories narrated in interviews, which, although still co-constructed, are primarily narrated by the interviewee.⁹

3.9.4. Story genres: an alternative approach

Building on Labov's work on narrative structure but sitting closer to genre analysis than a sociolinguistic approach to narrative analysis, Martin and Plum (1997) outline three types of story genres that recur in narratives of personal experience: the Recount, the Anecdote, and the Exemplum. These approaches are deemed to be agnate with the traditional Labovian narrative. The Recount is a story in which a sequence of events is presented by the teller as 'unfolding unproblematically', while the Anecdote is an account 'of a remarkable event, the point of which is to invite a listener or reader to share' (Martin and Plum, 1997: 301). The Exemplum, in contrast, shares 'a judgement about a noteworthy incident' (Martin and Plum, 1997: 301). Examining story genres found in schoolchildren's writing, Martin and Rose (2008) adopt these three story genres alongside a fourth: the Observation, the purpose of which is 'to share a personal response to things or events' (Martin and Rose, 2008: 65). As both studies indicate, these four story genres can be applied to spoken and written narratives.

Although they are now 25 years old, the four story genres outlined by Martin and Plum (1997) and Martin and Rose (2008) are more applicable to the spoken data I have collected than the traditional Labovian narrative or Georgakopoulou's (2007) small stories. That is, they are more flexible in terms of what constitutes a story than Labov (1972) while allowing for a more monologic approach than Georgakopoulou's (2007) small stories framework. As a result, I have drawn on the typology of the "story family" used by both Martin and Plum (1997) and Martin and Rose (2008) in my thesis for the first step of my discourse analysis of narratives:

⁹ See Poberezhnyi (2021) for a small stories approach to Facebook comments about Brexit.

determining what constitutes a story in my data. The story genres are reproduced in Table 7 below.

Type of story	Definition	Function	Structure
Recount	‘A retelling of a sequence of events presented by the teller as unfolding unproblematically in a Record of Events’ (Martin and Plum, 1997: 301). It does not have ‘a suspension of action through evaluation’ as evaluation is typically prosodic (Martin and Plum, 1997: 301). The ending is ‘not about restoring a disturbed equilibrium’ (Martin and Plum, 1997: 301).	To narrate past experience	Orientation → Record of Events → Reorientation
Anecdote	A retelling of a remarkable event/disruption to usuality intended to invite the listener to share a reaction (Martin and Plum, 1997). It is typically used to negotiate solidarity by inducing an	To share a reaction with the audience	Orientation → Remarkable Event → Reaction → Coda.

	affectual response from the listener (Martin and Plum, 1997).		The reaction is often recorded by the narrator through reiteration of a key aspect of the Remarkable Event.
Exemplum	A retelling of a disruptive event which is interpreted rather than reacted to or resolved (Rose and Martin, 2008). An exemplum is ‘intended to share/induce a judgement about a noteworthy incident rather than an emotional response to an event’ (Martin and Plum, 1997: 301). ‘The listener is positioned to approve or disapprove of the conduct of a story’s protagonists and their behaviour’ and ‘tellable	To share a moral judgement	Orientation → Incident → Interpretation → Coda

	events of the story are downgraded to an incident whose only function is to make a point about an event that lies outside of the text’ (Martin and Plum, 1997: 301).		
Observation	A retelling that ‘states what happened as a single event (collapsing a series of sequenced events into one)’ and describes how the event affected the narrator (Martin and Plum, 1997: 304).	To share a personal response to things or events	Orientation → Event Description → Comment

Table 7: Typology of story types

As Table 7 illustrates, there are four principal story genres used in the analysis of stories in my interview data: Recount, Anecdote, Exemplum, and Observation. (It should be noted that these are not the only story genres that exist: ‘storytellers continuously creatively construct and negotiate (new) narrative genres’ [Van de Mierop, 2021: 6]). The four story genres I have drawn upon have slightly different structural elements and different purposes. The Recount, as outlined above, is used to narrate a past experience. It differs from the Labovian story in that it does not have a Resolution. While it contains the Labovian Orientation, used to set the scene of the story, it has a Record of Events through which the action of the story takes place, and a Reorientation, during which the story’s main point is recapitulated.

The Anecdote differs from the Recount in that there is a Remarkable Event which does not unfold unproblematically. The Remarkable Event is typically narrated as a disruption to usuality and is intended to negotiate solidarity through a shared reaction. The Anecdote contains a traditional Labovian Coda. The Exemplum differs further, in that the Remarkable Event is interpreted rather than resolved. A single Incident is described and then interpreted morally to share a judgement about a character or an event. Often, Exempla make a moral point outside of the story world. They too have a Coda. Finally, the Observation collapses several events into a single Event Description and is followed by a Comment which articulates how the event affected the narrator. These story genres are useful because they illustrate that stories are told to ‘do something’ (De Fina, 2009: 235), whether that is to express solidarity or to convey moral judgements about social actors.

3.9.5. Identifying and analysing stories: a thematic approach to identity construction

Martin and Plum (1997) and Martin and Rose’s (2008) frameworks were used to identify stories in my interview data. If the data did not align with one of the four story genres outlined above, they were considered not to be a story for the purposes of this thesis. Comparing segments of the interview data to the story genres led to the identification of 128 stories as candidates for analysis. The next step involved thematically categorising the stories to identify common identity constructions. Using NVivo to assist with data management, I categorised each story into thematic groups, such as ‘stories that express nostalgia for a lost British identity’, ‘stories that emphasise British division’, and ‘stories that relate national and regional differences’. The most common thematic representations were selected for close linguistic analysis. The discourse analytical approach I take to narratives in this thesis is perhaps closest to what Riessman (2008) labels the thematic approach to narratives, which focuses on the

content of stories. However, I have combined this focus on story content with what De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2012: 24) would call ‘dialogic-performance analysis’, which is a consideration of the performance of identities in interaction. In other words, much like my adherence to CADS, my approach to narrative in this thesis is eclectic.

There are many frameworks for the micro-linguistic analysis of identity construction in stories. For instance, De Fina (2003) advocates for examining pronouns, verbs, syntax, definite descriptions, and referential terms at the lexical level, as well as various strategies at the textual/pragmatic and interactional levels. In this thesis, I have largely followed Wortham (2001), who similarly recommends analysing reference and predication strategies, alongside metapragmatic descriptors (verbs of saying or nominalisations that describe speech patterns), quotations, evaluations, and epistemic modality. These strategies focus primarily on identity representations in the story world. While useful, they are less helpful for considering the interactive elements of the story. To redress this limitation, Wortham (2001) usefully employs Bakhtin’s (1981) concept of ventriloquation (the voicing of others’ speech) to address the *performance* of identities in stories; this concept proved to be useful to some extent in my analysis, too, as my Remain-supporting participants tended to voice Leave-voting ideologies in a different pitch or tone of voice. Beyond Wortham’s (2001) recommendations, to ensure consistency across the three analytical chapters in this thesis, I also applied van Leeuwen’s (1995; 2008) socio-semantic categories of social actor and action to help analyse how people and their behaviours were construed in the stories.

Within the micro-linguistic analysis, I made use of the concept of indexicality. Indexicality focuses on how ‘linguistic forms are used to construct identity positions’ (Bucholtz and Hall, 2010: 21). Indexical meanings are ‘meanings that connect discourses to contexts and induce categories, similarities and differences within frames, and thus suggest identities, tones, styles and genres’ (Blommaert, 2007: 115). In other words, an index is a linguistic form that

points, either directly or indirectly, to a particular identity construction. Indexical processes, according to Bucholtz and Hall (2010: 21), include overt mentions of identity labels, implicatures and presuppositions, and the use of linguistic structures ‘that are ideologically associated with specific personas and groups’. As Ochs (1992) points out, most of the time the connection between a linguistic form and a social identity is indirect; words are linked to a particular stance, which is in turn associated with a particular social category. Indexicality has often been applied to constructing gender identities (see Ochs, 1992). In this thesis, however, I apply indexicality to political and national identity construction.

3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the processes through which I collected the data analysed in this thesis. I have provided a rationale for why I chose to analyse media, government, and interview data which is rooted in existing scholarly research. I have explored the corpus-assisted critical discourse analytical methodological approach. I have explained how I will analyse my three data sets, drawing on a substantial body of existing literature about research methods. In the next chapter, I present the first analysis of the discursive construction of Britain and Europe in the pro-Brexit British press.

4 From Unity to Disunity: Pro-Brexit newspaper representations of the UK, Europe, and the EU

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the discursive representation of Britain and Europe in the pro-Brexit press at various points between 2016 and 2019. Through key semantic domain analysis, I illustrate how the pro-Brexit press narrates Britain's journey from unity to disunity. I elucidate the EU's discursive role as a scapegoat for British problems and demonstrate how this representation positions Brexit as the solution to public discontent. Taking a diachronic approach, I uncover an argumentative shift in late 2018, prompted by Theresa May's Brexit deal and parliamentary indecision. The construction of a United Kingdom with a cohesive, civic national identity transforms into a depiction of a nation torn apart by social inequality and political incompetence. The nouns 'Remainer' and 'Brexiteer' persist in linking socio-political divisions to the EU, even in 2019; the terms foster resentment between a so-called metropolitan elite and "ordinary Britons" in the UK, threatening to destabilise a collective British identity that will prove increasingly important in the post-Brexit period.

4.2 Constructing Britain and Europe in the early post-referendum years (2016-2017)

4.2.1. Key semantic domain analysis

As detailed in Chapter 3, the analysis below combines key semantic domain analysis with a micro-linguistic analysis of textual examples. I began the analytical process by running the articles through the part-of-speech and semantic analysis taggers on Wmatrix (Rayson, 2008).

Using the UCREL semantic analysis system, I compared the relative frequencies of the different automatically tagged semantic categories in each annual subcorpus with the relative frequencies of the semantic categories in the British National Corpus Informative Sampler. I organised the results by effect size and selected as potential candidates for analysis those semantic domains which had a log ratio value above 1.0 and a log-likelihood value above 6.63. In total, this process generated seventeen semantic domains.

Not all the seventeen domains were involved in discursively constructing Britain and Europe. I manually examined the concordance lines for each key semantic domain and removed domains which did not include the terms ‘Britain’ and ‘Europe’, representations of Britons and Europeans, or depictions of relationships between British social actors. After this process, thirteen semantic categories remained. I then ranked the semantic categories according to the number of concordance lines that included the terms mentioned above and selected the top three – Alive, Polite and No Respect – for close reading. The close reading entailed examining each concordance line to distinguish the social actors and actions, with a particular focus on the linguistic means through which these actors and actions were represented. To illustrate using the No Respect domain as an example, I analysed who was constructed as disrespecting whom and then categorised these representations into groups, such as ‘the EU disrespects Britain’ or ‘British politicians humiliate Britain’. After I had established these broader categories of social actor representation, I examined the representation of social action in the concordance lines. To continue the example above, I determined which processes were used to construct disrespectful social actions, such as ‘humiliate’ or ‘disdain’. I analyse the most frequent themes, actors, and actions from each semantic domain diachronically below.

4.2.2. *The Alive semantic domain*

Each year, the Alive semantic domain appears among the ten most key domains. As shown in Table 8, the log ratio values indicate that the normalised frequencies in the target subcorpora are consistently over four times higher than those in the reference corpus.

Year	Relative frequency in C1 per 100,000 words (media)	% of C1 (media)	Relative frequency in C2 per 100,000 words (ref)	% of C2 (ref)	Log-likelihood	Log ratio
2016	40.3	0.05%	7.1	0.01%	216.70	2.67
2017	33.7	0.04%	7.1	0.01%	107.07	2.36
2018	33.4	0.04%	7.1	0.01%	124.41	2.55
2019	44.5	0.05%	7.1	0.01%	170.14	2.78

Table 8: Statistical information about the 'Alive' semantic domain

Through a manual reading of concordance lines, I identified that a construction of a common British way of life is the main national identity-related representation realised by the Alive semantic domain. Instances of the theme remain stable over the years, with only a small decrease in 2017, as shown in Figure 3. The diachronic consistency demonstrates that a national lifestyle is integral to the depiction of a collective British identity throughout the withdrawal period.

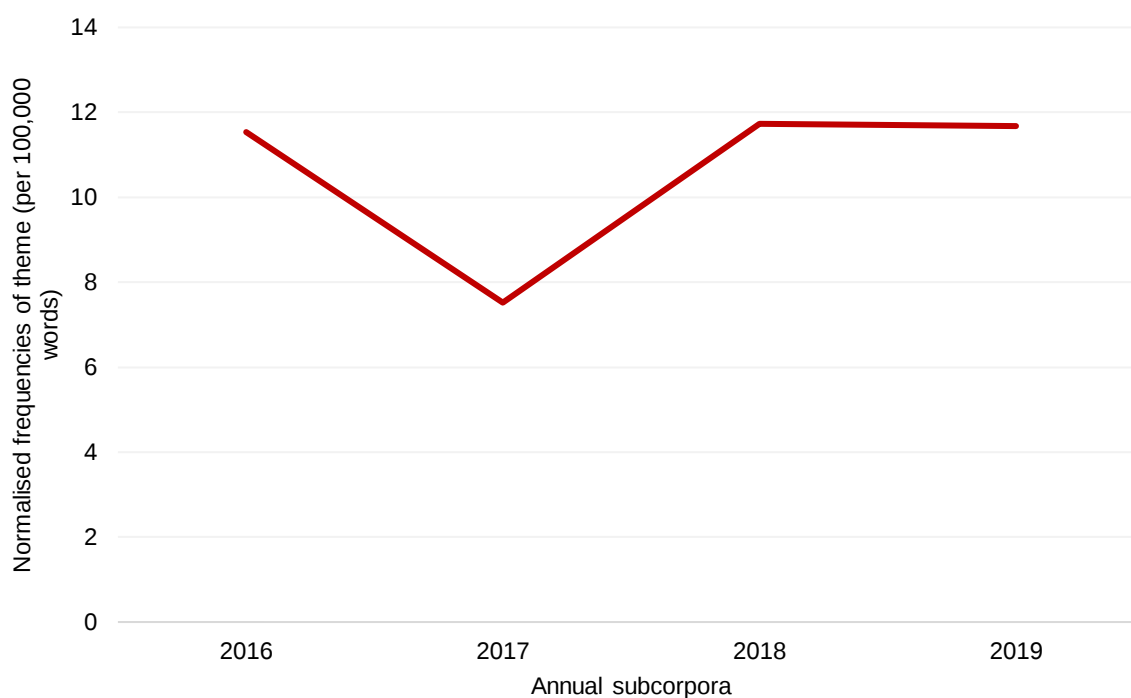


Figure 3: Instances of the 'British way of life' theme remain stable over the years

There are two principal constructions of a British way of life: the EU's interference in British life (13 examples) and the characteristics of a British lifestyle (14 instances). The former depiction features only in the two earlier subcorpora, where it appears nine and four times respectively. The representation reflects the interrelated construction of Britain and Europe in the early post-referendum years; depicting Britishness, in these articles, involves making value judgements about the EU's social actions. The theme's absence from the later subcorpora suggests that following the Leave vote, the EU's social actions become less salient in the data.

The second theme, the characteristics of a British lifestyle, features in all four annual subcorpora. The most consistent representation of British life appears in 2017, in the context of calls for a second Scottish independence referendum. Journalists foreground British unity in these examples to undermine nationalist arguments about Scotland's cultural and territorial distinctiveness. The remaining concordance lines presuppose common experiences across

Britain but the circumstances they describe differ, from technological advancements to the mutable nature of human existence. Only two concordance lines narrate multiple versions of British life based on socio-economic inequalities. Overall, then, the emphasis of the domain is predominantly on British unity.

The EU's interference in British national life

Nine of the thirteen concordances from this theme acknowledge the diversity of British life through the plural noun 'lives.' Extracts (1) to (3) below, which constitute a representative sample across different newspapers in the corpus, presuppose that there is a plethora of lived experiences in the UK:

- (1) Miss [Priti] Patel said: 'The EU is undemocratic and interferes too much in our daily **lives**. We have seen that with the scale of migration, and the impact this has had on local communities - and key public services such as the NHS, housing and schools' (*MailOnline*, June 2016).
- (2) The British people never voted for endless directives and EU rulings which invade and restrict their **lives** day in, day out. Political sovereignty is owned by every elector in this country and it was never a gift our politicians had a right to hand over to Brussels and those fat cats in the Commission (*The Express*, June 2016).
- (3) For almost half a century, Brussels has tightened its bureaucratic grip over every nook and cranny of our daily **lives**. Once power is seized by the centre, it is never handed back (*The Sun*, January 2017).

Four additional concordance lines assume greater homogeneity in the lifestyles of Britons through the singular noun ‘life’. One representative example is shown in Extract (4).

- (4) And with thousands of individual pieces of legislation (which speaks volumes about how Brussels has insinuated itself into the minutiae of British **life**), two years is a tight schedule (*Daily Mail*, March 2017).

The presumption of diversity and the presupposition of homogeneity are not as contradictory as they first appear. Homogenising a British lifestyle through the singular noun ‘life’ allows the journalist to assert that the EU affects every person in the UK while ignoring how experiences differ between countries and socio-economic backgrounds. Conservative MP Priti Patel achieves the same effect by emphasising the unifying experiences of public services in Extract (1). As a member of the government, Patel could be considered responsible for policies that have negatively affected the national health, housing, and education systems. To shift the blame towards the EU, she creates a common enemy against which all members of the nation can unite. Patel realises this by positioning a rhetorical tripartite list of core elements of national infrastructure, ‘the NHS, housing and schools’, as casualties of EU interference. Including herself among those affected by the EU through the possessive determiner ‘our’, Patel recontextualises British politicians as powerless victims rather than the agents responsible for funding public amenities. Although Patel implies that ‘key public services’ are crucial for ‘local’ communities to function, the NHS, for example, is regulated at the (devolved) national level and so underpins communities whether they live in small, rural areas or larger towns and cities (Morrison, 2019). This universal applicability is fundamental to Patel’s argument that no

matter how they live day-to-day, all readers will be affected by the breakdown of the healthcare, housing, and education systems.

The argument that national services are under attack and need defending is part of an Invaded Nation frame (Charteris-Black, 2019); it constitutes a national call to action to protect sacred infrastructure from collapsing. Patel's use of grammar indicates that the fundamental problem for the nation to resolve is EU intervention in British culture: 'interferes' is the only dynamic material process (Halliday, 1985) assigned to the outgroup's actions in the extract and so is more grammatically salient than the backgrounded action of the nominalisation 'migration'. The connotations of external action surrounding 'interferes' place the EU at a geographical and political distance, marking it as a radical Other – an invader of the UK (Gibbins, 2014). The verb's linguistic salience accentuates the overtones of outside meddling and delegitimises the EU's right to insert itself into British life. From this representation, Patel's primary exhortation emerges: the public should vote to leave the EU so that Britain can regain control of its immigration policies and protect its public services.

Although Patel's central call to action is focused on the EU, her choice to frame migration as the consequence of EU interference encourages division between British citizens and EU migrants. The pejorative semantic prosody of the noun 'impact' (Cook, 2011) depicts EU migrants as draining the public services Britons use every day, even if this is not the grammatical or argumentative focal point of the sentence (see Zappettini [2019] for more on the construction of EU migrants as a drain on British services). The claim that migration affects 'local communities' places migrants who live in the UK outside of the spatial imaginary of the nation, a common strategy in the British government's discourse about immigration (Bennett, 2018). The discursive exclusion of migrants creates a neoliberal hierarchy among the public that positions "native" Britons' economic needs above the needs of migrants. The underlying presupposition is that migrants threaten to overpower British services simply by using them;

there are not enough resources available for Britons *and* migrants. This neoliberal argument shifts attention away from the fact that there are already insufficient resources by employing the common Eurosceptic British media trope of securitising immigrants; that is, transforming immigrants into matters of security (Chernobrov, 2019). Conceptualising EU migrants' use of public services as a threat asserts that protecting Britain's amenities involves preventing migrants from accessing British infrastructure. On a political level, this may be achieved by leaving the EU and creating a national migration policy. However, for readers, whose only immediate control is over their lives, this argument could inspire intolerance towards EU migrants and bolster support for policies that prohibit migrants' access to primary public services.

The overriding account of how the EU interferes in British national life is through legislation and regulations, as Examples (2), (3) and (4) illustrate. As rules and regulations are more abstract for readers than the public services they encounter daily, the effect that these entities have on the daily lives of the British people is perhaps less clear. To persuade readers that regulations do impinge upon their lives, the journalist personifies the actors 'endless directives' and 'EU rulings' and positions them as the perpetrators of the metaphorical material processes 'invade' and 'restrict' in Extract (2) (Halliday, 1985). The personification and material processes combine in a metaphor of violation to reinforce the Invaded Nation frame (Charteris-Black, 2019), arguing that EU legislation poses an immediate, tangible threat to the lived experiences of people in the UK. Positioning British 'lives' as the goal of the material processes (Halliday, 1985) 'invade' and 'restrict' frames the European threat as one which targets individuals in addition to the entire nation; readers are encouraged to feel personally victimised by EU law. Through the belligerent connotations of the material processes, the journalists solidify the EU's role as a radical Other, positioning it against the UK in dichotomies of enemy and victim, invader and invaded (Gibbins, 2014).

Despite the effect of the grammatical and lexical choices in creating a sense of tangible impact, the extracts do not articulate how British life is affected or which regulations restrict Britain. These omissions are arguably intentional. The lexical choices in the extracts situate the discourse in the semantic field of bureaucracy; journalists cite ‘directives’ and ‘rulings’ in Extract (2) and the nominal group ‘bureaucratic grip’ in Extract (3). A central tenet of Eurosceptic discourse is the construction of the EU as faceless, bureaucratic and untransparent (Oberhuber et al., 2005); by referring to vague, political manoeuvres, the journalists strengthen the EU’s reputation as a complex and opaque institution that meddles in British life. Commentators argue that the perceived complexity of EU practices influenced the vote to Leave; in the face of incomprehensible legalese and institutional jargon, it was easier for voters to defer to emotional instincts (Toynbee and Walker, 2020). That these articles place an opaque EU within a discourse of threat suggests that the pro-Leave press contributed to this phenomenon – the extracts draw out an instinctual desire for self-protection while failing to delineate the exact nature of the threat. The adjective ‘endless’ and the nominal group ‘thousands of individual pieces’ form a numerical argumentation strategy (Wodak et al., 2009); they imply EU legislation is churned out on a whim without direction. Through the construction of the EU as a power-hungry, faceless institution, journalists shift the responsibility for unfavourable policies towards Brussels, diverting the blame away from the national government.

An Invaded Nation frame consistently encases the depiction of a British way of life in the earlier subcorpora; it encourages the public to vote to leave the EU to protect national infrastructure (Charteris-Black, 2019). Identity construction in this representation is relational: journalists repeatedly dichotomise Britain and the EU and demonise the Union as an intruder and an enemy. The newspapers do not delineate the official workings of the EU; a semantic field of bureaucracy frames the Union as overly complex and too far removed from the lives it

regulates. Although the intended call-to-action is a Leave vote, Patel's use of migration to disparage the EU reduces migrants to "political rivalry discourse" (Baker et al., 2008). In this frame, EU migrants become the unspoken perpetrators of the collapse of the national infrastructure; such a depiction makes migrants vulnerable to intolerance and sows the seeds of discord in British society. Ultimately, the representation shifts the blame for problems in Britain away from the national government and towards Europe.

Characterising British national life

Only 14 of the 179 concordance lines from the Alive semantic domain depict what a British lifestyle involves. Of those 14 extracts, four constitute nationalist responses to calls for a second Scottish independence referendum. To represent the consistency of this discourse, three of the four selected extracts below are from March 2017, when Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon sought approval from the Scottish Parliament to lay the groundwork for a second independence referendum (Scottish Government, 2017). Examples (5) and (6) are direct quotations from a speech by Theresa May, which *Express Online* and *Daily Mail* both published without editorial intervention. Extract (7) is from a lifestyle feature while Example (8) is from an editorial, which accounts for its more explicit bias and personal tone.

- (5) As Britain leaves the EU and we forge a new role for ourselves in the world, the strength and stability of our union will become even more important. This proud shared heritage provides the bedrock of our **lives** in the UK. As we face this great national moment together I hope you will continue to play your part to build a stronger Britain, a more united Britain that I'm determined we shall be once we emerge from this period of national change (*Express Online*, March 2017).

(6) And the great institutions which we have built together, the pillars of our national **life**, are the result of common endeavour. The National Health Service, the BBC, our armed forces, our Parliamentary democracy, our constitutional monarchy, our commitment to the rule of law, our respect for fundamental human rights (*MailOnline*, March 2017).

(7) Practical and character building the humble potato crisp is at the heart of national **life**. Imagine a childhood without licking the salt and vinegar flavour off your fingers. Impossible (*Express Online*, March 2017).

(8) I wonder if they will be happy with what they reap, and what astounding damage they have done not just to our political settlement but to the famous civility and fair mindedness of British **life** (*Telegraph Online*, March 2019).

In contrast to the plurality of lifestyles acknowledged in the EU-related version of this theme, most extracts above use the singular noun 'life'. Selecting the singular noun instead of the plural is significant because it constructs a shared lifestyle which denies the existence of cultural diversity between Scotland, England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. In the context of calls for Scottish independence, this denial is especially key; Scottish nationalism is primarily civic and posits that Scotland has a unique territorial and institutional identity (Leith and Soule, 2011). Using the singular noun to refer to a homogenous Britain, then, undermines the nationalist argument that Scotland is institutionally autonomous and territorially and politically distinct (Leith and Soule, 2011). During this period, Theresa May and Nicola Sturgeon were embroiled in a public dispute over Scottish independence; that Extracts (5) and (6) are examples of direct speech from Theresa May is significant. The pro-Leave text producers give

extended, unedited space to May's full speech because her arguments match the newspapers' pro-domestic Union editorial line. In contrast, Nicola Sturgeon's assertions are only alluded to implicitly by May's call for unity. Through this omission, the journalists lead readers to believe that Scottish independence is merely Sturgeon's desire, rather than a genuine threat to the UK.

Nationalist discourse exhibits a sense of timelessness as a country's history is retold, its present elaborated and its future envisioned (Bennett, 2018). This temporal unity seeps through in Extract (5), which draws on a narrative of national history through the nominal group 'proud shared heritage' to argue that a national way of life has developed out of a long-term union between the four countries. The construction of the union as 'heritage' locates unity in the past, evoking nostalgia for a period of 'strength' and 'stability' that will 'become even more important' in coming years. Through this example, May exploits the public's desire, expressed through the Leave vote, to return to a British golden era (Calhoun, 2017); she feeds into an interpretation of British hegemony as a relic of a bygone age that must be reclaimed. The call to 'continue' the union, represented through the metaphorical material process (Halliday, 1985) 'build [a stronger Britain]', is based on a conservative plea to respect a long-established tradition, rather than on present ideological cohesion between the UK's constituent countries. Foregrounding the past and positioning it as the roadmap to the future obscures the dwindling ideological unity between the UK's countries after the referendum. More importantly, it undermines the Scottish nationalist argument that Scotland is fiscally and politically peripheral to an English core by positioning Scotland at the shared centre of British institutional innovation (Whigham, 2019). Given Scotland's desire to remain in the EU, shoring up support for the UK and presenting Brexit as inevitable through the present tense verb 'leaves' dispels Sturgeon's hopes that Scotland could become an independent member state (Macnab, 2019).

The retrospective focus continues in Example (6) in the present perfect tense of the material process ‘we have built’. Again, collective British achievements are situated in history. This extract goes beyond a vague reference to historical ‘union’ by presenting concrete examples of what can be achieved through UK collaboration in an asyndetic list: ‘The National Health Service, the BBC, our armed forces, our Parliamentary democracy, our constitutional monarchy, our commitment to the rule of law, our respect for fundamental human rights’. Through its open-ended nature, the asyndetic list suggests that the potential for UK collaboration is infinite and what has already been achieved is too great to enumerate, hence the lack of conjunction signalling a final example. The ideological work performed by the list is noteworthy: it begins with an institution that is specific to the UK (the NHS), but by degrees introduces institutions and ideologies that characterise any democratic country. Many nations have armed forces, for example, and respect for human rights is enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights, in addition to national legislation. What this genericity suggests is that rather than constructing an image of a uniquely British way of life, then prime minister Theresa May emphasises the fundamental democratic principles that underpin the UK’s institutions. This strategy encourages readers who might sympathise with Scottish secession to consider the UK’s democratic values as transcending any cultural distinctiveness that Scotland may possess. The focus on general democratic principles in place of more specific British attributes offers an important insight into national identity construction: generic qualities can be framed as unique to a particular nation to obscure areas of socio-political discord and give the illusion of cultural affinity.

Rowinski (2017) argues that in recent years, Britain has experienced a shift from patriotism to ethnic nationalism in the British press. In their expressions of civic nationalism, Extracts (5) to (8) somewhat challenge his claim. May bases her calls for unity on shared institutions and military history, rather than specifically on British lineage. Britons are united

by ‘licking the salt and vinegar flavour off [their] fingers’ and by their ‘Parliamentary democracy’ and ‘constitutional monarchy,’ rather than thousands of years of shared ancestry. Although a nation is typically defined by its historical territory (Smith, 1992), there is no reference to British geography in any of the constructions of British life. Rather, each example draws on abstract elements of nationhood: a culture united by food and a legal framework rooted in democracy. That the list in Example (6) becomes increasingly generic rather than nation-specific indicates a preference for civic belonging over ethnic ties; the marked lack of specificity does not fit with the biological and geographical distinctiveness so important to ethnic nationalism. Arguably, the distinct histories of the UK’s nations render civic nationalism the only option; no majority ethnic lineage exists to unite the English and Scottish peoples, for example, as Scots historically separated their national identity from their loyalty to the British state (McCrone and Kiely, 2000; Morton, 2001). As a result of the supranational nature of Britain, the only feasible legacy that can be drawn upon to claim shared ‘heritage’ is the creation of the Union, a civic act. While ethnic nationalism might be a persuasive tool for journalists when distinguishing a homogenous UK identity from an international Other, it is not fruitful for a prime minister addressing the UK’s constituent countries and their relationships through the media (Rowinski, 2017).

In addition to calls for national unity based on shared history, the newspapers draw on childhood experiences and alleged personal attributes to construct a distinctly British personality. For example, the adjective ‘character-building’ pre-modifies ‘the humble potato crisp’ in Example (7), positioning the act of eating crisps as a process of initiation into the national character. Using food as a symbol for British ‘childhood’ is significant because it transcends national divisions in the UK and unites people from different socio-economic backgrounds in a single, recognisable experience (Mautner, 2001). The crisp is likely a deliberate choice because of its interdiscursivity and cultural salience; it has appeared several

times in Eurosceptic discourse. In 1993, for example, the UK press claimed that the European Commission was going to ban prawn cocktail crisps, an allegation the institution later denied. A decade later, the *Sunday Times* alleged that the EU would outlaw smoky bacon-flavoured crisps, a point again refuted by the European Commission. In Eurosceptic discourse, then, the crisp has long been a symbol of a national culture under threat. By positioning the crisp in the context of national childhood experiences, the newspaper elicits a protective instinct to prevent UK children from losing the opportunity to participate in this unifying, national experience. At the same time, it relies on interdiscursivity to evoke a European threat to British culture, creating an ingroup based on a common enemy.

In Example (8), two national personality traits, ‘civility and fair-mindedness’, underpin the national character and make Britons culturally distinct. The two abstract nouns contribute to the positioning of tolerance as a uniquely British quality, a representation which has underpinned British media discourse on national values for at least a decade and was prominent in David Cameron’s rhetoric about the nation (Bennett, 2018; Bolt, 2022). The nouns are positioned as the Goals of the material process ‘damage’ (Halliday, 1985), suggesting a second threat to British national culture. UK politicians, rather than an international enemy, pose this threat. The shift in the perpetrator of UK distress marks a broader move towards intranational division in the newspaper discourse, a phenomenon explored later in the chapter. Nevertheless, the examples illustrate that just as British identity was born out of conflict and a common enemy (Colley, 1992), so too is the call for the preservation of that identity at a time of perceived national crisis. The interrelated key semantic domain Polite, which is instantiated by nouns such as ‘civility’ and ‘decency’, extends the depiction of Britishness as performative civility and will be deconstructed in the next section.

Descriptions of the EU’s interference in British life enact division between Britons and EU migrants, while enumerations of British characteristics write into being a unified UK

history, personality, and childhood. Taken together, the two representations obscure potential discord among Britons and redirect anger towards two common enemies: the EU and migrants. Throughout the examples, journalists and politicians shift the blame for the breakdown of British public services towards the EU and diminish the threat of Scottish independence by suppressing calls for secession. The extracts reveal that the unique supranational nature of the UK renders civic nationalism a more pertinent framework for a collective British identity than the ethnic nationalism that has previously been identified in British media discourse (Rowinski, 2017).

4.3. Constructing Britain and Europe in the later post-referendum years (2018-2019)

4.3.1. The Polite semantic domain

The Polite semantic domain expands on the discourse of a British way of life by revealing the characteristics of a presupposed British public character. It is slightly less key than the Alive domain, placing 22nd in 2016 and rising to 18th in 2019. Nevertheless, the log ratio scores in Table 9 reveal that the domain consistently occupies over twice as much space in the target corpus as in the reference corpus.

Year	Relative frequency in C1 per 100,000 words (media)	% of C1 (media)	Relative frequency in C2 per 100,000 words (ref)	% of C2 (ref)	Log-likelihood	Log ratio
2016	20.7	0.02%	6.8	0.01%	65.19	1.76
2017	15.7	0.02%	6.8	0.01%	20.78	1.31
2018	15.0	0.02%	6.8	0.01%	24.99	1.46
2019	23.0	0.03%	6.8	0.01%	52.57	1.89

Table 9: Statistical information about the Polite semantic domain

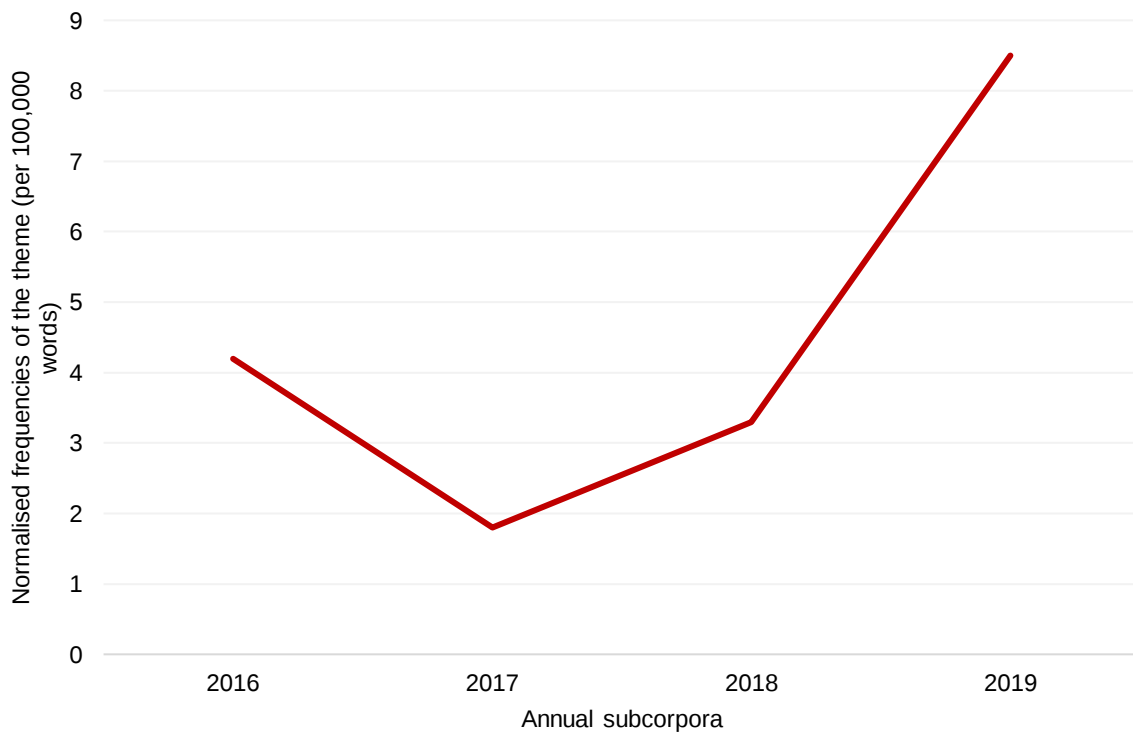


Figure 4: The politeness as a British value theme reaches its peak in 2019

As Figure 4 reveals, articles that cite politeness as a British value are most frequent in 2019, after two years of comparatively low frequency. The semantic domain centres on many recurrent words, the most frequent of which are ‘courtesy’, ‘decency’ and ‘civility’. Extracts (9) to (13) illustrate how journalists employ the latter two nouns.

(9) Finally, the Remainers are now desperately trying to suggest that anyone who wants to Leave is somehow against the spirit of modern Britain; against openness, tolerance, **decency** (*Telegraph Online*, June 2016)

(10) The **civility** of the people waiting patiently in line at the bank. The daily miracle of seeing queues of traffic next to empty bus lanes a sight so incomprehensible to my inner Italian it still makes me smile in amazement (*Daily Mail*, June 2016)

(11) I wonder if they will be happy with what they reap, and what astounding damage they have done not just to our political settlement but to the famous **civility** and fair mindedness of British life (*Telegraph Online*, March 2019).

(12) And what is worst, the people have learnt something they will not forget about how much they are despised by those who actually run the country. God help us. The great national virtues of reason and **decency** are about to be tested to their limits (*Telegraph Online*, March 2019)

(13) Speaking a [sic] People's Vote rally last week, Ms Soubry said: "There is a profound danger of the country being seized by a minority who don't share basic British

values of **decency**" (*Express Online*, September 2019)

The Polite semantic domain complements the Alive domain in more than just its thematic coherence: it includes several words which share connotations with 'life', revealing a second linguistic strategy used to construct a particular way of being British. The abstract nouns 'spirit' (9), 'virtues' (12) and 'values' (13) imply a British essence that evades concrete description; their positive semantic prosody and selection over neutral alternatives such as 'norms' indicate a framing of Britishness as imitable.

There is a remarkable continuity to these extracts in their construction of the British national character as grounded in 'decency'. Consistency is important when ascribing qualities to a collective national identity because the cohesion of a nation depends primarily on a strong consensus about national values (Hroch, 2019). Equally, the persuasiveness of discourses about national values depends partly upon their repetition. That the different newspapers share a vision of British values appears promising for the generation of a cohesive pro-Brexit British identity. The extracts expand upon the moral Briton characterisation by identifying the qualities of 'openness, tolerance, decency' (9). The asyndetic tripartite list creates an open-ended selection of values, suggesting that these three examples are just a sample of many positive qualities attached to Britishness. The nouns share connotations of acceptance and equality, envisioning Britain as a country that champions difference and debate. The noun 'openness' is striking as it encapsulates the 'dual voice of a modernist democratic nationalism' (Leith and Soule: 73). That is, it positions 'openness' as a symbol of a unique British 'spirit' even though an open nation would necessarily be diverse. As diversity would dilute the supposed singularity of Britishness, this construction of Britain exhibits a tension between British exceptionalism and the liberal-democratic values of civic nationalism (Tabachnik, 2019).

Constructing a collective national character has a specific function in Extract (9), where an innate, transcendental ‘decency’ counters alleged criticisms of the Brexit vote as xenophobic. *Telegraph Online* presupposes that the ‘spirit of modern Britain’ is ‘openness, tolerance [and] decency’. As Leavers are Britons, they are imbued with these values and so cannot be xenophobic, according to the newspaper. Following this logic, readers must question *Remainers’* claims to Britishness because, in their allegations, they do not exhibit the tolerance that characterises modern Britons. This discursive technique reveals that in addition to constructing a collective identity, national values can be drawn upon to ostracise social groups by implying that they do not belong. Once again, the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion prove irrevocably intertwined in national identity construction.

In Extract (10), British columnist Sarah Vine employs a conceptual metaphor of the INNER SELF AS THE EMOTIONAL CENTRE OF A PERSON (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) to construct herself as, emotionally speaking, Italian. Vine moved to Italy aged five and lived there until she was 16; she thus possesses a liminal identity as both a migrant and a British national – a so-called friendly Other (Gibbins, 2014). Vine’s experience of living in Europe allows her to step outside of the British cultural sphere to comment positively on the behavioural characteristics and values that give Britain an international reputation for ‘civility’. Her dual identity enables her to witness the ‘miracle’ of British ‘civility’ as a person from a different culture might: with reverence. Her choice of abstract nouns, ‘amazement’ and ‘miracle’, foreground the singularity of British cultural practices, marking them as different from, and superior to, life on the Continent. In other words, they perpetuate the myth of British exceptionalism. The article’s publication coincides with the EU referendum vote; its claims reinforce the Leave campaign’s argument that the UK is both geographically and culturally distinct from mainland Europe (Cap, 2019).

While the extracts from 2016 constitute a positive reflection on British characteristics, a threat to British identity unites the three examples from 2019. The material process ‘tested (to their limits)’, which takes ‘great national virtues’ as its Goal, depicts peril and renders the danger to the collective British character tangible in Extract (12) (Halliday, 1985). British political officials pose the threat to the UK in this narrative: ‘those who actually run the country’ are blamed for testing the ‘great national virtues of reason and decency’. These political actors are charged with ‘despising’ ‘the people’ in a populist construction that reveals that the national values being ‘tested to their limits’ belong to British citizens, not British politicians. Through this subtle linguistic differentiation, the journalist suggests that the political elite is less British, or at least less decent and reasonable, than the ordinary Briton. Context is enlightening here: the article disparages an allegedly pro-EU Parliament, whose inability to agree on withdrawal terms delays Brexit. The act of ‘despising’ means, in concrete terms, disagreeing with the majority public vote to Leave, as the noun ‘minority’ suggests.

What is striking about this example is its inversion of British civility; by asserting that elected representatives despise ‘the people’, the journalist establishes a scenario in which it would be reasonable for Britons to lose their sense of decency. As decency is a core characteristic in the British national identity narrative (Bennett, 2018), losing this value throws the existence of collective Britishness into crisis. In short, the betrayal of political leaders threatens the principles that unite the British nation. That the political threat has the potential to dismantle the entire realm is evident in Example (13), which argues that ‘the country’ is at risk of being ‘seized’ by a minority that does not value decency. The metonymic nominal group ‘the country’ reveals that it is not just the culture and norms of Britain that are under threat, but the very existence of the nation. The negative construction of British MPs reveals an emerging ‘state-of-the-nation’ discourse in the later years of the withdrawal process in which dissatisfaction and disharmony within the UK pose a bigger threat to British identity than any

international enemy. The discussion of the No Respect domain below explores this discourse further, but it is worth noting here that it forms part of a discursive shift from supporting the official government line on national identity to framing Britain as a nation divided by an incompetent political elite.

The evaluative language in the Polite semantic domain envisions Britons positively as liberal-minded and tolerant. Perpetuating a belief in united British ideals, values and goals strengthens the collective conception of British national identity (Henderson and McEwan, 2005). Given the ongoing desire for Scottish independence, creating a collective sense of character and belonging that overcomes political disagreements can bolster support for the domestic Union. The semantic domain does more than simply construct a country united in positive, democratic values, however. A discursive shift in 2019 marks the emergence of a scenario in which the British nation is under threat, not from an external enemy, but from people within Britain who lack the fundamental values of British decency and tolerance. This demonised group consists of pro-EU politicians and people who voted Remain; labelling these social actors intolerant enables the newspapers to shield Leave-voting Britons from post-referendum accusations of xenophobia. However, given that almost half of voting Britons opted to Remain, this discourse demonises a large part of the population. The radical Othering of pro-EU politicians and voters (Gibbins, 2014), then, engenders a deep-rooted division at the very core of British society. Despite the linguistic construction of a united character, the newspapers envision and threaten to reify widespread national disunity.

4.3.2. The No Respect semantic domain

The No Respect semantic domain is statistically significant in all four datasets and rises from the seventh most key domain in 2016 to the most key semantic domain in 2019. Table 10 below displays the relative frequencies, log-likelihood values, and log ratio values for the semantic domain of No Respect across the four data sets.

Year	Relative frequency in C1 per 100,000 words (media)	% of C1 (media)	Relative frequency in C2 per 100,000 words (ref)	% of C2 (ref)	Log-likelihood	Log ratio
2016	13.3	0.02%	2.6	0.00%	67.49	2.54
2017	14.8	0.02%	2.6	0.00%	53.65	2.63
2018	23.2	0.03%	2.6	0.00%	123.13	3.49
2019	44.9	0.05%	2.6	0.00%	262.18	4.25

Table 10: Statistical information about the No Respect semantic domain

The representations realised by the No Respect semantic domain are heterogeneous; there are four key themes which increase in 2019 at markedly different rates. Table 11 presents the themes and their overall instances across the four annual subcorpora.

Themes	Overall instances (2016-2019)
The denigration of Britain	86
Contempt within Britain	45
Contempt for democracy	21
Contempt for Europe	5

Table 11: The four key themes in the No Respect semantic domain

The underlying sentiment of the themes is division, which afflicts all levels of society: international partnerships, alliances between politicians and the public, and relationships between citizens. As Figure 5 illuminates, the distribution of themes is weighted largely towards the later post-referendum years, where the greatest discursive concerns are the denigration of Britain and contempt within Britain. The only theme dedicated to Europe, Contempt for Europe, remains entirely on the periphery, suggesting that the EU's significance as a social actor is generally much lower than Britain's within concordance lines from this semantic domain. This is unsurprising, given that the articles are from the UK press and the news value of proximity dictates that events which take place in the newspaper's country are more likely to be covered than those that occur at a distance (Shoemaker, Lee, Han and Cohen, 2007). That the two most frequent themes depict dissatisfaction and disharmony within the UK indicates a general discursive shift inward in comparison to the earlier subcorpora, towards a focus on national division and self-perception. This discursive pattern, as it is borne out in the two most salient themes, will be explored in the remainder of this chapter.

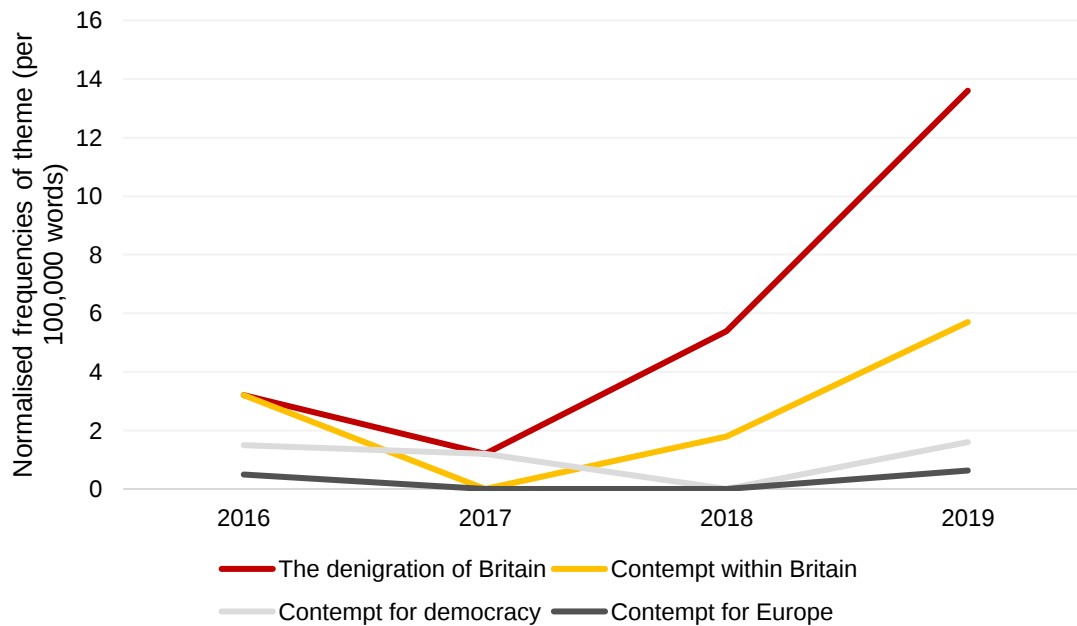


Figure 5: Normalised instances of the Denigration of Britain and Contempt within Britain themes increase between 2018 and 2019

The Denigration of Britain

The Denigration of Britain theme consists of two discursive representations: Disdain for Britain, and the Humiliation of Britain. There are 21 raw instances of the first theme, the majority of which appears in the two earlier annual subcorpora. The latter theme occurs 65 times and features most frequently in the two later annual subcorpora.

Disdain for Britain

According to the pro-Brexit newspapers, the most common perpetrator of contempt for Britain is the EU, which appears in 11 pejorative instances of the theme. The depiction of the EU's contempt towards Britain is present in all the annual subcorpora and is based on five main lemmas: 'scorn', 'contempt', 'deride', 'disdain' and 'disrespect'. Three representative extracts appear below.

(14) Meanwhile, our partners (who offered us nothing but **scorn** in their arrogant presumption that we'd vote to Remain) know how heavily they depend on British markets (*Daily Mail*, June 2016).

(15) Mr Tusk appeared to **deride** the UK for leaving the EU and called on remaining countries to get behind the bloc's failing policies (*Express Online*, March 2017).

(16) Meanwhile the Brussels machine pours **scorn** on poor lost Britain and for our part we look ready to give in (*The Daily Telegraph*, July 2018).

A two-pronged discourse of European hypocrisy and British exceptionalism envelops the EU's alleged disdain for Britain in these three extracts. Journalists consistently use a strategy of demontage to derogatorily position Europe as divided, failing, and dependent on the UK, a characterisation that in turn presupposes British superiority (Wodak et al., 2009). In Extract (15), for example, Donald Tusk asks European countries to support the EU's policies even though they are 'failing'. The supposedly dwindling success of European policy renders Tusk's derision of the UK absurd: Britain can only benefit from avoiding the collapse of the European political framework. In this discourse of British exceptionalism, Britain's vote to leave the EU constitutes political foresight, which contrasts with the myopia of the remaining EU member states, whose blinkered hubris leads them to commit to the EU's failures.

Example (16) similarly depicts alleged European delusions of grandeur: EU countries are said to 'depend' on British economic success while 'arrogant[ly]' pouring 'scorn' on the nation. The cognitive, mental process 'know' (Halliday, 1985) implies that Britain's financial

security and the EU's economic dependency are epistemological certainties, a spurious position considering that just weeks before the extract was published, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicted a UK recession if Britain left the EU (Allen, 2016). Nevertheless, the construction of the EU's knowledge forms the crux of its characterisation as hypocritical: it highlights a gap between its dependency and disdain, its knowledge and actions. The gulf between the EU's self-perception and its behaviour is alluded to in the nominal group 'our partners'. The relational identification between the UK and the EU ostensibly envisions camaraderie, but the pre-modifying adjective 'arrogant' and the verbal group 'offered us nothing but scorn' belie the authenticity of the 'partnership'. The adjective and verbal group shroud the noun 'partners' in irony, revealing the extract to be a caustic comment on the purported nature of EU collaboration as bubbling with unpleasanties beneath superficial support.

All three extracts envision the EU as duplicitous. They posit that it is not the political collaboration it purports to be but a demanding entity that presumes support from its member states while failing to offer them robust policies and protection. The prevailing, pejorative depiction of the EU infuses the nominal group 'poor lost Britain' with irony in Example (16). In the extract, the EU is dehumanised and linguistically positioned as an inanimate Other through the metaphor of the 'Brussels machine'. The depiction of EU officials as machinery evokes the Eurosceptic portrayal of the EU as faceless and opaque. More importantly for this reading, though, it supports a villainous depiction of the EU as devoid of human emotion. The vision of Britain as 'poor' and 'lost' is attributed to the EU; while those adjectives ostensibly imply empathy, the EU's construction as a machine precludes it from emotional intelligence. As a result, the EU is characterised by pretence; its supposedly supportive nature is revealed to be a performance. In the same vein, the EU's vision of Britain as 'poor' and 'lost' is undermined. The adjectives are used to mock and subvert the pro-EU argument that Britain would suffer

because of its withdrawal from the EU. According to this journalist, Britain's departure from the EU does not render it 'lost'. On the contrary, it allows the UK to escape from a Union that thrives on contempt, not collaboration. Despite the EU's perception of Britain, then, the three extracts assert that the UK should thrive outside of the EU.

The extracts were published after the EU referendum vote, at a time when politicians were preparing for and then engaging in Brexit negotiations. In this context, the inferior EU-superior UK dichotomy bolsters public support for UK negotiators taking a tough stance towards the EU in Brexit negotiations. That the *Daily Telegraph* exhorts readers to support a more resolute position in negotiations is evident in the verbal group 'give in' in Extract (16). The phrase depicts the UK's central problem not as EU derision, but as UK negotiators' apathy and lack of assertiveness in the face of that derision. Through the ironic tone, the journalist questions ostensible political incompetence and implies that Britain should achieve more during EU-UK talks because it is not negotiating from a position of weakness. (The second theme from this representation, Humiliation of Britain, will explore the media portrayal of British political ineptitude further).

Nevertheless, it is worth considering the diplomatic implications of constructing the EU as a radical Other (Gibbins, 2014). Although disparaging the EU as an enemy of the UK might garner support for a post-Brexit British identity, it could hinder relations between the EU and the UK moving forward. That is, increasing globalisation demands that the UK develop a trading relationship with a bloc that part of its press has explicitly condemned to ruin. EU officials will not be ignorant of the anti-EU sentiment expressed in the pro-Leave press; explicitly belittling the EU could persuade its officials to adopt a more hostile approach to negotiations. The relational nature of national identity construction thus proves double-edged: on the one hand, constructing an EU outgroup allows pro-Leave journalists to strengthen support for a non-EU British identity, but on the other hand, it problematises the development

of future international relationships, which are vital for national prosperity in a globalised world (see Chapter 5 for further exploration of political constructions of international relationships).

A homogenous group of pro-EU British political officials constitutes the second source of disdain towards Britain; it features in 10 of the 21 concordance lines. Intranational contempt for Britain is situated within a National Traitor frame, or fifth-column discourse (Chernobrov, 2019), in which support for non-British entities becomes an expression of national self-loathing. The National Traitor discourse is particularly prevalent in the *Daily Express*, as Extracts (17) to (19) exemplify.

(17) His [Tony Blair's] eagerness to invade Iraq was matched by his **disdain** for our British identity, reflected in his devotion to the EU, foreign aid and ever greater immigration (*Express Online*, July 2016).

(18) It proves the argument that there was a large streak of unpatriotic **disdain** running through the Remain campaign (*The Express*, July 2016).

(19) On a deeper level key Remainers sought the embrace of Brussels because, in their **contempt** for traditional Britain, they wanted to make our country more European, more continental (*The Express*, July 2016).

Three nominalisations, 'devotion to the EU', 'foreign aid' and 'ever greater immigration', form the basis of Tony Blair's 'disdain' for a collective British identity in Example (17). Through the linguistic strategy of association (van Leeuwen, 1995), the journalist implies a relationship between pro-EU sentiment, approval of foreign aid and support for high levels of immigration.

Using Blair as evidence, the journalist warns about the perils of supporting pro-EU politicians or political parties. That is, they imply that support for the EU also entails a propensity for national disloyalty that culminates in uncontrollable immigration levels. Immigration is securitised in the pro-Leave press, in a discursive construction of immigration as a threat to British infrastructure (see Extract 1); recontextualising pro-EU sentiment as support for migrants constructs Remainers as traitors who threaten to unravel their nation, a so-called fifth column (Chernobrov, 2019). Given the salience of immigration during the EU referendum campaign (Geddes, 2017), the threat of greater immigration is a promising rhetorical strategy for persuading pro-Leave readers to support a Leave-backing candidate to replace David Cameron as then prime minister. After all, this would protect the nation from dissolution according to the pro-Brexit press, and is, therefore, the ultimate act of patriotism.

In Example (19), ‘key Remainers’ are charged with ‘want[ing] to make our country more European, more continental’ because they view ‘traditional Britain’ with contempt. The attributive adjective ‘traditional’ intimates that there is a uniquely British history that exists outside of European culture and geography. This discursively constructed history distinguishes between a pre-European British identity and a homogenous mainland European existence. The adjective ‘continental’ is paramount to this differentiation; it draws on the connotations of geographical distance to emphasise a distinction between Britain and mainland Europe. Geography represents culture in this discursive frame, with geographical distance implying cultural difference. At the time this extract was published, Nigel Farage had been making claims about the UK’s cultural singularity based on its geographical distinctiveness for at least three years (Cap, 2019). The identical media and political arguments illustrate that the *Express* aligned its vision of Britain with the most overt of Eurosceptic ideologues. As the *Express* constructs the identities of Britain and Europe as oppositional, it argues that wanting to be part of the EU represents a desire to become more European and so, inevitably, less British. This

desire for the Other is conceptualised as taboo through the noun 'embrace'; the connotations of physical intimacy frame the acceptance of a supposedly homogenous European culture as an illicit romantic affair. Although this example differs from the criticism levelled at Tony Blair, it renders an image of the same social act, betrayal of the nation, based on the idea that pro-European sentiment inevitably equates to anti-British beliefs.

Depicting Remainers as unpatriotic and a threat to the nation encourages intolerance of pro-EU sentiment in the UK, both in political leaders and in members of the public. It primes Brexiteer readers to associate Remainers with national betrayal, an attitude which could lead to the social exclusion of large swathes of the British public. The National Traitor frame encourages pro-Brexit readers to support a tougher stance in Brexit negotiations to prevent pro-EU politicians and political parties from driving the country towards higher levels of immigration. All three extracts were published immediately after the EU referendum; there was no longer a need to prove the importance of voting Leave for the UK. Instead, as the country geared up for unprecedented negotiations, the pro-Brexit press employed discursive strategies to augment support for a post-Brexit British identity by narrating a pre-European, collective national history.

The Humiliation of Britain

The two social actors that feature in the Disdain for Britain theme, the EU and British political officials, also appear in the Humiliation of Britain representation. However, there is a reversal in their salience; the most prolific instigator of British humiliation in the pro-Brexit press is a group of pro-EU British MPs. This collective agent appears in 43 of the 65 instances of the theme, while the EU fulfils the discursive role of the perpetrator in the remaining 22 examples. Unsurprisingly, all extracts from this theme centre on the lemma 'humiliate'. The depiction of

the EU humiliating Britain is a strategy of demontage that draws on the tropes of perpetrator and victim to construct the EU as a villain and a threat to the UK (Wodak et al., 2009). Six concordance lines draw on lexis from a semantic field of violence, such as the processes ‘punish’, ‘blast’ and ‘intimidate’ (Halliday, 1985), to depict the EU’s desire to humiliate Britain as a targeted act. The noun ‘henchman’ and the material process ‘thwarting’ in Extract (20) exemplify this discursive pattern:

- (20) Juncker duly became EU President in 2014, despite a strong campaign against his candidacy by David Cameron. His henchman Selmayr has been thwarting Britain ever since. He wants victory for the EU and **humiliation** for us (*MailOnline*, July 2018).

In this example, the nominal group ‘his henchman Selmayr’ refers to Martin Selmayr, who was Chief of Staff to the then President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker. The pronoun-noun combination enacts relational functionalisation (van Leeuwen, 1995). That is, it constructs Selmayr in terms of the social role he performs as a ‘henchman’ and associates his actions with Juncker. The journalist does not mention Selmayr’s institutional title; rather, the writer recontextualises his job from political official to member of a violent, underground group through the pre-modifying noun ‘henchman’. The illicit connotations of the noun characterise Selmayr as an individual who perpetrates violent acts on behalf of a larger organisation: the European Commission. The acts, *MailOnline* insinuates, are commissioned by Juncker, who occupies the discursive role of European institutional kingpin in his position as President. Through the simple depiction of Selmayr as a ‘henchman’, then, the journalist undermines Juncker’s credentials, disparages Selmayr, and envisions the EU as an institution that will stop at nothing to get what it desires. The representation of Selmayr as a ‘henchman’

feeds into the construction of the EU's *gangsterism* that Zappettini (2021b) locates in an article by *The Sun*; my analysis shows that this discursive depiction of the EU extends beyond a single newspaper.

The *MailOnline* journalist employs the first-person personal pronoun 'us' as an inclusive, national form of 'we' to unite the writer, reader, and other imagined members of the nation in a single ingroup. The pronoun's inclusivity is collusive and coercive; it positions readers as the victims of national humiliation, personalising the threat and increasing public indignation towards EU actors. The parallelism of the circumstances of Cause (behalf) (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004) in the prepositional phrases 'for the EU and [...] for us' creates a binary of grammatical beneficiaries in which the EU is the outgroup. By splitting the beneficiaries, the journalist explicitly asserts that for Selmayr, and so for the EU, success in negotiations is not an option for both parties; the EU achieving 'victory' in negotiations inevitably involves humiliation for the UK. Characterising the EU's position in negotiations as antagonistic and selfish enables *MailOnline* to advocate for a similar response from UK negotiators. Framing British resistance as a reaction places the blame for any unfavourable consequences of a hard Brexit (that is, a withdrawal that results in 'a radically different economic relationship between the UK and the EU' [UK in a Changing Europe, 2020b]) on the EU's original, uncompromising negotiating position and not on Britain's diplomatic decisions.

As President of the European Commission between 2014 and 2019, Jean-Claude Juncker symbolised the European political elite throughout the Brexit process; the pro-Brexit press regularly disparaged him as the epitome of the European 'uber-bureaucrat' (Hardman, 2017: n.p.). Juncker did not shy away from expressing his disappointment at the Leave vote and his progressive weariness with Brexit negotiations (BBC News, 2018; Adler, 2019), political views which contradicted *MailOnline*'s pro-Brexit sentiments. Juncker's willingness to talk

about Brexit, often in terms which were unflattering for Britain, made him a useful tool for the newspapers' discursive framing of a hard Brexit as an inevitable consequence of the EU's treatment of Britain. For example, by demonising Juncker and his associates as violent bullies in Example (20), *MailOnline* envisages the ongoing Brexit negotiations as a battle against an enemy, rather than a collaborative enterprise intended to produce a favourable deal for both parties. This argument, in turn, persuades the audience that a hard Brexit deal is the only option that will protect Britain against EU antagonism.

Although the EU is constructed as violent and tyrannical in its attempt to humiliate Britain, six extracts exude a derisive tone that undermines the Union's prospects. Examples (21) and (22) represent this argument:

(21) The EU is desperate to **humiliate** us 'pour décourager les autres', as France's President Macron might put it (*Daily Mail*, July 2018).

(22) Nigel Farage delivered an excoriating barrage at EU 'pipsqueaks' trying to **humiliate** Britain today during a stormy battle in the European Parliament (*MailOnline*, September 2019).

The verbal group 'trying to' (22), the intensive relational process 'is desperate to' (21), and the desiderative, mental process 'wants' (20) perform temporal distancing, marking the EU's humiliation of Britain as a hypothetical event rather than a reflection of reality (Halliday, 1985). The relational and mental processes minimise the threat of intimidation because they frame the EU's humiliation of Britain as a desire rather than a certainty. Positioning Britain's degradation in the future indicates that there is an opportunity to save the country from disgrace. Example (22) strengthens the insinuation that Britain can avoid defeat. In its metaphorical

recontextualisation of a European Parliament debate as a ‘stormy battle’, the extract conceptualises ARGUMENT AS WAR (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Nigel Farage embodies the archetype of the hero in his linguistic position as the Sayer of the verbal process ‘delivered an excoriating barrage’ (Halliday, 1985). Meanwhile, the EU is enfeebled by its grammatical role as the Receiver. The linguistic attribution of agency acts as a commentary on the socio-political power dynamic between UK and EU politicians; the UK, *MailOnline* suggests, has the advantage. The negative epithet ‘pipsqueaks’ casts an ironic shadow over the EU’s attempt to humiliate the UK by evoking connotations of insignificance and weakness. Simultaneously, the nominalisation ‘barrage’ connotes overwhelming bombardment, revealing that in the battle of words taking place in the European Parliament, Farage is triumphant.

It is clear from Extracts (21) and (22) that despite the EU’s characterisation as Britain’s enemy, the *Daily Mail* does not consider the bloc a serious threat to the UK’s international standing. The discursive diminution of the EU threat represents an optimistic view of Britain’s ability to thrive outside of the Union, even in the case of a hard Brexit deal. However, the UK’s success in negotiations is as contingent on the competence of British politicians as on the EU’s alleged incompetence. It is the awareness of this dependency that underpins the widespread representation of British MPs as causing national humiliation. The depiction of British embarrassment appears most frequently in articles from March 2019, when Theresa May was forced to request an extension to Britain’s withdrawal after losing a second meaningful vote on her Brexit deal (Walker, 2021). In the same month, MPs failed to agree on an alternative Brexit blueprint, prompting fears that Parliament was in disarray. That the publication dates coincide with May’s most challenging month indicates that the newspaper undermined public confidence in May’s leadership skills and approach to Brexit to increase support for an alternative prime minister.

The pro-Brexit press depicts Theresa May as the individual responsible for Britain's shame most frequently, although often through the pronoun 'her' or the official title of 'Prime Minister' rather than by name. Fifteen concordance lines feature a condemning depiction of May, her cabinet, and the deal she has negotiated, as shown in Extracts (23) to (25).

(23) The entire handling of the Brexit negotiations has been a national **humiliation**. Even calling them "negotiations" is a stretch. The Prime Minister's Withdrawal Agreement hands over our country's self-respect along with control of our future (*Telegraph Online*, March 2019).

(24) Oh and 90 per cent of Brits think her [May's] handling of Brexit has been a national **humiliation**. What's been sacrificed here is Britain's reputation on the world stage (*The Express*, March 2019).

(25) Jo Johnson has written that the deal risks being a national **humiliation** on the scale of Suez. He is right (*Telegraph Online*, November 2018).

In March 2019, journalists describe May's humiliation of Britain chiefly in the present perfect tense: 'has been a national humiliation'. In addition to the nominalisation 'humiliation', the present perfect tense in Extracts (23) and (24) depicts May's disgrace as a pre-existing reality – an act which has already occurred, and which has ongoing consequences for the nation. This representation incites a dual sense of helplessness and indignation among readers: envisioning the public as powerless contests the UK's status as a parliamentary democracy. Example (25) constitutes a warning of the national humiliation as its publication occurred before MPs scrutinised May's deal in Parliament. This timeline reveals how the pro-Brexit press

undermined May's authority as prime minister even before she unveiled her vision for Brexit. By forewarning the public about May's inevitable failure, the newspapers prepared readers to accept calls for her resignation. During this period, many Conservative MPs publicly voiced concerns about May's deal; in December 2018, she faced a vote of no confidence. That the *Telegraph* chose to paraphrase this specific quote from Conservative MP Jo Johnson indicates that editors saw ideological value in his comparison between the Suez crisis and Britain's international standing in 2019.

There are several events in British political history that Jo Johnson could have cited to symbolise the dire consequences of political decision-making mistakes. That he chooses the Suez crisis signifies that the collective interpretation of British national history includes this historical event. Many historians consider the Suez crisis to be a political miscalculation that adversely affected the nation's position as a world power and triggered a loss of national self-confidence (Peden, 2012; Maccaferri, 2019). As the crisis occurred in recent history, Britons born before the 1950s will remember the effect of the Suez crisis on the national psyche. Jo Johnson's comparison consequently resonates on a political and personal level for older members of the public who, of course, were more likely to have voted Leave (Ashcroft, 2016). Given the shared perception of Suez as a political failure, discursively associating it with May's Brexit deal persuades readers that if the deal is passed in Parliament, Britain's international standing will further disintegrate. In this argument, journalists and politicians draw on British history to generate public concern for the future and entreat Britons to support a change in the present political makeup as a preventative measure. Undermining May steadily convinces readers that a different politician, who would negotiate a more ambitious deal, would better steer the UK through Brexit. As a result, the representation is calculated to agitate the public and incite political dissatisfaction. By citing right-wing detractors rather than the opposition,

the *Telegraph Online* reassures readers that they are not betraying their political position by criticising the current Conservative leader.

Although May takes most of the blame for her failure to pass a Brexit deal, the pro-Brexit press also condemns British parliamentarians for their inability to agree on amendments. This social actor representation appears in 17 concordance lines and is exemplified by Extracts (26) to (28):

(26) Perhaps the pro-Brussels majority in Parliament – so obscenely out of step with the people they are elected to represent - have already ensured the greatest national **humiliation** in our history (*The Sun*, March 2019).

(27) Britain has suffered almost three **humiliating** years of infighting, weak leadership and giving away constant concession to the EU (*Daily Star Online*, March 2019).

(28) Insulated in their Westminster bubble, are they incapable of grasping that their refusal to bow to the common good is destroying faith in democracy, turning the country into a **humiliating** international joke? (*Daily Mail*, March 2019).

Pro-Brexit newspapers offer different explanations for how politicians have humiliated the UK. For example, in Extract (27), the *Daily Star* lists the actions that prompt national humiliation as ‘infighting’, ‘weak leadership’ and ‘concession to the EU’. These nominalisations suggest that MPs hamper Britain’s reputation by refusing to agree on a Brexit deal, not being brought into line by party leaders, and agreeing to give the EU more than it requires in negotiations. In

short, the underlying causes of national mortification, according to the *Daily Star*, are impassable divisions between British politicians and the incompetence of national leaders.

In contrast, the *Daily Mail* envisions a scenario in which the nation, rather than its politicians, is an 'international joke' in Example (28). Supporting the Benn Act and preventing a no-deal Brexit are recontextualised as a 'refusal to bow to the common good'. Privileging the desires of the so-called elite over the universal good of the public 'destroy[s] faith in democracy' in this example. The nominal group 'common good' personifies the nation, drawing on collective well-being to portray this political stance as an unpatriotic, selfish act of rebellion that sacrifices the nation's international reputation. The argument that selfishness 'destroys faith in democracy' rests on the idea that politicians are failing to respect the (supposedly homogenous) public opinion and therefore are not fulfilling their responsibility as political representatives in a democracy. As parliamentary democracy is often framed as the cornerstone of British identity in political discourse (Marcussen et al., 1999), a loss of democracy entails the loss of a collective sense of Britishness.

The rhetorical effect of both examples is the same: diminishing public confidence in MPs' ability to agree on a Brexit deal that will benefit the country. Recent evidence reveals that this argument resonated with the public: the 2019 Audit of Political Engagement, conducted by Ipsos MORI for the leading independent research institute The Hansard Society, reports that only 25% of the 1,198 adults surveyed had confidence in British MPs' handling of Brexit (Hansard Society, 2019). As the relationship between discourse and social practice is dialectic (Fairclough, 1989), the media depiction of political ineptitude likely reflects and reinforces these fears among readers.

Example (26) is enlightening in its populist construction of a dichotomy of British 'people' and a 'pro-Brussels majority in Parliament'. The metaphorical verbal group 'obscenely out of step' presupposes that the only ideological position among Britons is anti-EU sentiment.

By linguistically omitting "Remainer" Britons from its construction of the public, *The Sun* implies that only Leave-voting Britons exist (Theresa May evinced a similarly narrow conceptualisation of the British public in her speeches [Atkins, 2022]). Given that only one million votes separated Leave and Remain in the 2016 referendum, this discourse excludes almost half of the voting population in the UK. Discursively erasing the existence of Remainer identities from a British ingroup could prompt widespread social division in the UK because it encourages intolerance of diverse political positions. Perhaps more ideologically remarkable than this divisive rhetoric, however, is the construction of ongoing political support for the EU as 'the greatest national humiliation in our history'. Through this claim, *The Sun* writes a version of national history in which the ideological divergence between politicians and a small majority of the public is more problematic for the nation's reputation than, for example, the Civil War of the 1600s, division between pro- and anti-slavery stances in the 18th and 19th centuries, or contemporary calls for Scottish independence. By ignoring historical examples of division in British society, the newspaper frames Brexit as the defining moment in Britain's existence. The construction of Brexit as the most critical juncture (Capoccia, 2016) in British history commands a sense of urgency from readers; it prompts them to react to the constructed outrage.

The pro-Brexit newspapers argue that EU officials purposely humiliate Britain to provoke indignation among readers and encourage them to support a more hostile, reactive stance in Brexit negotiations. The journalists also sow distrust between British politicians and the public by undermining Theresa May and her Cabinet's ability to handle Brexit and secure a favourable deal for the UK. The populist dichotomy of politicians and the public engenders a pejorative self-reflection on the state of the British nation; the country's proud international standing is increasingly jeopardised in this narrative by the incompetence of UK political officials. This populist discourse both reflects and reinforces public dissatisfaction with the state of the UK: 56% of participants in the 2019 Audit of Political Engagement believed Britain

to be in decline (Hansard Society, 2019). The image of division expands beyond the politician-public relationship, though. The newspapers presuppose that all members of the British public harbour anti-EU sentiment, erasing Remainers from the collective British identity. This discursive exclusion precipitates social exclusion by implicitly encouraging intolerance of pro-EU views while strengthening pro-Brexit readers' sense of belonging to their nation. In sum, the Humiliation of Britain representation depicts a deeply politically fractured nation. Concerns about the breakup of the UK commonly cite Scottish, Welsh, and Northern Irish nationalisms as likely catalysts (Cochrane, 2020). However, the conflation of British national and political identities in the pro-Brexit press reveals the perception that there is as much division *within* the UK's constituent countries as there is *between* them. The real threat to UK unity according to these newspapers, then, is national division along political lines, a hypothesis that will be explored in the next section.

Contempt within Britain

The Contempt within Britain theme depicts a nation divided along a single, simplified, populist axis: a pro-EU, metropolitan and political elite, labelled 'Remainers', and a hardworking, disillusioned public referred to as 'Brexiters' or 'Leavers'. Across the annual subcorpora, there is a diachronic shift towards the greater saliency of 'Remainer*' and 'Brexiteer*': there are only 12.8 instances of 'Remainer*' per 100,000 words in the 2016 annual subcorpus but 86.2 instances per 100,000 words in the 2019 subcorpus. Likewise, there are 19.5 instances of 'Brexiteer*' per 100,000 words in 2016 and 70.8 instances per 100,000 words in 2019. That the two terms appear in 2016 is perhaps unsurprising, given that they represent the two opposing sides of the EU referendum campaign. However, that the divisive nouns persist after the referendum takes place indicates that the identities that they index have become what Zürn

and De Wilde (2016: 284) term a ‘cleavage’. A cleavage refers to a situation in which a myriad number of conflicts are subsumed under a single dimension between opposing groups, ‘reinvigorating a new sense of identity politics which may bring back previously disillusioned citizens to the political sphere’ (Zürn and De Wilde, 2016: 284).

In the subcorpora, the ‘Remainer’ identity indexes a group of upper-middle-class, highly educated people who have benefited from globalisation and may be part of the so-called political “elite”. ‘Leavers’ or ‘Brexiters’, in contrast, index a politically aware but oft-disdained group of “ordinary” citizens. The relationship between these two identities is what the Contempt within Britain theme captures; the theme largely rests upon the lemma ‘contempt’, which appears in 26 of the 45 concordance lines and is particularly prevalent in the *Daily Telegraph*. Extracts (29) to (31) demonstrate the consistency of this divisive rhetoric between 2016 and 2019:

(29) Much of the discourse has become tainted by a barely concealed form of class warfare, oozing **contempt** for anybody who doesn't have a postgraduate degree and who is therefore too stupid to see the truth. Special bile is reserved for the class traitors – the eminent economists or lawyers who back Brexit. Trendy London society in particular has imported the worse values of modern US politics: the hate, division and credentialism are out of control, making it impossible for both sides to agree to disagree (*Telegraph Online*, June 2016).

(30) At Tate Britain, the Brexiters were booed by visitors to the gallery who stood on the steps and signalled a thumbs down. Here was seemingly London's metropolitan elite **jeering** the largely out-of-town Leavers as they walked past. Perhaps nothing so

much summed up the nation's divide. When the Remainers booed, the Leavers shouted back: 'Losers' (*Telegraph Online*, March 2019).

- (31) Yes, something nasty in the woodshed has been revealed about a sizeable section of British society - and that thing is not the alleged racism of my fellow Brexiteers, as Remainers would have you believe. No, it is the long-concealed **contempt** of the Remainers for most of their fellow citizens. They have felt free to indulge in the forbidden taste-thrill of bigotry for once in their self-censoring lives (*Daily Telegraph*, March 2019).

These examples reveal that the emerging political identities of 'Remainer' (30, 31), 'Brexiteer' (30, 31) and 'Leaver' (31) do not solely reflect attitudes towards the EU, even during the EU referendum campaign. Rather, they symbolise a range of national and social divisions in the pro-Brexit press, particularly in terms of education and class. For example, Extract (29) uses the conceptual metaphor of ARGUMENT AS WAR (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) to envision the EU referendum campaign as a social class battle for the monopoly of knowledge and intelligence. Within this oppositional frame, Remainers are intellectuals who cannot appreciate intelligence that exists outside of the academy; their unwillingness to see past the lack of 'a postgraduate degree' leads them to undermine Leave arguments as an inability to grasp the complexities of the EU. Within the EU referendum context, the depiction of Remainers as academics with a superiority complex bolsters Michael Gove's claim that the British public has 'had enough of experts' (Financial Times, 2016: n.p.) to convince readers that "Remainers" are sneering at them. Consequently, it lends credence to the Leave campaign. Read outside of that context, it acts as a criticism of a class system that privileges educational attainment. That the argument appears in the *Daily Telegraph* is pertinent because the newspaper is more popular among

readers who have higher-paid jobs than those from lower social classes (Ofcom, 2016). Pro-Leave readers of the *Telegraph* are especially likely to feel frustrated by Remainers' alleged belief that Leavers are intellectually inferior. Through this argument, the *Telegraph* reinforces the class division it describes.

The writer of the editorial from which Extract (29) derives repeatedly frames the division between Remainers and Brexiteers in terms of intellect, class, and morality by emphasising what Siles-Brügge (2019: 423) terms the 'malleability of expert knowledge'. They explicitly argue that the Remainer tactic of 'reasoned argument' is 'not enough' because 'nobody agrees on the facts any more [sic]'. The claim that facts are open to debate undermines the very underpinnings of the knowledge economy; it questions the ethos of 'credentialism' that positions certain "experts" as intellectually superior by suggesting that there are alternative, equally valid interpretations of the facts among the educated middle classes. Indeed, the writer evaluates the economists and lawyers who support Brexit as 'eminent'. This argument adds nuance to the reductive perception of the 'Remainer' identity as the domain of the intellectuals, legitimising the Brexiteer perspective by aligning it with alternative facts. Even while dismantling the claim that there is a one-to-one relationship between the 'Remainer' identity and the educated middle classes, the journalist reveals the depth of the division they see in the UK both between and within social classes. There is no disputing that the divisions they describe are *national* problems but subsuming them under the terms 'Remainer' and 'Brexiteer' gives the illusion that the problem relates to the EU. After all, at the most literal level, the terms refer to attitudes towards Britain's membership of the EU.

The Telegraph's recontextualisation in Extract (29), then, links Brexiteers' discontent with national and intranational divisions to EU institutions. By scapegoating the EU, the journalists can position Brexit as a panacea for the public's palpable frustrations at divisions in the UK and present post-Brexit Britain as the promised land. In other words, they can position

national policies as the solution rather than the problem. This argument is persuasive for readers because, as Hearn (2017: n.p.) argues, ‘people look for the concrete agents of their troubles, and states and other large institutions are more visibly available to take the blame for people’s woes’. In short, EU institutions provide a concrete entity towards which people can direct their frustrations; framing them as the cause of Britain’s problems minimises the discontent expressed towards national policymakers.

By March 2019, the ‘Remainer’ and ‘Leaver’ identities symbolise more than simply class division: they represent socio-spatial divisions within the UK (Bachmann and Sidaway, 2016). Through the proper noun ‘London’ and the adjective ‘out-of-town’ in Example (30), the *Telegraph Online* employs the spatial imaginary of Left Behind Britain (Sykes, 2018) to discursively separate London from the allegedly rural rest of the country. The division alludes to the EU referendum vote, in which London opted for Remain and most of England’s remaining counties voted to Leave. This context gives the illusion that the gulf between the two camps is related solely to the EU referendum campaign. As the nominal group ‘the nation’s divide’ indicates, though, the city-countryside dichotomy also symbolises a domestic problem: the perceived injustice of UK economic policies that facilitate the prosperity of London and its ‘metropolitan elite’ at the expense of other cities and towns (Calhoun, 2017). In this discursive frame, geography symbolises socioeconomic status and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991): the national ‘divide’ is between those who have and those who have not. By emphasising a geographical and socioeconomic distinction between Remainers and Brexiteers, *Telegraph Online* frames the ‘jeering’ of the metropolitan elite as a further insult towards disadvantaged Brexiteer readers. The argument seemingly resonated with the public; 63% of respondents to the 2019 Audit of Political Engagement thought that Britain’s system of government is rigged to advantage the rich and powerful (Hansard Society, 2019). Once again, then, *Telegraph*

Online perpetuates division in the UK by inciting bitterness towards a so-called self-serving “elite”.

The *Telegraph Online*’s use of ‘Remainer’ and ‘Leaver’ identities goes beyond a simple attempt to blame the EU for national problems. Leave and Remain stances have become a new ‘political and social fault line’ in the UK, and the associated identities command a stronger allegiance than traditional political parties among Britons (Kelley, 2019: 13). Framing social divisions within the context of the EU referendum harnesses the strength of the public’s emotional attachment to these identities to influence social relationships and shape the political landscape. These emotional attachments can be aroused by emotive lexis, such as the adjective ‘nasty’ and the nouns ‘contempt’ and ‘bigotry’ in Example (31), which cultivates a sense of outrage that requires a passionate, indignant reaction. That two of the examples above are from articles published towards the end of the data collection period reveals that, contrary to its suggestion that Brexit will resolve the UK’s problems, the pro-Brexit press still perceives and encourages division in Britain even as it approaches its withdrawal from the EU.

4.4. Conclusion

The analysis in this chapter reveals a diachronic shift in the construction of British, European and EU identities in the pro-Brexit British press. In the earlier years, Britain and the EU are dichotomous identities: journalists demonise the EU, Europeans and migrants and depict them as endangering the national infrastructure. By encasing the two identities in an Invaded Nation frame (Charteris-Black, 2019), the pro-Brexit press conceptualises EU membership as a threat and a Leave vote as a proactive way to protect the British nation. Later, journalists portray the EU’s stance in Brexit negotiations as antagonistic, framing calls for a more hostile position from Britain as an inevitable reaction to the EU’s continued mistreatment of the nation. While

bolstering public support for a hard Brexit deal, this representation also pre-emptively shifts the blame for any negative consequences of a Brexit deal away from Britain and towards the EU.

The discursive exclusion of European identities threatens to legitimise the social exclusion of “non-native” British citizens and Europeans living in the UK. The increase in xenophobic hate crimes after the EU referendum certainly suggests that the anti-EU and anti-migrant rhetoric spouted during the referendum campaign emboldened some Britons to discriminate against those they saw as ethnic Others (Home Office, 2019). In this context, it is useful to apply Baker et al.’s (2008) theorisation of anti-migrant rhetoric as “public rivalry discourse” to Europeans in the UK. In maintaining the political argument that European equals bad, the pro-Brexit press reduces Europeans who live in the UK to the collateral damage of (often legitimate) anger towards the EU.

While the oppositional representation of the UK and the EU in the early subcorpora incites division between Britons and Europeans, it fosters a sense of cohesion within the UK that contradicts the socio-political reality. The EU referendum prompted a resurgence of Scottish nationalism; the pro-Brexit press responds by diminishing the threat to the domestic Union. Journalists construct a collective British national identity rooted in innate civility, institutional collaboration, and a childhood love of crisps. Consistently positioning Scotland at the centre of British institutional success, the press rewrites a cohesive British history that challenges the Scottish nationalist claim that Anglocentric policies weaken Scotland. The historical focus also feeds the English desire to recover a golden age of political hegemony (Calhoun, 2017), by conceptualising the post-Brexit future as a return to a unified, powerful past.

The chapter reveals how the pro-Brexit press employs and manipulates nationalist discourses to react to socio-political circumstances. Journalists downplay the threat to the

domestic Union through a civic nationalist discourse that writes into being a homogenous British institutional identity. At the same time, they reinforce the Leave campaign's cultural distinction between the UK and mainland Europe through ethnic nationalism. This blend of nationalist discourses underpins the main argument in the early subcorpora – that the EU is to blame for issues in Britain that the public might otherwise interpret as the consequences of national austerity policies and global forces of neoliberalism. These social problems include bitter class divisions, intranational threats to the domestic Union, and depleted public resources. By blaming the EU for these problems, the pro-Brexit press presents national policies as the *solution* rather than the problem: the press argues that if Britain can reduce EU control, it can improve the national problems that its politicians are currently too powerless to fix. In this scenario, Brexit offers a glimmer of hope for the future of the nation and a cure for a wealth of public problems.

The early optimism towards Brexit begins to deteriorate in November 2018. Theresa May's initial Withdrawal Agreement and Parliament's inability to agree on a more favourable deal prompt the shift in discursive technique. The focus turns inward, away from the international UK-EU dichotomy towards an intranational reflection on the state of Britain. The EU's role in the discourse decreases substantially; British politicians assume its position as a threat to the UK. This threat is more severe; irony minimises the danger that the EU poses to the UK in the early subcorpora, but no such relief exists for the threat of the pro-EU politicians. The rhetoric exploits public anxieties about immigration by implying that pro-EU politicians are national traitors who inevitably betray their country by supporting uncontrollable immigration. It argues that the ineptitude of existing MPs constitutes a national humiliation that threatens to undermine Britain's reputation for decency by causing widespread indignation. A populist dichotomy of a political elite and ordinary citizens underpins the argument; the politician-public relationship seemingly radiates mutual contempt. This divisive

discourse captures and reinforces the public mood; 50% of people surveyed in the 2019 Audit of Political Engagement felt that the main political parties do not care about people like them (Hansard Society, 2019).

Depicting a fractured relationship between politicians and the public supports the newspapers' political agenda to shift the balance of power towards a new prime minister. The rhetoric cultivates public dissatisfaction with the existing parliamentary makeup, a sentiment Theresa May cannot afford to ignore after facing a vote of no confidence. However, the pro-Brexit press does not only depict division between politicians and the press. Under the EU-related guise of the nouns 'Remainer' and 'Brexiters', it envisions a public cleaved apart by social class and educational disparities. The *Daily Telegraph* persuades its readers that Remainders consider them intellectually inferior. There are consequences to this divisive rhetoric. The Remainder-Brexiters dichotomy nurtures a belief in an unjust gulf in British society between those who benefit from globalisation and those who do not, which risks creating a deep-rooted bitterness in the UK. Notably, the aftermath of Brexit has not brought 'evidence of conciliation or convergence in public attitudes' or shown that 'underlying issues of distrust, disconnection and division' have been addressed (Wincott, 2019: 16). It is not far-fetched to suggest that the discourses I have identified in this chapter have contributed to the sustained sense of division in the UK post-Brexit.

In sum, the positive, homogenous Britishness present in the earlier subcorpora disappears by 2018; in its place is a nation that is more splintered than ever. New labels, 'Remainers', 'Brexiters', and 'Leavers', reduce a range of political, socio-economic, and educational positions to a bitter binary of "elites" and "ordinary people". The identity labels relate national problems to the EU, reinforcing the perception that international officials, not British politicians, are to blame for the state of the nation. This discursive effect is useful for the pro-Brexit press because it addresses public concerns without compromising political alliances.

Nevertheless, discursive exclusion often engenders social exclusion. The divisive rhetoric of the pro-Brexit press mobilises EU-related identities for political gain but, in doing so, risks fomenting a resentment in UK society so deep that it may be difficult to harness a collective post-Brexit national identity after the withdrawal process is complete.

5 Best friends and allies? Constructing Britain and Europe in UK government documents

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I examine how Britain and Europe are represented in the UK government's narrative of 'Global Britain'—a plan to make the UK 'a problem-solving and burden-sharing nation' that remains open and global (Cabinet Office, 2021: n.p.). Applying key semantic domain analysis to government documents, I uncover a diachronic shift in the representation of Anglo-European relations, prompted by rising political tensions as Brexit negotiations reach a stalemate. I reveal a turn away from the positive portrayal of a transactional UK-EU relationship, towards antagonism and uncertainty about future ties. I argue that the increasing improbability of negotiating a stronger UK-EU partnership triggers the unravelling of the Global Britain narrative—international and intranational tensions render Britain a less attractive ally, forcing it to become an 'outsider' and 'supplicant' (Daddow, 2015: 75). I demonstrate that despite the dwindling argumentative value of Global Britain, the government remains faithful to its narrative, producing a vision that lacks precision and detail, and is often contradictory. I contend that the tensions underpinning the Global Britain vision fail to provide national audiences or prospective trading partners with a coherent blueprint for post-Brexit Britain. I conclude that this could weaken the UK's international standing—the opposite of the promise to reinvigorate Britain's golden-age reputation as a global trading nation.

5.2. Britain, Europe, and the world in UK Government documents: a diachronic analysis

5.2.1. Key semantic domain analysis

The analysis in this chapter follows the same method of key semantic domain analysis as Chapter 4 (see Chapter 3 for a detailed description). The government documents were run through the part-of-speech and semantic analysis taggers on Wmatrix (Rayson, 2008). Using the UCREL semantic analysis system, the relative frequencies of the automatically tagged semantic categories in each annual subcorpus were compared with the relative frequencies of the semantic categories in the British National Corpus Written Informative Sampler. The results were organised by effect size; the semantic categories that had a log ratio value above 1.0 and a log-likelihood value above 6.63 were selected as potential candidates for analysis. In total, this process generated eleven semantic domains.

Not all semantic domains were related to the discursive construction of national identity. I manually examined the concordance lines for each key semantic domain and removed those which did not include any mention of the terms ‘Britain’ and ‘Europe’, representations of Britons and Europeans, or depictions of relationships between social actors within the UK. After this process, four semantic categories remained: Alive; Personal Relationship: General; Power, Organising; and No Obligation or Necessity.

I then ranked the semantic categories according to the greatest number of concordance lines which included the terms ‘Britain’ and ‘Europe’ and selected the top three – Alive, Personal Relationship: General, and Power, Organising – for close reading. The close reading entailed examining each concordance line to distinguish the social actors and actions, with a particular focus on the discursive strategies employed to construct them. Taking the Personal

Relationship: General domain as an example, I analysed with whom Britain was constructed as having a relationship and then categorised these representations into groups, such as ‘the EU’ or ‘non-European countries’.

After I had established these broader categories of social actor representation, I examined the concordance lines that included the most frequent representations thematically and linguistically. To continue the example above, I determined which kinship terms were used to construct international relationships and considered which themes – such as security or trade – typified the type of relationship that the political officials envisioned. I analyse the most frequent themes and representations for each semantic domain below. Although I intended to examine three semantic categories, I found that analysis of the Power, Organising domain merely reiterated what the examination of the two other semantic domains had already uncovered. In the interests of space and depth, then, I decided to focus solely on the Alive and Personal Relationship: General domains.

5.2.2 The Alive semantic domain

The keyness of the Alive semantic domain diminishes slightly over the years. In the 2016 subcorpus, Alive sits among the ten most key domains in the keyness list but by 2019, it places 25th. The log ratio values in Table 12 below reveal that the domain consistently occupies over twice as much space in the target subcorpora as in the reference corpus; it is distinctive, then, of the government's Brexit-related documents. Nevertheless, the relative frequencies across the four subcorpora are low compared to the other key domains (see Section 5.2.3). The lower frequency values reveal that although there is an identifiable, cohesive set of discourses that centres on the lemma 'life', the "incremental effect" (Baker, 2006) of these discourses is less perceptible than for other key domains.

Year	Relative frequency in C1 per 100,000 words (gov)	% in C1 (gov)	Relative frequency in C2 per 100,000 words (ref)	% in C2 (ref)	Log-likelihood	Log ratio
2016	28.1	0.03%	7.1	0.01%	22.51	2.03
2017	26.6	0.03%	7.1	0.01%	78.53	2.22
2018	9.6	0.03%	7.1	0.01%	50.15	1.88
2019	21.1	0.02%	7.1	0.01%	44.36	1.64

Table 12: Statistical information about the 'Alive' semantic domain in the government subcorpora

In the government subcorpora, the Alive semantic domain consists of the noun ‘life’ and its plural counterpart ‘lives’. The two nouns contribute to three discursive representations, which were identified through a manual thematic and linguistic analysis of the concordance lines that focused on social actors and actions. The three discursive representations are: ‘Shared experiences between Britain and Europe’, ‘Europeans in Britain’, and ‘British life after Brexit’. The nouns build towards the three representations in slightly different ways. In the first discursive construction, the plural noun ‘lives’ refers to a collective way of being among Britons and Europeans, such as the claim that ‘we live in prosperous countries, whose inhabitants enjoy great **lives**’ (Davis, 2016: n.p.). In the second representation, both the singular and the plural nouns construct experiences for migrant groups ‘who’ve made their **lives** and homes in our country’ (May, 2017: n.p.). In the final construction, the singular noun ‘life’ refers to the material practices that will underpin ‘**life** outside of the EU’ (Davis, 2017: n.p.).

As Figure 6 indicates, representations of the shared practices and histories among British and European citizens appear most frequently in the documents from 2016. The cohesive stance that is anchored around this first discursive construction disintegrates by 2017 and is barely perceptible by 2019. In 2017, the central representations are of Europeans living in Britain (the second construction) and life in Britain after Brexit (the third construction). Foregrounding the three million European citizens living in Britain is an attempt to reassure migrant groups that protecting their rights is on the government's agenda. The introduction of the third theme, 'British life after Brexit', indicates that as negotiations begin, the government responds to pressure to outline plans for Britain's future.

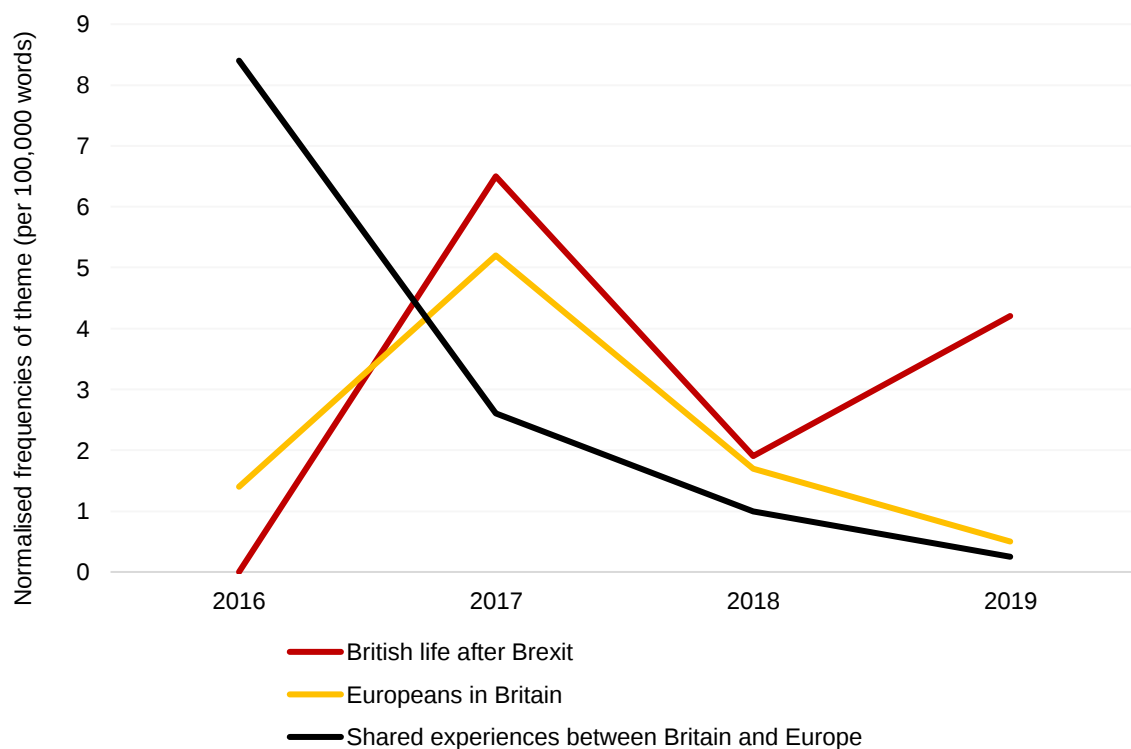


Figure 6: While Europe-related versions of the theme decrease over the period, visions of post-Brexit Britain increase

Shared experiences between Britain and Europe

According to the UK government, Britain and Europe's shared experiences include 'losing lives' (four instances), a 'cultural life' (six occurrences), and 'saving lives' in the Mediterranean Sea (eight cases). The discursive construction of these experiences highlights three unifying processes: military sacrifice, cultural integration, and preventing "illegal entry" into Europe. The war-related representations feature exclusively in the 2016 subcorpus in ministerial statements. They narrate European cooperation in the Second World War and the fight against terrorism, invoking historical precedents to support calls for stronger bilateral defence relationships after Brexit. Depictions of European officials saving migrants' lives recur between 2016 and 2018 in a greater variety of documents, including statements, speeches, and White Papers. The representation of a European culture emerges in 2017 and persists through to 2019; it features in speeches, written editorials, and statements.

Ethnocentric ideologies underpin many representations in the 'Shared experiences' theme. Ethnocentrism conceptualises the world through rival social groups (Sumner, 1906; Sobolewska and Ford, 2021). As the term 'Eurocentrism' indicates, ethnocentric ideologies inform the construction of transnational ingroups with shared interests, memories, and knowledge (Ifversen, 2019). Extracts (32) to (34) exhibit Eurocentrism in their depiction of a European ingroup endangered by conflict, terrorism, and illegal immigration. Constructing a threatened ingroup legitimises the government's call for renewed bilateral defence relationships between Britain and European countries after Brexit:

(32) We have a shared history, as the Prime Minister said, we were able this morning to recognise those many Polish men and women who sacrificed their **lives** to help keep us safe and secure here in the United Kingdom, as well as Europe safe and secure. And we recognise that and there is much that we share in our values that we can take forward together with that greater strategic relationship (Theresa May, Statement in Poland, November 2016).

(33) This, first of all, we owe it for those who died, Father Jacques, who lost his **life** while he was celebrating the Eucharist, and to the many victims in Europe, and also the many victims of our citizens throughout the world. I'm thinking about those British who died in Tunisia just a year ago, and the Italians who died in Dhaka just a few weeks ago. Terrorism is trying to disintegrate our **lives** and when they are enabled to do that, they try to create fear and terror. We have to reaffirm our values, our identity, and we have to continue fighting, aware that our first challenge is not to give in. We have to remain strong and solid, believing in our culture (Matteo Renzi, Statements in Rome, July 2016).

(34) In addition, the UK uses its military assets to support Operation SOPHIA, the EU's countering illegal migration operation in the Mediterranean. The UK is one of a few countries to have had a ship continuously assigned to the operation, and its naval assets have destroyed 172 smuggling boats, saving over 12,000 **lives**, since the Operation began (The Future Relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union, July 2018).

Although all three extracts above appear on the UK government's website, not all authors are British officials. Extract (33) is from the then Italian prime minister Matteo Renzi, while

Example (32) alludes to a comment by the Polish prime minister, Beata Szydło. The UK government's style guide stresses that statements should only be published online when it is in the public interest to know the entire content; when only a single message needs disseminating, alternative formats are available (Government Digital Service, 2020). Publishing the statements from non-British ministers in full suggests that policymakers deem Renzi and Szydło's arguments worth communicating to the British public. This is unsurprising: as the analysis below reveals, there is a strong convergence between the UK, Polish and Italian arguments, which reflects positively on the Government's ability to re-establish ties with European countries after Brexit. It makes sense, then, that these statements are part of the government's officially curated, public-facing content.

In Extract (32), Theresa May makes an intratextual reference to an earlier comment from the then Polish prime minister, Beata Szydło. At the press conference during which May delivered her statement, Szydło said:

(35) So first of all, thank you very much for accompanying me to lay flowers in front of the monument commemorating Polish pilots who lost their **lives** in the Battle of Britain fighting for the freedom of the United Kingdom but also for the freedom of Europe, for all of us (Statement in Poland, November 2016).

In contrast to the British media framing of European history as a series of cross-continental conflicts (Marchi and Partington, 2012), May and Szydło frame military 'sacrifice' positively as evidence of European collaboration; they argue that it 'help[ed] keep us safe and secure' and brought 'freedom' to the Continent. Through recourse to the highly emotive discourse of suffering (through the verb 'sacrificed' and the verbal group 'lost their lives'), the two leaders create a moral responsibility to collaborate on European defence. By foregrounding 'sacrifice',

the politicians undermine the claim that Britain's transactional approach to the EU lacks 'underpinning emotive content' (Siles-Brügge, 2018: 426). The commemorative event to which the ministers allude renders the image of sacrifice meaningful for present-day UK-EU relations: that the Second World War strengthened the Anglo-Polish partnership signals that European relations improve when nations face conflict. The collective memory, then, offers hope that Britain can reconfigure its European relationships despite the potential for intra-European tension caused by Brexit.

May and Szydło construct Britain and Europe as independent yet friendly 'Others' (Gibbins, 2014) – that is, as two *distinct* social actors who share cultural and historical affinities. They foreground the absence of a collective political identity for Britain and Europe through the linguistic differentiation of 'here in the United Kingdom, as well as Europe' (May), and the syntactic parallelism of 'for the freedom of the United Kingdom but also for the freedom of Europe' (Szydło). In distinguishing the UK from mainland Europe, the politicians evoke the myth of the geographically unique British Island Nation, a spatial imaginary that accounts for the nation's defence against Hitler in popular retellings of European history (Bogdanor, 2020). British policymakers employ the British Island Nation imaginary to situate the country at a distance from any single foreign power, arguing that its geography should allow the UK to engage with different 'circles of influence on a "transactional" basis' without being tied to one partner (Gaskarth, 2013: 67). In the context of Brexit, situating Britain outside of Europe mirrors May's desire for a flexible, pragmatic approach to forging relationships after Brexit – one that balances the public desire for sovereignty and independence (Miglbauer and Koller, 2019) with the realities of a globalised world. That Szydło also distinguishes between Britain and Europe suggests she could be amenable to offering the UK a unique relationship that reflects its alleged historical distinctiveness.

May and Szydło's statements demonstrate how policymakers reformulate the boundaries between the national self and foreign other(s) to fit their needs, albeit within the constraints of existing identity positions (Gaskarth, 2013; Atkins, 2022). By situating Britain within Europe ideologically and outside of it geographically, May creates and legitimises a liminal status for her nation as both an insider and outsider in Europe (Shackleton, 2016). May's speech acts as an 'identity-reinforcing activity' (Gaskarth, 2013: 61) by reproducing and celebrating the stability of a long-enduring Anglo-Polish partnership. Through her delivery, May performs the role of an extra-EU ally that she covets for post-Brexit Britain, constructing the future in the present (Watkins, 2015). She legitimises her role conception by drawing on a long-established tradition, dating back to Thatcher, of conceptualising Britain as both a part of European heritage and an exceptional case (Daddow, 2015). By rooting Britain's distinctiveness in history, May frames Brexit as the ratification of a long-existing norm of British exceptionalism, rather than a radical departure from the status quo. Overall, then, May elucidates her vision for post-Brexit Britain as a constructive, extra-European defence partner (Gaskarth, 2014).

While retaining the emphasis on collective threats, Extract (33) shifts the focus to interactions between European and extra-European social actors. In the excerpt, Matteo Renzi responds to a European journalist's question about the viability of a unified, post-Brexit response to terrorism after an attack which occurred in France the day before. Although the journalist asks about 'what happened in France,' Renzi shifts the locus of terror away from Europe as he speaks: after acknowledging the 'many victims in Europe', he expands to 'our citizens in the world' and then narrows the lens to two specific place imaginaries (Watkins, 2015): 'Tunisia', and 'Dhaka' in Bangladesh. By relocating the terror attacks to "Eastern" places, Renzi constructs terrorism as an extra-European phenomenon to which Europe must respond, rather than a threat which also comes from within the Continent. The calls to action,

‘reaffirming our values’ and ‘believing in our culture’, frame terrorism through a cultural discourse of difference, in which European leaders react peacefully to foreign agents who incite ‘terror’ and ‘fear’. The postcolonial relationships between Europe, Tunisia and the Bengal imbue this Eurocentric, cultural interpretation of terrorism with an imperialist spirit of European superiority, in which Europeans are the innocent, “civilised” victims of an “Eastern” threat to a shared ‘culture’, ‘identity’ and ‘values’.

Despite situating the terror attacks in North Africa and South Asia, Renzi linguistically suppresses (van Leeuwen, 1995) the extra-European victims, including the two Tunisians who died in the former attack and the seven Bangladeshis who died in the latter. This act of discursive exclusion implies that extra-Europeans only occupied the roles of perpetrators, reinforcing the Eurocentric conceptualisation of terrorism as an act that is done to Europe by extra-European others. British public opinion exhibits a similar Western-centric view of terrorism: 48% of British YouGov respondents (3,574 adults) cited international terrorism as the great ‘threat to the West’ in 2018 (YouGov, 2018: n.p.). Given the mutually reinforcing relationship between discourse and social practice (Fairclough, 1989), Renzi’s statement strengthens the perception that “non-Western” actors pose a terrorist threat to European nations. Although constructing a European ingroup based on collective threats might foster intergovernmental solidarity between Britain and Italy, then, it could also perpetuate interpersonal divisions between Europeans and non-Western migrant groups. That this statement appears in full on the UK Government website suggests an ideological alignment between British and European policymakers on the status of non-Western migrant groups.

As Excerpt (34) appears in a policy paper, it represents the UK’s official negotiating position rather than the views of individual politicians. Its audience is not the public but interested groups who will likely be invited to consult on the proposals. Despite its greater formality, the document continues to structure UK-EU relations around shared threats. In the

extract, Britain occupies the role conception of a maritime power within the broader role orientation of an influential, international actor (Gaskarth, 2014). This discursive construction centres on the repeated noun ‘assets’ in the nominal groups ‘military assets’ and ‘naval assets’. The evaluative connotation of ‘asset’ as a useful tool, in conjunction with the noun ‘support’, depicts Britain as a constructive partner and reliable ally to Europe (Gaskarth, 2014). Britain’s generosity is allegedly rare: the nation is ‘one of a few countries’ to ‘continually assign a ship to the operation’. Describing the UK’s willingness to pool ‘assets’ as unusual subverts the oft-cited conceptualisation of Britain as an “awkward partner” to Europe (George, 1990). In this novel discursive frame, the UK is so active a collaborator that without its ‘assets’ and willingness to cooperate, the EU’s defence against illegal immigration would be weaker. In other words, the Government intimates that Britain can withstand the absence of a ‘future [defence] relationship’ much better than the Union. Despite this national posturing, the policy paper emphasises Britain’s attractiveness as a partner, indicating a return to the nation’s pre-accession orientation of ‘outsider as supplicant’ (Daddow, 2014: 74). This role is far removed from the Vote Leave vision of a country ‘taking back control’ (Vote Leave, 2016: n.p.). In sum, the excerpt elucidates a tension between the rhetoric of Britain as a powerful maritime force and the use of this image to persuade European countries to collaborate with Britain after Brexit.

Beyond shared material practices, Extract (34) highlights an ideological agreement between Britain and the EU that “illegal migration” requires a military response. Positioning Britain as the agent of the verbal group ‘saving lives’ situates the EU’s anti-smuggling mission within a European saviour narrative. By constructing the maritime crossings as “illegal migration” and the operation as a life-saving regime, the government positions the UK and the EU as moral upholders of international human rights. This discourse of humanitarian intervention intertwines with the securitisation and militarisation of migration (Perkowski,

2015) through the adjectives ‘military’ and ‘naval’, and the material process ‘destroyed’ (Halliday, 1985). Together, these lexical choices construct Mediterranean border crossings as an illicit activity that threatens the Continent, legitimising the use of hard power to contain the so-called threat. The abstract noun ‘migration’ carries a heavy ideological load; it obscures the fact that sea crossings often occur because of ‘conflict’ and ‘persecution’ (EUNAVFOR MED, 2018: n.p.). Conflict and fear of persecution are both legitimate grounds for seeking asylum from the EU (European Commission, n.d.), meaning that some of the backgrounded (van Leeuwen, 1995) social actors are asylum seekers, not migrants. Although the government adopts a controversial and specious discursive frame, the “illegal migration” narrative creates an extra-European threat against which the UK and the EU can unite. It allows politicians to stress to EU leaders that the UK is willing to offer resources to protect the Continent. In short, it echoes Excerpt (32) in subverting the myth of British reticence by highlighting the UK’s inclination to be an active EU partner.

Though implicit in each case, Extracts (32) to (35) outline the need for future bilateral collaboration in the ideological and physical defence of Europe by arguing that the fight for freedom is ongoing. The excerpts establish the role conception of a reliable ally (Gaskarth, 2014) for Britain, Poland, and Italy, citing deaths which occurred during symbolic battles against extra-European values as evidence of allyship. Britain occupies a liminal place within Europe in this discursive construction, allowing the UK government to balance its promise to protect Britain’s sovereignty with its post-Brexit, internationalist narrative of Global Britain.

Where Extracts (32) to (35) construct a European ingroup based on hard power and collective threats, Excerpts (36) and (37) below reveal a culturally constructed European ingroup. In this discursive frame, soft power – the diffusion of ideas and knowledge between communities (Unesco, n.p.: n.d.) – unites Britain and Europe.

(36) And Danish culture can be seen in all parts of British **life**. Television dramas like *Borgen* and *The Bridge* are screened on the BBC, our children play endlessly with Lego and *hygge* is the new buzzword for coffee shops and eateries across the UK. So, as Britain leaves the EU, the relationship between our two nations will continue to thrive, not least because of the shared interests we have in this globalised world (David Davis, Statement in Denmark, March 2017).

(37) We can continue the whirl of academic exchanges that have been a feature of European cultural **life** since the middle ages, and whose speed of cross-pollination has been accelerated by the internet as well as by schemes like Horizon or Erasmus, all of which we can continue to support, and whose participating scholars are certainly not confined to the EU (Boris Johnson, *Uniting for a Great Brexit*, February 2018).

In Excerpt (36), from a speech delivered in Denmark just thirty days before official negotiations began, David Davis reflects positively on the effects of cultural globalisation across Europe. He offers ‘lifestyle evidence of the Europeanisation of Britain’ (Garton Ash, 2001: 9). By identifying Danish influences on the English language through linguistic borrowings (*‘hygge’*), entertainment consumption through television programmes (*‘Borgen’*, *‘The Bridge’*), and childhood play (*‘Lego’*), Davis creates a role for Denmark as an international cultural leader (Gaskarth, 2014). The emphasis on the benefits of Anglo-Danish contact constructs Britain as a country that welcomes diversity and views multiculturalism as the natural result of globalisation. That is, Davis’s glorification of Denmark reworks Gibbins’ (2014) concept of the friendly Other, assigning Britain the role of a friendly Self that acknowledges and amplifies the strengths of its international partners. In other words, it conciliates Danish leaders while emphasising Britain’s willingness to champion its European

counterparts after Brexit. Through this two-pronged approach, Davis performs a soft, cultural power version of the extra-EU ally role that his government desires for Britain, evincing a coherent, albeit tenuous, foreign policy strategy throughout May's tenure as prime minister.

Boris Johnson's "Great Brexit" speech reinforces the positive evaluation of European soft power. Where Davis focuses on the products of cultural globalisation, Johnson highlights the processes through which a European cultural sphere has emerged. Although the nominalisations 'exchange' and 'cross-pollination' linguistically background the process of sharing academic knowledge, they frame the UK-EU relationship in terms of active cooperation. That is, they support the view of Europeanness as constituted through action—a performance, rather than an innate supranational identity. The plant-based metaphor of 'cross-pollination' naturalises European collaborative endeavours, a linguistic choice which Johnson strengthens by representing the exchange of ideas through the grammatical structure of objectivated naturalisation (representing an action, through nominalisation, as a natural process of development, evolution, or fusion) (van Leeuwen, 2008). Johnson depoliticises the European academic community by arguing that it pre-existed the political Union, with research exchange forming the basis of 'cultural life since the middle ages'. By situating Britain within a long-enduring European intellectual tradition, Johnson identifies institutional collaborations that could continue if the ongoing negotiations between the UK and the EU do not end in a trade deal. In other words, he makes the case for cultural unity to distract from the potential for political division.

While Johnson's construction of a European research community is integral to his call to 'continue' cross-continental 'academic exchanges', focusing solely on European social actors would imply a Eurocentric conceptualisation of knowledge. A Eurocentric focus would undermine the Government's construction of Britain as an outward-looking, global nation (see below). To avoid the criticism of Eurocentrism, Johnson alludes to 'participating scholars'

from outside of the 'EU'. By widening the research community to extra-EU countries, Johnson assigns the UK a role conception of an international bridge (Gaskarth, 2014). In this position, Britain encourages EU member states to expand their scope to extra-European nations, facilitating a strongly interconnected international community. In short, the excerpt elucidates the belief that the UK can use its soft power to expand its sphere of influence throughout the globe while continuing to shape Europe.

Extracts (36) and (37) reveal that in its quest to create a global trading nation, the UK government naturalises and embraces cultural globalisation, positioning it as evidence of the need to sustain bilateral relationships with EU member states. This stance is most overt in David Davis's idealised spatial imaginary of 'this globalised world' (Watkins, 2015), a discursive construction which presupposes an already interconnected planet. The government's pro-globalisation attitude recognises that the UK must intensify its relationships to survive economically after Brexit (Bogdanor, 2020). Framing globalisation in cultural rather than economic terms renders this fact more palatable to a public that, in part, voted to leave the EU out of frustration at feeling economically "left behind" (Goodwin and Heath, 2016). Nevertheless, if the UK government pursues deeper ties with individual nations after Brexit, Britain's exposure to the economic forces of globalisation will increase. Ironically, this could compound feelings of dissatisfaction and marginalisation among the "left behind" in the UK (Bogdanor, 2020). In short, greater international cooperation could lead to further *intranational* division of the kind that the Eurosceptic media envisions in Chapter 4.

In contrast to the Eurosceptic media's construction of a uniquely British way of life based on democratic values and institutional innovation (see Chapter 4), the government envisions Britain as a nation whose experiences and culture are naturally influenced by the Continent. The six examples above outline the need to strengthen Britain's bilateral relationships with Poland, Italy and Denmark while maintaining cultural exchange and

expanding the European research community to extra-EU scholars. The excerpts intertwine British exceptionalism, evident in the discursive differentiation between Britain and the Continent, with the awareness that the UK must intensify its global relationships to survive economically after Brexit (Bogdanor, 2020). Politicians argue that post-Brexit Britain will use its hard and soft power to act as a link between EU and extra-EU countries. That soft power becomes more salient after negotiations begin suggests that officials search for cultural common ground to offset political tensions.

Europeans in Britain

The Europeans in Britain theme further depicts an inextricable link between Britain and the Continent by foregrounding European citizens living in the UK. Of the 32 instances of the theme, 10 appear in policy papers, nine in statements and nine in speeches. The remaining four instances occur in press releases (two examples), an open letter, and a technical note. The policy papers express the government's official position on post-Brexit migration from the EU, whereas the statements outline the commitment to guarantee migrant rights. In contrast to official accounts, ministers deliver speeches directly to migrants at informational events. Although the tone differs across the documents, there is a normative underpinning to the construction of the "acceptable" European migrant. That is, policy papers stipulate more explicitly the conditions for post-Brexit immigration that speeches and statements imply in their description of Europeans in the UK. Excerpts (38) to (40) exemplify this normative discourse:

(38) Everyone in this room, and members of the French community across the whole of the UK, make a contribution to British society and culture. You help save **lives**, you teach children, you enrich our business, tech and finance industries, and you help to make Britain the inclusive and diverse society it is (Robin Walker, Speech at Community Outreach Event, April 2018).

(39) But I want to repeat to the 600,000 Italians in the UK – and indeed to all EU citizens who have made their **lives** in our country – that we want you to stay; we value you; and we thank you for your contribution to our national **life** – and it has been, and remains, one of my first goals in this negotiation to ensure that you can carry on living your lives as before (Theresa May, Speech in Florence, September 2017).

(40) We will continue to value the positive contribution immigration has made to our society – enriching our communities and culture. Those who wish to establish their family **life** in the UK, should do so on a basis that prevents burdens on the taxpayer and promotes integration. That is fair to migrants and to the wider community (The UK's future skills-based immigration system, White Paper, December 2018).

In Extract (38), Walker positively evaluates the contribution to 'British society and culture' that the 'French community' makes. While the abstract nouns 'society' and 'culture' suggest that French citizens provide socio-cultural value to Britain, the agency Walker assigns to them is economic. That is, he defines French migrants by their occupations as doctors, teachers, entrepreneurs, and financial or technological experts through the material processes 'help save lives', 'teach children', 'enrich our business, tech and finance industries'. Beneath the socio-

cultural rhetoric, then, is a portrait of the French community's contribution to the market and the knowledge economy, not cultural practices.

Walker's occupation-based description presupposes that all members of the French community in Britain are skilled workers, people whose jobs require formal education equivalent to an A-Level or above (Davidson Morris, 2021). French immigrants with lower-income jobs such as factory workers or care workers, so-called "unskilled workers", are conspicuously absent from this representation. Through this discursive exclusion, Walker informs existing members of the 'French community' that to be welcome in the UK after Brexit, they must possess the identity of 'taxpayer, producer and consumer' (Bennett, 2018: 39). In other words, Walker's exclusion of lower-income French immigrants precedes the social exclusion that would occur from 2021, when the UK government would only permit migrants with a salary above a certain threshold to move to the UK.

Walker does comment on the cultural contribution that French immigrants make to Britain by arguing that they render the nation 'inclusive and diverse'. Placing this evaluation at the end of the sentence, however, suggests that cultural enrichment is ideologically subordinate to economic desirability. More importantly, Walker offers no evidence of Britain's 'diversity' — there is nothing in his depiction of the 'French community' that would distinguish it from a British workforce. Walker's assertion that French immigrants contribute to 'British [...] culture' thus reads as cultural assimilation, with migrant behaviours reinforcing the so-called hegemonic "British culture" rather than diversifying it. In other words, the adjective 'diverse' acts as a "reputational shield" (Sobolewska and Ford, 2020): it masks a socio-economically narrower conceptualisation of the "acceptable EU migrant" than before the EU referendum. In sum, the extract exhibits a tension between an ostensibly positive evaluation of cultural diversity and a somewhat (financially) homogenous image of French immigrants.

A similar ideological tension underpins Extracts (39) and (40). In these excerpts, British politicians construct a long-enduring identity for Britain as an inclusive, pro-immigration nation through the present tense verbal group ‘continue to value’ (Ex. 40) and the claim that Britons ‘want [Italians] to stay’ in the UK after Brexit (Ex. 39). The argument that Britons view immigration as ‘a positive contribution’ to ‘our society’ is not without basis: the proportion of British people believing that migration enriches cultural life has increased consistently since 2011 (Curtice, Hudson and Montagu, 2020). However, grammatical choices belie the construction of a tolerant Britain in both cases. In Extract (39), May repeats the noun ‘life’ alongside three pronouns and four possessive determiners, blurring the boundaries between the ingroup and outgroup. This ambiguity is most obvious in the clause, ‘we thank you for your contribution to our national life’. While the possessive determiner ‘our’ could include Italians in the ‘national’ ingroup, this reading would contradict the wider use of the second-person pronoun ‘you’ to refer to Italians and the first-person pronoun ‘we’ to allude to Britons. More probably, then, ‘our’ is an anaphoric reference to the British-only ingroup of ‘we’. Read this way, May’s grammatical choices place Italians outside of the national ingroup, as external contributors to whom “native” Britons are grateful.

In Extract (40), the positive evaluation of migrant contributions to ‘our society’ is repackaged as a negative economic argument, based on the topos of burden (Bennett, 2018), that migrants should only come to Britain if they can ‘prevent burdens on the tax payer [sic]’. The government justifies its neoliberal argument in ethical terms as ‘fair’, presupposing a common-sense agreement that economic self-sufficiency is the morally right position for prospective migrants to adopt. However, even if migrants ‘establish a family life in the UK [...] that prevents burdens on the tax payer [sic]’, they are still not constructed as taxpayers – they are distinguished from ‘the wider community’ as a homogenous group of ‘migrants’ through collectivisation (van Leeuwen, 1995). Read alongside May’s speech, the document

reveals a liminal position for EU citizens as (necessary) contributors to the British economy but not fully-fledged members of the national public. This image is a clear contradiction of the multicultural UK that the Global Britain vision implies.

Neoliberal discourses of immigration are not new to Britain—they date back to at least the 1980s and are overtly present in government documents from the 2000s (Kapoor, 2011; Bennett, 2018). What has changed is the recipient of the discourses: as the White Paper acknowledges, ‘these rules already apply to non-EEA citizens who are settled in the UK and will apply to settled EU citizens in the future’ (UK Government, 2018: n.p.). Extract (40) reconfigures the “settled EU citizen” identity, aligning it with the extra-European settled citizen to reflect the higher-level shift in the UK-EU relationship. In other words, the changing relationship between countries trickles down to the individual, reshaping the place of the EU migrant within the British public sphere. Even though settled citizens have lived in the UK for at least five years, their right to a family in the UK becomes enmeshed in more restrictive immigration discourses and policies that conceptualise EU migration as an economic threat. By communicating to EU citizens that their position in the UK has changed, the government potentially weakens their sense of belonging to the nation. In doing so, it challenges its vision of Britain as a tolerant, pro-immigration nation and undermines the sincerity of its claim to ‘value’ migrants.

Comparing the examples above with those from the previous theme reveals a contradiction in the government’s construction of migration. In documents directed towards European audiences, such as joint statements, immigration is a European-wide problem. In texts produced for national audiences, however, European migration is a threat to Britain. As Chapter 4 reveals, government ministers such as Priti Patel also appear in Eurosceptic media articles substantiating claims that high UK immigration levels derive from EU policies (see Section 4.2.1). These argumentative tensions indicate that there is space within the

government's immigration-related discourse to shift the blame for the "immigration threat" towards different spatial imaginaries depending on diplomatic goals. Although the provenance of the so-called threat might change, the migrant outgroup continues to be reduced to "political rivalry discourse," whether it features in official government literature or the speeches of individual politicians (Baker et al., 2008).

Consistently shunting EU migrants between the ingroup and outgroup allows ministers to manage the tension between reassuring European countries that Britain values their citizens and acknowledging public anxiety over EU migration. However, the move towards a more neoliberal construction of the acceptable EU migrant might overestimate public concern. The 37th British Social Attitudes Survey reveals that over 50% of participants consistently rate would-be care workers as a high priority for post-Brexit migration from the EU, a figure which reaches 60% in February 2020 (Curtice et al., 2020). Care workers, at the time of writing, are not included in the exemption for industries with staff shortages (Skills for Care, 2020), hence their exclusion from the post-referendum discourse on acceptable migration. Seemingly, then, in reversing the long-established pattern of creating more liberal immigration policies than public opinion would sanction (Sobolewska and Ford, 2020), the government threatens to reduce socio-economic diversity, weaken belonging, and undermine the pro-immigration image it tries to project.

In sum, although the government's stance on European immigrants is ostensibly welcoming and celebratory, it subtly imposes normative limits on acceptability and differentiates between "native" and immigrant communities. Politicians obscure exclusionary ideologies and policies (not being a burden, remaining outside of the national public despite contributing economically) behind inclusionary rhetoric that accentuates the 'value' of migrant 'contributions' to British 'culture'. The tension between the pro-immigration 'Global Britain'

image and more stringent immigration policies undermines the government's claim to preside over a 'tolerant' nation.

British life after Brexit

The final theme, British life after Brexit, elucidates the government's vision for Britain's role after it leaves the EU. Unsurprisingly, given the importance of this theme for bolstering Britain's post-Brexit reputation, examples appear in a variety of documents. Of the 50 concordance lines, 18 are from policy papers, 14 from speeches, and 12 from statements. The remaining six appear in press releases (five), and a government-produced news story about the EU (Withdrawal) Bill receiving Royal Assent. Although the theme is most quantitatively salient in 2019, these examples are merely variations of the claim that British and European migrants can 'continue to live their lives broadly as they do now' after Brexit. This assertion appears in 16 extracts (from nine documents) in the context of guaranteeing citizens' rights despite the breakdown in UK-EU negotiations. While this consistency reveals a desire to reassure migrant communities, the examples which expose argumentative contradictions are more ideologically illuminating—they reveal the challenges that the government faces in legitimising its Global Britain vision. Excerpts (41) to (44) below reveal two principal disagreements in the plan for post-Brexit Britain:

(41) Of course, we recognise that we can't leave the EU and have everything stay the same. **Life** for us will be different. But what we do want, and what we hope that you, our European friends, want too, is to stay as partners who carry on working together for our mutual benefit (Theresa May, Speech in Florence, September 2017).

(42) And the certainty that Britain's plan, its blueprint for **life** outside of the European Union, is a race to the top in global standards. And not a regression from the high standards we have now (David Davis, Foundations of the Future Economic Partnership Speech, February 2018).

(43) The implementation period is not only about providing certainty in the short term. It's also about beginning **life** outside the European Union, serving as a platform on which we build our future relationship. Which is why, as Michel said, the United Kingdom will be able to step out, sign and ratify new trade deals with old friends — and new allies around the globe — for the first time in more than 40 years (David Davis, Statement in Brussels, March 2018).

(44) Now the reason I took the job of Brexit Secretary is because at this crucial moment in our history, I want to see the UK leave the European Union in the best possible way. Preferably with a deal, but prepared, on any eventuality, to manage the risks and grasp the opportunities of **life** outside the EU (Dominic Raab, Speech on No-deal Planning, August 2018).

The construction of Brexit as both a departure from and continuation of the status quo in international relations is the most salient contradiction across the examples. In Extract (41), Theresa May expresses a desire to maintain Britain's relationship with the EU through the verbal phrases 'carry on' and 'stay as partners'. Despite conceding that 'everything [cannot] stay the same', the connotations of stability and continuity underpinning these verbs suggest that May's vision for a new UK-EU relationship largely echoes the one already in place. These contradictions can be partially explained by May's audience ('our European friends') – EU

leaders have repeatedly stated that post-Brexit Britain cannot continue to enjoy the same benefits as member states. Nevertheless, May's emphasis on equality and continuity jars with David Davis's metaphorical conceptualisation of Brexit as Britain 'step[ping] out' (43) into the world in a speech that is also delivered to European leaders. Through this metaphor of onward movement, Davis personifies the nation and underscores political action and agency.

Adapting the Eurosceptic metaphor of EU MEMBERSHIP AS ENTRAPMENT (Charteris-Black, 2019), Davis pejoratively frames the existing UK-EU power dynamic to establish a basis for changing its terms. For Davis, emerging from the shadows of the EU means ratifying new trade deals 'for the first time in more than 40 years' (43). In other words, Britain's post-Brexit status is not a new role but a return to its pre-accession standing. Davis's plan for post-Brexit Britain thus marries the ideas of progress and rising standards, expressed through the conceptual metaphor of INTERNATIONAL POLITICS AS A COMPETITION ('race to the top') (Charteris-Black, 2019), with the restoration of a lost imperial reputation as a global trading nation. In uniting the two conflicting images, Davis acknowledges the public's desire to return to a golden age of British power (Calhoun, 2017) while eschewing criticism that this constitutes 'regression'.

The inconsistent conceptualisation of Brexit as both continuity and rupture renders unclear the government's vision for post-Brexit Britain: it is not obvious whether the UK will continue down its pre-referendum path, transform, or return to its former glory. The argumentative tension is unlikely to be a rhetorical choice. Rather, it reflects competing pressures on the UK government to maintain a trading relationship with the EU while delivering on the Vote Leave promise to sign new trade deals with 'key allies like Australia or New Zealand, [and] growing economies like India, China, or Brazil' (Vote Leave, 2016: n.p.). It also mirrors a broader inconsistency in Theresa May's rhetoric about Brexit during her premiership (Brusenbauch Meislová, 2019a). The incongruities could be diplomatically useful:

by informing EU leaders that Britain still values its trading partnership while also illustrating its desire for more equal relationships, the government placates both EU and extra-EU allies. However, the lack of clarity could also indicate that Brexit Britain is unsure of its place in the world; perceived instability could weaken Britain's international standing and lessen its attractiveness as an ally.¹⁰

A further tension emerges in Excerpts (42), (43) and (44) between viewing Brexit as a risk and an opportunity. The abstract noun 'certainty' recurs in Davis's speeches, promising that the government has a 'blueprint' for Brexit Britain that entails rising global standards and financial security. In both examples, Davis foregrounds the government's preparedness to leave the EU on favourable terms. However, just four months after delivering his speech in Brussels, Davis resigned, citing concerns about giving away too much to the EU (Walker, 2021). Replacing him as Brexit Secretary was Dominic Raab, who, in Example (44), offers a more balanced statement on the 'risks' and 'opportunities' of Brexit. Although Raab reassures Britons that the UK is 'prepared' for its withdrawal, his use of the phrase 'on any eventuality' expresses greater uncertainty about a future trade relationship than any of the previous speeches. This temporal shift in the discursive construction of Brexit corresponds to an impasse regarding the Irish border in Brexit negotiations, which led to a greater probability of the UK leaving the EU without a trade deal. Together, Raab's more temperate view of Brexit and the conflict that he alludes to challenge the feasibility of the government's Global Britain vision: they problematise the nation's role conception as a mediator between EU and extra-EU countries by highlighting the increasing precarity of the UK-EU relationship.

As the analysis above indicates, very few tangible policies appear in the government's vision for life in Britain after Brexit. In the early years, ministers conceptualise post-Brexit

¹⁰ It is important to recognise that incongruity in British political conceptualisations of the UK-EU relationship is not new: David Cameron's position on UK-EU ties was also notoriously inconsistent (Brusenbauch Meislová, 2019b).

Britain as a global trading nation whose reach will expand after it ‘step[s] out’ from the shadows of EU membership. This image rests on two conceptual metaphors, INTERNATIONAL POLITICS AS A COMPETITION and PROGRESS AS ONWARD MOVEMENT, which disguise the lack of detail behind a general image of development. In the later years, the Global Britain spatial imaginary unravels as negotiations between the UK and the EU reach a stalemate. Given that the only concrete plan the government articulates is to act as a point of connection between EU and extra-EU countries, the vision for life in Britain after Brexit becomes hazier as the withdrawal day approaches.

The examples from the Alive semantic domain reveal that, in the early years, the government pursues bilateral relationships with European nations. Politicians construct a European ingroup which collaborates to defend itself against three shared threats: conflict, terrorism, and illegal immigration. The UK is represented as occupying a unique, liminal position as both an insider and outsider to this group (Shackleton, 2016). This discursive placement balances the public demand for independence (Miglbauer and Koller, 2019) with the realities of collaborating on foreign policies with other nations. Although the primary unifying factors are hard power and collective danger, politicians also depoliticise European socio-cultural ties and naturalise cultural globalisation. They envision the UK as a facilitator of an interconnected global community. While a pro-globalisation stance is necessary for Britain's economic survival after Brexit (Bogdanor, 2020), it is unlikely to ameliorate the feeling of being "left behind" which led some Britons to vote to leave the EU in 2016 (Goodwin and Heath, 2016). Paradoxically, then, the government's internationalist ‘Global Britain’ vision threatens to intensify the intranational discontent that contributed to the decision to leave the EU.

As Extracts (38) to (44) reveal, once official negotiations begin, the government's optimistic tone towards the UK-EU relationship disintegrates. Where the government once

conceptualised extra-EU migration as a threat to Europe, it begins to frame European migration as an economic threat to Britain. The analysis exposes a tension between pro-diversity rhetoric and exclusionary grammar that places European immigrants outside of the national public. This inconsistency undermines the construction of Britain as a tolerant, pro-immigration nation. The complexities and contradictions only increase in the later subcorpora, as ministers offer conflicting visions of post-Brexit Britain. There is little clarity or detail about where Britain fits into international politics; the only tangible plan, to reignite the UK's reputation as a global trading nation, becomes increasingly unlikely as Brexit negotiations reach a stalemate. A diachronic analysis of the examples thus uncovers a turn away from a hopeful, unifying view of Anglo-European relations, towards confusion and uncertainty about Britain's ability to fulfil the role it covets as a bridge (Gaskarth, 2014) between EU and extra-EU countries.

5.2.3. The Personal Relationship: General Domain

Much like the Alive semantic domain, the keyness of the Personal Relationship: General domain diminishes over the years. In 2016, it places 12th in the keyness list but by 2019 it drops to 38th. As Table 13 shows, the domain does not reach the 1.0 log ratio threshold in 2019. Although the 0.87 value indicates that the domain contributes almost twice as much to the target subcorpus as it does to the reference corpus, it demonstrates a marked reduction in the salience of relationships in the data relative to the earlier years. This discursive pattern mirrors the breakdown in UK-EU negotiations – as tensions rise, the government's emphasis on international relations decreases.

Year	% of C1 (gov)	Relative frequency in C2 per 100,000 words (ref)	% of C2 (ref)	Log- likelihood	Log ratio
2016	0.37%	93.2	0.10%	255.57	1.93
2017	0.42%	93.2	0.10%	891.79	2.11
2018	0.24%	93.2	0.10%	263.69	1.33
2019	0.18%	93.2	0.10%	123.73	0.87

Table 13: Statistical information for the Personal Relationship: General domain

As its name indicates, the Personal Relationship: General semantic domain consists of lexical items used to describe international alliances. Depictions of the UK-EU relationship feature in 1,052 of the concordance lines; representations occur in speeches, parliamentary statements, policy papers, editorials, and withdrawal bills. Four nouns describe UK-EU ties: ‘relationship’ (65%), ‘partner*’ (23.8%), ‘friend*’ (10.7%), and ‘ally’ (0.5%). All four terms connote less emotional attachment than the ‘European family’ metaphor that the European Commission adopts (Charteris-Black, 2019). For the UK government, then, Brexit involves a release from some of the affective ties and moral obligations that bind together EU member states; the lexical choices used to frame UK-EU interaction reflect a more transactional, pragmatic approach than EU membership entailed.

Representations of UK-EU relations decrease over the years: there is a decline from 163 to 55.2 instances per 100,000 words between 2016 and 2019. ‘Relationship’ is the only term which experiences a renaissance in use over the years, as Figure 7 illustrates. This uptick

corresponds to the publication of the Withdrawal Agreement, which includes a section dedicated to ‘the future UK-EU relationship’. Use of the other three nouns peaks in 2017 when the formal negotiation process begins.

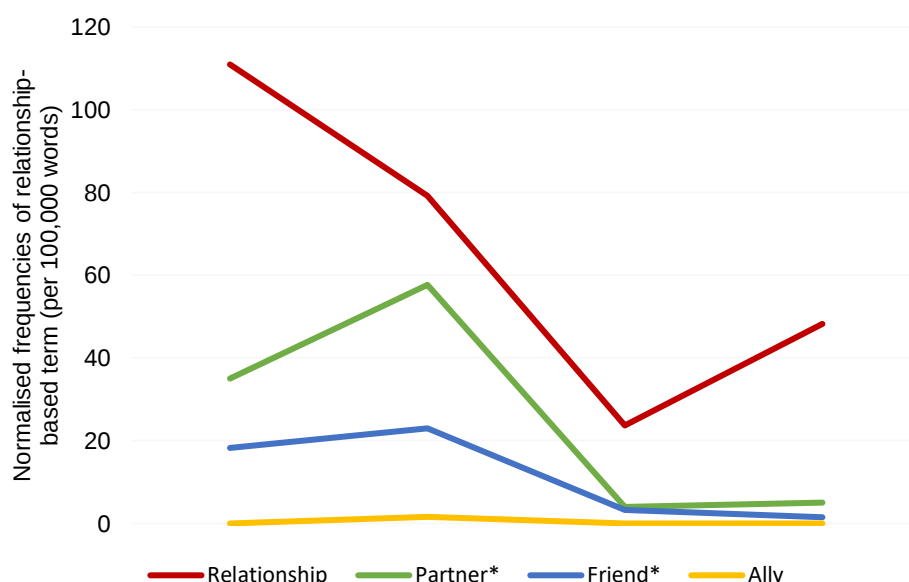


Figure 7: Diachronic change in terms used to describe the UK-EU relationship

Three extra-European alliances also appear in the government data: partnerships with unspecified countries (136 instances), relationships with specific countries outside of the EU (93 occurrences), and relations between Ireland, Northern Ireland, and the UK (88 cases). The former category consists of vague references to ‘the rest of the world’ or ‘international partners’ – these phrases appear most frequently in 2016 and decrease consistently thereafter. The second group includes 20 named countries or continents, reflecting the government’s attempt to position Britain at the centre of a sprawling network of bilateral relationships. The most frequently cited nation in this category is Japan (18 instances), followed by the USA (15 instances), Canada (9 instances), Gibraltar, China, and Switzerland (8 instances each). The mix of non-English speaking and Anglophone countries somewhat problematises Siles-Brügge’s

(2019: 422) claim that the Global Britain vision involves ‘bringing the UK [...] closer to its “kith and kin” in the Anglosphere’.

In its choice of extra-European countries, the government aligns its plan for Global Britain with public opinion about the UK’s closest allies and the most trustworthy nations: some 60% of Britons surveyed view Japan as the most trustworthy and responsible nation, while 29% of British respondents believe that the USA is the UK’s best friend (Gaston, 2020). Instances of specific extra-EU relationships decrease overall, although there is a slight increase between 2018 and 2019. This growth reflects the greater likelihood of a no-deal Brexit, the consequences of which the government seeks to counteract by brokering more extra-European partnerships (see below). Representations of the Ireland-Northern Ireland-UK nexus follow the same pattern of declining overall but rising slightly between 2018 and 2019. In this instance, the uptick reflects a growing discussion about the effects of a potential hard border on Anglo-Irish relations after Brexit.

The UK-EU relationship

The government alters its construction of the UK-EU relationship in line with the changing socio-political context. In 2016, politicians positively evaluate bilateral relationships with European countries while acknowledging that higher-level UK-EU interactions will change after Brexit. Government documents from this subcorpus repeatedly construct prospective security relationships (in 134 concordance lines) and trade relationships (in 148 concordance lines) between the two parties after Brexit. In their emphasis on security threats that both the UK and the EU face – and which necessitate a close, strategic relationship between the two actors – these concordance lines echo those which appear in the ‘Shared experiences’ subtheme of the Alive semantic domain. Together, the two domains present a long-established history of

security cooperation. In the context of the Personal Relationship: General domain, the concordance lines often express a desire to maintain ‘the closest possible economic relationship between our countries’ (May, 2016) and to engage in ‘close cooperation on global challenges’ (UK Government, 2016). As these two brief examples indicate, the government typically frames future UK-EU interactions as mutually beneficial and goal-oriented, while remaining optimistic that negotiations will produce a ‘better relationship’ (Davis, 2016). Excerpt (45) below encapsulates this duality:

(45) Simply, we will do what independent, sovereign countries do. It will be a negotiation, and it will require some give and take, but we want a deal that reflects the kind of mature, cooperative **relationship** that close **friends** and **allies** enjoy. I have been clear to my European counterparts that we approach the negotiation in a spirit of goodwill and a desire to see the EU succeed politically and economically. In exit we are not seeking a bitter divorce, but a better **relationship** (David Davis, Speech, December 2016).

The extract above illuminates a frequent rhetorical strategy in the government’s pre-negotiation stance of combining several kinship terms in a single sentence. Repeating kinship terms allows the government to frame what it desires, a *strategic* international friendship based on congruent interests, as a *normative* international friendship based on ideational and emotional bonds (Oelsner and Koschut, 2014: 13-15). The subtle reframing of a pragmatic future relationship as an affective attachment emerges out of the different connotations of ‘relationship’, ‘friends’ and ‘allies’. ‘Relationship’ is the least specific kinship term; it acts as a hypernym for the two more nuanced nouns. Given its genericity, ‘relationship’ connotes a functional approach to interaction that serves the interests of both parties. The adjectives ‘mature’ and ‘cooperative’ foreground rationality and shared responsibility, framing the future ‘relationship’ as a logical

means to an end—an obvious way to ‘succeed politically and economically’. The repetition of this noun indicates that pragmatism forms the core of the government’s vision for future UK-EU interaction (see also Mautner, 2001).

The focus on transaction is offset by the noun ‘friends’, which combines greater interpersonal warmth with individuality (Roshchin, 2011). The noun ‘friendship’ has long appeared in international treaties as a boundary-producing term that recognises the distinctiveness of the two parties (Roshchin, 2011). That is, it connotes collaboration between equal but different entities. The adjectives ‘independent’ and ‘sovereign’ tease out this meaning of the noun, foregrounding a transformation in the UK’s position from *part of* the EU to *partner to* the EU; the focus on sovereignty echoes the demand for British sovereignty made during the Vote Leave (2016) campaign. Although ‘friends’ implies a deeper emotional attachment between the UK and the EU than ‘relationship’, then, it also conceptualises Brexit as a process of *political distancing*. This duality allows the government to balance the need for a deal with the EU with the narrative of Brexit as a means of regaining independence. In other words, it placates national readers who viewed EU membership as a trap while reassuring EU leaders that the Leave vote symbolises a desire to redefine, not remove, ties to the Union.

The final noun, ‘allies’, is the most emotive and value-laden kinship term in the extract. In a European context, it evokes memories of the Second World War and the bonds of duty and loyalty that united the UK and its mainland counterparts (Charteris-Black, 2019). The Second World War reminds European leaders of the moral responsibility to collaborate on European defence (see Section 5.1.1). Equally, it is a powerful example of affective ties emerging out of a practical need for collaboration – it reflects the government’s broader argument that a mutually beneficial transaction is more important than ideational alignment. Ultimately, then, the noun ‘allies’ provides an emotional rationale for redefining the UK-EU relationship in functional terms, once again contradicting the claim that there is no emotive

dimension to the government's transactional approach to Europe (Siles-Brügge, 2019). Considering the three kinship terms together reveals that while the government desires a relationship that best serves its defence and economic interests, it recognises the rhetorical power of evoking affective attachments between European nations.

A confident tone towards the idea that the UK and the EU will be able to reach a deal also pervades the 2017 subcorpus. This year, the UK government announces its vision for Global Britain, promising that the UK will become a trading nation with expansive international relationships. At the same time, negotiations between the UK and the EU begin in earnest. As a result of these contextual factors, government documents address in greater detail how the two parties can collaborate (through scientific and technological research in 32 examples and by tackling climate issues in five instances). They also situate the UK-EU relationship within a broader network of global alliances (59 occurrences). Examples (46) and (47) exemplify some of these discursive and argumentative developments:

(46) I want us to be a truly Global Britain, the best **friend** and **neighbour** to our European **partners**, but a country that reaches beyond the borders of Europe too. A country that goes out into the world to build relationships with old **friends** and new **allies** alike (Theresa May, Plan for Brexit Speech, January 2017).

(47) We aim to enhance our strong bilateral **relationships** with our European **partners** and beyond, projecting a truly global UK across the world (UK Government, Policy Paper: The United Kingdom's exit from, and new partnership with, the European Union, February 2017).

In Extract (46), May's use of the noun 'neighbour' illuminates how UK-EU relations fit within her broader vision for a 'truly Global Britain'. On a pragmatic, transactional level, the connotations of geographical proximity underpinning the noun 'neighbour' construct European countries as valuable trade partners for the UK. However, read through the interpersonal lens of May's nation-as-a-person metaphorical frame (Charteris-Black, 2019), a second interpretation of the noun 'neighbour' emerges. An individual's relationship with their neighbour exists foremost *because of* geographical proximity, not necessarily ideological bonds. Scaled up to international relationships, the term implies that the usefulness of trading with a close continent does not warrant curtailing relationships with countries that exist 'beyond the borders' of Europe. In other words, the UK's post-Brexit identity as a diplomatic pioneer requires that the UK-EU relationship be just one of many practical arrangements that facilitate international trade. Although the nominal group 'best friend' ostensibly implies sentimentality – and appears to take ideological precedence given its placement before the noun 'neighbour' – in this context, it connotes a desire for exclusivity. That is, May seemingly wants the EU to offer the UK a unique relationship (making it a 'best friend'), while the UK pursues closer ties with extra-European 'old friends and new allies'. Overall, then, the extract illuminates a tension between the economic imperative to trade with the EU and the Vote Leave promise that Brexit would expand Britain's trading networks and reinstate its reputation as a global trading nation.

Extract (47) illustrates that international relationships are important for more than just economic survival. By arguing that 'enhanc[ing] [...] bilateral relationships' will 'project a truly global UK across the world', the Policy Paper recognises that new trade deals are paramount to the UK's credibility as an independent and sovereign political actor: they *legitimise* the UK's decision to leave the EU by demonstrating that the nation can stand alone. If the government fails to secure new trade agreements, its ability to 'project a truly global'

image would be weakened, prompting an identity crisis that could undermine the UK's international standing. Although this argument suggests that leaving the EU has made the UK an 'outsider' and 'supplicant' (Daddow, 2014: 75), the policy document downplays the nation's dependence on other states through the mental, desiderative processes (Halliday, 1985) 'want' and 'aim'. These verbs depict new deals as a *desire* rather than a necessity, ignoring the practical constraints that an internationalist identity imposes on UK negotiators.

Taken together, Examples (46) and (47) reveal the risks that the Global Britain plan poses. By demanding that politicians focus on extra-European ties, the Global Britain project reduces the UK-EU relationship to only one facet of a broader foreign policy strategy. While diminishing the importance of the UK-EU relationship placates Britons who desire more expansive trading networks, it informs EU leaders (at the onset of negotiations) that redefining UK-EU interactions is not Britain's only priority. Given that establishing future relationships with extra-European countries will depend in part on stabilising Britain's economy, which in turn relies on minimising trade barriers and tariffs with the EU (UK in a Changing Europe, 2020a), the Global Britain project communicates less of a commitment to negotiations than Britain's economic needs would require. A lack of commitment is unlikely to foster an ethos of compromise and community at the negotiation table. In sum, then, downplaying Britain's reliance on international relationships could make it harder to forge the ties required to 'project' a global image to the world.

By 2018, the confident tone surrounding the ability to redefine the UK-EU relationship seemingly wanes. Across 17 concordance lines for this domain in the 2018 subcorpus, politicians question the EU's commitment to negotiations and discuss the possibility of the UK leaving the EU without a deal. Failing to reach a trade agreement with the EU could undermine the UK's claim to be a global trading nation, given that the Single Market accounts for 450 million consumers and is one of the world's largest economies (European Commission, 2019).

To navigate the potential threat to this emerging national identity narrative, British politicians argue that the UK will remain committed to its European relationships irrespective of the EU's behaviour in negotiations. This discursive strategy, represented in Extracts (48) and (49) below, places the blame for a potential breakdown of trust on the EU. Blaming the EU, in turn, allows the government to maintain its construction of the UK as an outward-looking, diplomatic nation.

(48) We approach these negotiations with a spirit of pragmatism, compromise and indeed **friendship**. I hope, I trust that the EU will engage with our proposals in the same spirit (Dominic Raab, Statement to Parliament, July 2018).

(49) That way, as we prepare for our departure from the EU, and as we strain every sinew to deliver a new, deep and **special**, partnership with our European **friends**, we will be ready, in case those efforts are not matched (Dominic Raab, Speech on no deal planning, August 2018).

In Example (48), Raab's description of Britain's 'spirit' of 'pragmatism' and 'compromise' imbues the nation with a natural aptitude for diplomacy. It echoes the construction of an inherently tolerant nation in the British Eurosceptic media (see Section 4.3.1), revealing a cohesive vision of national values across the UK's foremost public institutions. Despite the claim to diplomatic expertise, the extract constitutes an attempt to coerce EU negotiators into conceding to British demands. Through the syntactic parallelism of the expressive and directive speech acts 'I hope, I trust' (Searle, 1979), Raab produces an emotive plea for the EU to approach the UK's proposals with compromise. At the locutionary level, Raab performs the 'friendship' to which he alludes by expressing his belief in the trustworthiness and honesty of

EU negotiators. Through this performance, he constructs the UK's negotiatory stance as reasonable and friendly. At the illocutionary level, however, the speech act introduces doubt that the EU will approach negotiations fairly, a shift from the optimism found in the earlier documents. This rhetorical duality allows Raab to place the blame for inevitable tensions during negotiations on the EU—deciding not to compromise becomes a breach of Britain's trust. In other words, it enables Raab to present the UK as an innocent victim of an antagonistic, uncompromising EU, even as he issues a veiled threat to the EU's reputation. This is somewhat ironic, given that the Withdrawal Agreement published months later was voted down by British MPs after the EU had made several concessions to reach an accord.

Excerpt (49) exposes a further contradiction in the construction of the future UK-EU relationship. By asserting that the UK desires a 'deep and special partnership' with European countries, Raab indicates that he is pursuing a 'thick, normative' relationship (Oelsner and Koschut, 2014: 13) with the EU based on trust. Usually, however, countries with normative relationships do not demand reassurances that their counterparts will be honest because relations are rooted in mutual confidence (Oelsner and Koschut, 2014). In challenging the EU to match its efforts in 'strain[ing] every sinew' to reach an agreement (and requesting proof of the same 'spirit' of compromise (Ex. 48)), Raab constructs a *lack* of trust between the two parties. Despite the rhetorical focus on achieving a 'deep and special relationship', then, Raab's speeches and statements envision a severing of trust between the UK and the EU that could result in a more distant future relationship.

Extracts (48) and (49) are both directed towards a national audience—the former to Parliament, which contains several Eurosceptic MPs advocating for a hard Brexit, and the latter to the British public. In this context, Raab's antagonistic approach to UK-EU negotiations reads as political posturing—an attempt to strengthen confidence in UK negotiators and their ability to guarantee British interests. In choosing to make those reassurances by provoking EU

negotiators, however, Raab only increases the likelihood that the EU will adopt a more antagonistic stance in retaliation. In other words, Raab's discursive strategy further undermines trust between the two parties and makes a deal more complicated to reach. Given that a lack of conflict is in the national interest (Hug, 2020), Raab's language exposes a tension between meeting public expectations of Brexit and the constraints of foreign policymaking in a globalised world.

Perhaps inevitably, tensions continue to afflict the UK-EU relationship throughout most of 2019 – in part because British MPs repeatedly vote down the initial Withdrawal Agreement agreed between Theresa May and EU leaders. British politicians repeatedly express dissatisfaction with the existing Withdrawal Agreement, while EU leaders contend that the Agreement cannot be renegotiated. Responding to the disintegration of UK-EU relations and the greater possibility of leaving the EU without a deal, UK politicians direct their attention towards potential extra-European partners (12 examples). Although officials still assert the importance of a trade deal with the EU, they argue that the UK does not *require* one to become a global trading nation. Example (50) illustrates this argument:

(50) Today, the UK wants a strong **relationship** with our European **partners**. But Brussels isn't the only game in town. It's time we broadened our horizons, and my first visits as Foreign Secretary – to the US, Canada, Thailand and Mexico – have shone a light on the opportunities for a truly global Britain (Dominic Raab, Article in the Sunday Telegraph, August 2019).

Compared with the examples from the 2017 subcorpus, Excerpt (50) reveals a shift from framing the UK-EU relationship as integral to the Global Britain vision to considering it expendable ('isn't the only game in town'). The mental desiderative process (Halliday, 1985)

‘wants’ frames the relationship with the EU as a desire, not a necessity. Together with the idiomatic metaphor ‘isn’t the only game in town’, these grammatical choices posit that extra-European bilateral relationships will act as substitutes for the loss of a ‘strong relationship’ with European countries. In other words, Raab promises both stability and change—leaving the EU allows the UK to ‘broaden [its] horizons’ (change), offering other trade ‘opportunities’ to those presented by EU membership (economic stability). In doing so, he perpetuates the same tensions as May and Davis in their narratives of Brexit as departure and continuity (see Section 5.2.1).

Despite Raab’s positive rhetoric of expansion and substitution, the socio-political and economic realities of foregoing a ‘strong relationship’ and focusing on extra-European trade deals were likely to have been much more complex. The UK could have continued to trade with both the EU and extra-European countries on World Trade Organisation (WTO) terms without securing a ‘strong relationship’ with the EU. In this sense, the Global Britain vision would not inevitably unravel in a no-deal scenario. Nevertheless, leaving the EU without a deal would have imposed more non-tariff barriers and tariffs on trade between the UK and the Single Market—the recipient of almost half of the UK’s exports at the time of Raab’s speech (Ward, 2020). These changes, in turn, could have had logistical and administrative consequences that would have affected both the UK economy and individual consumers (UK in a Changing Europe, 2020a). Any negative short-term consequences of a failure to reach a deal could have affected Britain’s international standing if they weakened its economy or tarnished its reputation ‘for competent governance and administration’ (UK in a Changing Europe, 2020a: 55). In other words, even if the government shifted the focus of the Global Britain vision to extra-European relationships, failure to reach a deal with the EU could have rendered the nation a less attractive ally. Without strong international relationships, the UK could not claim to be a ‘truly global nation’.

Extra-EU relations

The government's Global Britain vision requires politicians not just to re-negotiate UK-EU ties, but also to situate the UK within an expansive network of international relationships. As outlined above, the government achieves this by depicting alliances between the UK and three extra-European groups: unspecified global actors, specific extra-EU countries, and the Northern Ireland-Republic of Ireland nexus. A diachronic analysis of these examples reveals a similar unravelling of the Global Britain vision as emerges from a study of the UK-EU relationship.

In the earlier subcorpora, politicians draw on Britain's (sanitised) historical identity as a global trading nation to envision the UK's post-Brexit reputation as a return to a former legacy (14 instances). This optimistic representation of Brexit as an opportunity for greater global interconnectedness coincides with the early confidence in the ability to redefine the UK-EU relationship (see Section 5.2.1 and above). Excerpt (51) below is an extended example of this discursive strategy:

(51) It is in the interests of global order that we are at the centre of a network of **relationships** and **alliances** that span the world. It is one of the great achievements of British diplomacy in the 20th century that – together with others – we effectively changed the basis and assumptions on which those **relationships** work. It was Britain in 1815 that helped to create the balance of power system of politics [sic] a system that was remarkably successful for about a century in keeping the peace, until it could not cope with the rise of new states in the European order (Boris Johnson, Beyond Brexit: a Global Britain Speech, December 2016).

In Excerpt (51), Johnson argues that ‘it is in the interests of global order’ that the UK sit ‘at the centre of a network of relationships’. The prepositional phrase ‘at the centre’ and the phrase ‘in the interests of global order’ posit that Britain has an ethical responsibility to be a world leader because it has unique, diplomatic capabilities that allow it to facilitate peace. In other words, Johnson frames Britain’s desire to become a linchpin for international politics as an honourable act of generosity, rather than a role that it requires to enhance its credibility and legitimise its decision to leave the EU.

To support his role orientation for Britain as an influential, international actor (Gaskarth, 2014), Johnson retells a history of British diplomatic successes in the ‘20th century’ and ‘1815’. Alluding to the UK’s role in ‘creating the balance of power’ during the two World Wars and the Battle of Waterloo, Johnson reveals that the Global Britain vision is heavily rooted in the past (Eaton and Smith, 2020). He demonstrates that the government’s early plan for post-Brexit Britain is to create a future identity worthy of (its sanitised version of) the nation’s history—a vision which unites progress with a return to the past, appeasing the Leave-voting desire to reignite Britain’s former power and influence (Calhoun, 2017). By foregrounding two historical junctures during which the UK was an independent nation, Johnson illustrates that Britain can act and strategise globally. Although the events occurred long enough ago to question whether Britain can still shape global politics, the fact that they precede Britain’s accession to the EU allows Johnson to suggest that EU membership constrained the nation’s actions. Underpinning Johnson’s narration of British history, then, is the conceptualisation of Brexit as the rebirth of a powerful, internationalist Britain (see also Zappettini, 2019).

Echoing the discursive shift highlighted in Section 5.2.1, politicians begin to express concerns over the effect that a no-deal Brexit could have on the UK’s extra-European relationships in the later subcorpora. At the same time, disagreements about a potential

backstop bring into focus the tensions between Britain, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland (six instances). Extracts (52) and (53) elucidate these concerns.

(52) When I picture how others see Britain right now, I suspect old **friends** are shaking puzzled heads. The clash and thunder over Brexit is not an appealing spectacle (Jeremy Hunt, Article in the *Washington Post*, March 2019).

(53) We may sometimes be rivals in sport, but our nations are bonded by history and family, culture and commerce. We are diverse, but our bonds run deep. Very deep. All **friendships** go through testing times, and Brexit has certainly been one such test for the United Kingdom and Ireland (Chris Pincher, Speech, October 2019).

In Extract (52), Jeremy Hunt presupposes that American politicians, media outlets and nationals view Britain's decision to leave the EU critically. Although he does not specifically mention the USA, alluding only to 'old allies', Hunt's decision to publish in the *Washington Post* indicates that he is referring to American perceptions of Brexit. Acknowledging that 'Brexit is not an appealing spectacle' for 'old allies' is a departure from the confidence exuded as late as 2018 that the UK would strengthen ties with extra-European countries even if UK-EU negotiations failed. The argumentative shift reveals a sense of concern that the ongoing trust breakdown in UK-EU negotiations is rendering the UK a less attractive trade partner outside of Europe. In other words, it recognises that Britain is becoming an 'outsider' and 'suppliant' (Daddow, 2014: 75) not just to Europe but to powerful countries across the globe.

Even more illuminating is the weather metaphor of 'clash and thunder' – a rare reference to the *intranational* divisions caused by Brexit (see Chapter 4 for media coverage of these disagreements and Chapter 1 for a general overview). That the government acknowledges

national political tensions in an international newspaper indicates that the UK's inability to reach a consensus within its four nations is forcing it into a position of weakness. Extract (53) supports the reading of Brexit as diminishing the UK's international standing: through the idiom 'testing times', Pincher suggests that Brexit is unpicking the 'very deep' bonds between the UK and Ireland that have been painstakingly forged after years of conflict. Together, these two examples reveal that if politicians cannot improve international perceptions of the state of the nation, Britain will fail to enact the role that it covets as a connector between EU and extra-EU countries. In other words, continuing down the path of intranational and international antagonism will cause the Global Britain narrative to lose credibility. Overall, then, Extracts (52) and (53) reveal that, despite persisting with the Global Britain vision into 2019, politicians mitigate the view that Britain will be able to reignite its former legacy as a global trading nation as negotiations extend.

A diachronic analysis of the examples from the Personal Relationship: General domain supports the findings from Section 5.2.1: the government's approach to international relations shifts after UK-EU negotiations begin. In the early years, the government proposes a pragmatic UK-EU relationship that will naturally produce emotive and ideational bonds, allowing the UK and the EU to serve their mutual interests and defend themselves against shared threats. At the same time, politicians draw on British history to conceptualise post-Brexit Britain as an international linchpin that stabilises the world order. There is little suggestion that fulfilling this role will not be possible; indeed, officials imply that the UK has an ethical responsibility to be a world leader.

By 2018, Brexit negotiations begin to show signs of disagreement; in March, the two parties reach an impasse in talks over the Irish border with Northern Ireland – a problem which recurs throughout negotiations that year. This stalemate has a pejorative effect on the construction of UK-EU ties. While the government ostensibly positions the EU as a friend,

politicians allude for the first time to the possibility that there will not be a trade deal before the transition period ends. The absence of a deal would undermine the government's internationalist narrative—to offset this threat to an emerging national identity, politicians place the responsibility for the relationship breakdown onto the EU. They employ speech acts to construct Britain as a trusting and trustworthy partner, committed to achieving a deal; in doing so, they challenge EU negotiators to perform their trustworthiness by conceding and compromising. A plethora of kinship terms (unsuccessfully) obscures this construction of dwindling trust.

By 2019, Theresa May's Withdrawal Agreement has been rejected by the UK Parliament frequently enough to raise concerns about the ability to reach a deal with the EU. In response to this context, the government shifts its focus to extra-EU countries, relegating the EU to only one potential (but not necessary) ally. Paradoxically, documents published at the same time reveal a rising concern that failing to secure a trade deal with the EU would weaken the nation's international standing. These contradictions indicate a reluctance to accept that the UK has reverted to its pre-accession role as an 'outsider' and 'supplicant' (Daddow, 2014: 75). Despite the unravelling of the Global Britain vision, the government continues to promote its internationalist plan into 2019. While this might give the illusion of consistency, the British public appears to be cognisant of the Government's contradictions: in 2019, some 28% of Britons said they did not understand what it means to be a global nation (Gaston, 2020). Those that said they *did* understand, did not agree on what the criteria for a global nation are (Gaston, 2020).

5.3. Conclusion

This chapter reveals a discursive shift in the government's Global Britain narrative, brought about by a stalemate in Brexit negotiations and discord in the UK Parliament over the Withdrawal Agreement. In the early years, government documents envision a transactional UK-EU relationship that protects both entities from threats of terrorism and illegal migration. Within the construction of a European ingroup, the UK occupies a liminal position as both an insider and an outsider (Shackleton, 2016). The government argues that the UK's liminal position allows it to fulfil a role as an international linchpin, uniting EU and extra-EU countries in a strongly connected global community. This argument requires the government to embrace globalisation—the process which led some Britons to vote to leave the EU because they felt economically “left behind” (Goodwin and Heath, 2016; Bogdanor, 2020). Although politicians frame globalisation in cultural terms to render its inevitability more palatable, an internationalist identity could compound the feelings of dissatisfaction among the British public. Paradoxically, then, the Global Britain plan could foster intranational divisions of the kind that the Eurosceptic media envisions (see Chapter 4).

In the later years, the ability to strengthen the UK-EU relationship becomes increasingly precarious. Documents reveal an increased positioning of the UK as an international ‘outsider’ and ‘suppliant’ (Daddow, 2014: 75). Politicians foreground socio-cultural ties between Britain and Europe, but the focus on cultural unity cannot mask the palpable uncertainty about reaching a trade deal with the EU before the transition period ends. Dominic Raab, then Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, repeatedly accuses the EU of not approaching negotiations fairly – even though the Withdrawal Agreement is eventually rejected by *British* politicians. Although Raab obscures his allegations behind kinship terms, his provocative stance only increases the likelihood that trust will plummet, and that the EU

will retaliate. Paradoxically, the rising antagonism of the EU is constructed as negatively affecting international perceptions of Britain and Brexit in 2019; politicians allude to the chaos of intranational political divisions in international newspapers. Forced to address Britain's weaknesses, officials illustrate that their plan for Global Britain is becoming untenable: Britain cannot claim to be a global trading nation without strong international relationships, but ongoing disagreements could compromise future deals by negatively affecting Britain's reputation.

Despite the dwindling feasibility of the Global Britain vision, the government remains faithful to its narrative of post-Brexit national identity. While consistency might suggest that there is a coherent blueprint for life outside of the EU, the Global Britain rhetoric lacks detail and is often contradictory. For example, politicians promote an internationalist vision yet introduce stricter immigration policies for EU migrants and discursively place immigrant groups outside of the national public. These discursive and policy decisions are unlikely to foster the sense of international belonging that a global nation would require. They do, however, highlight the challenges of balancing the public desire for sovereignty and lower levels of immigration (Miglbauer and Koller, 2019; Geddes, 2017) with the internationalist vision for post-Brexit Britain. Politicians also provide contradictory interpretations of Brexit as both departure and continuity, risk and opportunity; metaphors of onward movement create a vague image of progression in an attempt to mask a lack of detail about life outside of the EU. Given these inconsistencies, it is perhaps unsurprising that, in 2019, 28% of Britons stated that they did not know what being a global nation entails (Gaston, 2020). Think tanks have responded to public confusion by calling on the Government to publish a values statement to demystify the Global Britain vision (Gaston, 2020; Hug, 2020). At the time of writing, no such statement has been produced.

The inconsistencies in the government documents and the dwindling argumentative value of the Global Britain vision fail to provide the British public or future trade partners with a coherent blueprint for Britain outside of the EU. The lack of precise details about the government's plan for its global nation leaves the UK at risk of losing its international standing—a far cry from the early promise that Brexit would reinvigorate Britain's historical identity as a global trading nation.

6 ‘I still felt British’: Discursive constructions of Britain and Britishness in public opinion

6.1. Introduction

Moving on from the corpus-assisted critical discourse analyses of media and government texts, in this sixth chapter, I conduct a discourse analysis of narratives to examine the ways in which fifteen people with ties to Nottinghamshire tell stories to position themselves within national social groups, legitimise their political stance towards Brexit, and perform their identities as Leave and Remain voters.

As explained in Chapter 3, when transcribing the interviews, I noticed the prevalence of narratives as responses to open questions that did not explicitly request narrative replies. It was through these stories that participants contested, negotiated, and performed national and political identities. While all participants told at least one narrative, often Remain-voting interviewees told several per interview. As a result, the stories that I analyse in depth in this chapter are most often told by Remain voters. The higher number of Remain stories is partly due to the Remain self-selection bias (ten of the fifteen interviewees voted to Remain). Potential Leave-backing participants expressed a greater level of suspicion towards the research aims than Remain voters, expressing concerns about being framed as racist or xenophobic. In general, my five Leave-voting participants were more likely to give minimal responses to questions during the interviews.

To analyse the narratives, I categorised the stories thematically based on the representations of Britain and Europe that they contained. This process resulted in the identification of three key themes: nostalgia for a British past (narrated primarily by older Leave-voting participants in nine stories), national division and inequality (related mainly by

Remain-voting participants in seventeen stories), and racial, linguistic, and national differences and discrimination (again, told largely by Remain-voting participants in fifteen stories). The micro-linguistic analysis of the narratives that follows explores these three themes across eleven stories, selected for the representativeness of the key discursive representations of Britain, Britishness, Europe and Europeanness.

Below, I reveal how my participants negotiate, perform and contest national and political identities through the stories that they tell during the interview. In their stories, the lived experience of being British and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion that accompany it are very much dependent on the spaces and places that characters occupy. Given the highly localised nature of the stories, the plots typically centre on quotidian activities such as conversations with friends or shopping excursions. I argue throughout the chapter that what unites the stories is a sense of dissatisfaction with the present state of the British nation as participants imagine it, whether that is due to a lack of global trade, the underfunding of English regions and towns, or the social exclusion of Black and minority ethnic people. This stance towards the nation is put forward by participants to justify their decision to vote either Remain or Leave in the referendum – for some interviewees, Brexit is a return to a golden age of internationalism, while for others it symbolises ignorance.

Most often, the stories include representations of Britain as divided: the participants claim that English regions are as different as countries and that some accents index otherness while others index Britishness. Despite the widespread sense of division in the stories, participants do not always accept mediated constructions of British division. Neither, however, do they accept governmental projections of post-Brexit Britain as a united nation. Most commonly, participants adopt a negotiated position (Hall, 1973) towards the data – they draw on personal experiences to accept some aspects of political and media discourses while rejecting others. Notably, although participants construct Britain as divided and its meanings

as contested, eleven of the fifteen interviewees still self-identify as ‘British’ and claim that this identity has emotional significance for them. Of the remaining four, two identify as ‘English’, and two say they do not subscribe to national identity as a concept.

6.2. Political identities: Stories about Brexit, Britain, and the EU

6.2.1. Nostalgia

Fifty-eight stories take place explicitly within the context of Brexit. In nine of these stories, participants discursively construct a historical global trading nation identity for Britain and ponder the nation’s ability to regain this reputation after Brexit. Below I examine three stories within which older, Leave-supporting interviewees narrate nostalgia for a powerful British past. The participants construct a time before accession to the EU when they were proud of Britain’s global influence. They narrate encounters with symbols of British power (flags in ports, school displays, and products on supermarket shelves) and these encounters are, through lexico-grammatical choices, situated in the past. Underpinning the stories is a sense of lost pride and dissatisfaction with the nation, suggesting an unfulfilled desire for change. For example, Participants D and E, a married couple in their mid-seventies who reside in Nottinghamshire, both tell stories of their former pride at ‘be[ing] British’. Participant E, a white, Leave-voting female, narrates an Observation of her ‘school days’ (transcription conventions for the following extract(s) can be found in Appendix B):

I can remember feeling very proud to be British particularly (.) in school days we had (.) Empire Day I can't even remember now but I think it was sometime in April (.) you know when all the children did (.) displays and proud to be British and everything that was British was good (.) and St George's Day we used to celebrate that and you know y I I was British and just proud to be British (.) I suppose I didn't know anything else really but I think I was brought up to believe that way

While Participant E's representation of herself as 'British' is straightforward in indexing her national identity, her alternating pronoun use is striking. In the storytelling world, Participant E repeatedly refers to herself through the singular first-person personal pronoun 'I' whereas in the story world of her 'school days', she frequently employs the plural personal pronoun 'we' to metonymically construct a national ingroup of British children who were socialised to believe that 'everything that was British was good'. The shift in pronouns, tense and stance marks a move away from a patriotic national identity in childhood towards a more ambivalent, less nationally connected adulthood. That Participant E is less patriotic in the storytelling world is clear from her assertion that she 'can't even remember' when Empire Day was held, and that she no longer celebrates St George's day ('used to'). It also emerges through the juxtaposition between the child character who 'didn't know anything else' and the storytelling adult who (it is implied in the adverb 'else') is aware of an alternative interpretation of British history. Through her coming-of-age story of a personal transition from patriotism to a more ambivalent elderly adulthood, Participant E narrates an analogous shift away from collective support for British influence in the national psyche.

In the same interview, Participant E's husband, Participant D, a white male, narrates a Recount of travelling to New Zealand by ship and feeling proud to 'see the [British] ensign flying':

When I went to New Zealand to visit by ship the journey took about six six weeks (.) it hit many ports on the way out there (.) and and in every port you know there was a British cargo ship with the ensign flag (.) and that that made me feel proud because that was influence to me of (.) of England because we were at that time we were still a kind of a really global trading country I mean this is go this would be around 1960 62 (.) obviously I don't think there'd be an English or British merchant ship now (.) but in those days yes and yes it was good to see the the ensign flying

While Participant E's story encapsulates a loss of British pride, Participant D's Recount narrates a concomitant loss of British influence since the 1960s. The adverbs 'obviously' and 'now' position the argument that Britain is no longer 'a really global trading country' as common sense. The past tense verb 'made' in the clause 'that made me feel proud' indicates a loss of pride in the storytelling world. Like Participant E, Participant D's Leave-voting identity hinges on a strong sense of belonging to the nation in the past, which is indexed through the first-person plural pronoun 'we' when talking about the country. What is notable about both stories is that while the participants articulate a coherent, shared construction of Britain in the past built around 'global trade' and 'Empire', neither story includes a representation of present-day Britain. (This absence is significant since the question that prompted these nostalgic reflections asked about how the participants felt when they woke up to the news that the public had voted Leave). As a result, contemporary Britishness is seemingly characterised by loss and absence (of identity, pride, and influence) for these Leave-voting participants. The two stories reveal that articulating nostalgia for a once powerful nation is one way that Leave-voting interviewees can construct their political identities and justify their Leave vote.

Although the older Leave-voting participants narrate a history of British power prior to EU membership, they express different attitudes towards Britain's future. Participant D is sceptical about Britain's ability to trade widely again; he remarks later in the interview that this is because 'we don't make anything anymore'. Participant E is equally dubious, noting that 'there's not so many British or English factories around nowadays and we don't make so many goods as we used to'. Conversely, Participant C, a white, Leave-voting, 'English' woman of 86 years, expresses enthusiasm towards an internationalist post-Brexit foreign policy. Participant C was born in Nottingham and has lived in the county of Nottinghamshire for over forty years. In the Observation below, she responds to a question about whether living in Britain before its accession to the EU influenced her view of what post-Brexit Britain could look like. Participant C asserts that this is the case, narrating a time when she saw butter from New Zealand in a shop to support her argument. The participant links her personal experience to a projection (Georgakopoulou, 2007), or future story, of how the UK will trade with other countries after it leaves the EU:

we used to trade all over the ^world and that I quite remember (.) New Zealand butter being on the shelves in the shops and Australian this and that and the other you know and (.) you could you could trade with anyone and that's the one thing we're pleased about coming out of Brexit hopefully that's what we're going to be able to do again we're going to work at it but (.) hopefully that's how it's going to be where we can trade with any country we want to

Participant C's Observation compares Britain in the past, present, and future. It does not specify when, prior to its accession to the EU, Britain traded globally. Rather, through the imperfect aspect of the verb 'used to', Participant C, like Participant E, lends to her story the air of

nostalgia for a mythical golden age that Calhoun (2017) attributes to Leave voters. The past tense verb ‘used to’ implies that the UK no longer trades globally, which is reinforced by the past-oriented verb ‘remember’. In her story, then, like Participants D and E, Participant C subscribes to a narrative of British decline in which a global trading nation identity disintegrates as the UK narrows its trading scope primarily to the EU. However, unlike Participant D’s Recount, this story is far from pessimistic, as the repetition of ‘hopefully’ reveals. In her Comment, the Participant claims that after Brexit, ‘we’re going to be able to do it again’. The temporal adverb ‘again’ ties the country’s trading past to its future, framing Brexit as a return to a more internationalist past for the nation. This metaphor coexists contradictorily with the representation of Brexit as linear progress in the verb phrase ‘coming out [of Brexit]’. For Participant C, then, Brexit seemingly involves going backwards to go forwards (see Chapter 5 for similar contradictory representations of Brexit in government discourses). A Leave-voting identity is not only indirectly indexed through positive evaluations of Britain’s pre-accession past, but also sometimes by articulating hope (‘hopefully’) for a future reinvigoration made possible through Brexit.

Aside from its complex temporality, the story is notable for the identity work which occurs through the constantly shifting pronoun use. In the Orientation, Participant C, like Participant E, uses the metonymic first-person personal pronoun ‘we’ to construct a national ingroup in the clause ‘we used to trade all over the world’. Through this clause, the participant implies that individuals were implicated in international trade even if they were not involved in the business of trading. In other words, the pronoun ‘we’ indirectly indexes a strong sense of belonging to a national collective for Participant C in the past, to the degree that her interests and actions were inescapably intertwined with others in the imagined community (Anderson, 2006). Following the first use of the national ‘we’, the Participant shifts to the singular first-person pronoun for the only time throughout the story. After a brief personal intrusion into the

story, the participant adopts the generic, national ‘you’ in the clause ‘you could trade with anyone’ before explaining that ‘that’s the one thing we’re pleased about coming out of Brexit’. In this version of the pronoun ‘we’, it is not the nation on behalf of which the participant speaks, but the more exclusive group of Leave voters, who are assigned the stance of being ‘pleased’ by the prospects of Brexit. By speaking on behalf of Leave voters, Participant C constructs a shared trade-based motivation for the millions of people who voted like her. In doing so, she indexes a strong sense of belonging to a collective Leaver identity and legitimises her stance by amplifying its resonance among voting Britons.

Participant C’s emphasis on collective belonging and her alignment with the government’s stance on Global Britain underpins her response to the stimulus task. When presented with May’s vision for Britain to become a global trading nation, Participant C accepts the message wholesale, saying she ‘agrees’ and that May’s plans ‘paint a good picture’ of what Britain could be. In contrast, when she encounters the *Telegraph Online* article, Participant C adopts a negotiated position (Hall, 1973), using her experience of family in Scotland to agree ‘to some extent’ that Scotland and England are different, and drawing on her experiences of visiting London to argue that London is more multicultural than Nottingham.

The stories I analyse above (re)produce similar constructions of Britain. First, they depict a powerful British history prior to Britain’s accession to the EU rooted in the spatial imaginaries of the British Empire and Global Britain (Sykes, 2018). Second, they convey the affective stance (Du Bois, 2007) of lost pride in the nation; in making this sentiment relevant during the interview, the participants suggest that articulating pride in the nation’s past is an important way of indexing their political identities as older Leave voters. Third, the stories lack a clear representation of contemporary Britain, which suggests that, for these individuals, present-day British identity is understood in terms of loss and absence (of pride and influence). As a result of this narrative of loss, the stories are underpinned by a sense of dissatisfaction

with the present state of the nation and a desire for change, which is explicitly articulated by Participant C in her claim that ‘hopefully’ Britain will be able to trade widely ‘again’ after Brexit. Finally, it is through telling stories about pride in British history that interviewees legitimise their vote to leave the European Union. Stories therefore act simultaneously as sense-making devices and legitimisation strategies used to justify a political stance towards Brexit.

All three stories support Calhoun’s (2017: n.p.) argument that the Leave vote was ‘a vote for the good old days, in complaint against a frustrating present’. However, not all participants voice a belief that Brexit will help Britain return to its past glory. While it is possible to identify a shared Leaver identity construction around pride in British history and nostalgia for lost power, then, an individual approach to attitudes towards Brexit highlights that the Leave vote is not necessarily always about *returning* to the ‘good old days’. More precisely, the stories reveal a desire for change in the present so that the future can be better, nuancing our understanding of reflections on reasons for the Leave vote.

The stories were narrated *after* Britain left the EU. In that sense, even though Participant C constructs Brexit as the means through which Britain could trade widely again, leaving the EU had not led to a tangible sense of national reinvigoration for these Leave voters at the time of interviewing. The same can be said for the (slightly) younger Leave-voting interviewees, one of whom (Participant O, a white, middle-aged male), argues that Britain still needs to ‘roll up its sleeves and get into the fight’ for a place in the world post-Brexit. For these participants, then, one might suggest that Britain has ‘lost an empire and not yet found a role’ (Acheson, 1962: n.p.).

6.2.2. Division and inequality

Whereas three of my Leave-supporting participants narrate stories of former pride in a glorious, distant British past, my Remain-voting participants tend to construct a historical imagined community (Anderson, 2006) that is socio-politically unequal and polarised when exploring their motivations for voting Remain. Some seventeen stories told by Remain-voting interviewees discursively construct the UK as divided, polarised, or unequal in some way. For instance, Participant A, a white Remain-voting interviewee in her mid-thirties who has lived in Powys, Manchester, Birmingham, and Nottinghamshire, narrates an Exemplum in which rural Wales has been neglected by London-centric government officials. This Exemplum is representative of the stories that encapsulate inequality:

a small part of it is a route back into childhood growing up in mid-Wales (.) which is not a very prosperous area in some ways and it didn't attract a lot of government funding you know so you had this quite polarised community sometimes very poor and and quite wealthy (.) and (.) I remember learning to drive (.) up and down Powys (.) and my dad was quite keen that I get some experience driving on (.) busier fast roads and not just poddling around the the hills which is quite sensible (.) and we did this big drive one day and I remember seeing signs built with Europe EU money built with EU money and so (.) it and that was the time of a Tory government as well and it just made me realise that actually we we are reliant on the Europe European Union to do the right thing because we (laughs) can't rely on our government (laughs) always to do it you know (.) and so (.) so there was a gut instinct (.) but it was rooted in in a kind of factual fact-based memory

Participant A is not the only Remain-voting interviewee to narrate a story of growing up in an economically unequal area of the UK and experiencing the realisation that the EU serves their economic interests better than the national government. Participant H, a white, Remain-voting British man in his mid-twenties, relates an almost identical Exemplum of growing up in a ‘poor’ area and seeing signs for developments funded by the EU:

definitely growing up we saw a lot of (.) signs around of (.) areas being developed because a lot of where I grew up was is poor and there were all these developments that was like funded by the EU and it was like you could see that and most of these w we had more investment from the EU than we did from Westminster so it’s like (.) I could see that and I was aware of that and I’d read that (.) and it’s just ridiculous to then (.) ignore it

Whereas the older Leave-voting participants narrate growing up in a time of British power, Participants A and H, who are at least thirty years younger, relate a ‘childhood’ experience of intranational inequality brought about by the economic policies of a (‘Tory’) government. In Participant A’s story, the association of mid-Wales’ poverty with a lack of governmental support establishes a discourse of blame in which supposedly representative politicians are implicated in the act of poverty-making. The informal pre-modifier ‘Tory’ evokes a sceptical attitude towards the main right-wing British political party, the Conservatives, indirectly indexing the interviewee’s left-wing political views. The phrase ‘as well’ makes relevant the political leaning of the government in the storytelling world, discursively associating the participant’s youthful political attitudes with her contemporary stance towards British politics. In other words, there is a temporal continuity to the government’s behaviour in the participant’s

narrated childhood and her adulthood; in the story world and the storytelling world, the ‘Tory Government’ occupies the role of an immoral villain on whom the British public ‘can’t rely’.

Unlike the sense of decline in the Leave-voting stories, this Remain-supporting story constructs poverty and inequality as a longer-term state for Britons. The same continuity is achieved in Participant H’s story through the repair ‘was is poor’ which suggests economic stagnation is still a feature of contemporary British society after the participant’s youth is over. The negative evaluative stances (Du Bois, 2007) underpinning the adjectives ‘poor’ and ‘unequal’ evoke dissatisfaction with the nation based on the effect of funding policies on regions outside of the political centre of London. In these stories, then, individuals index a pro-EU stance by discursively constructing the EU as the saviour of an economically neglected British public whose lives have been negatively affected by the (right-wing) policies of ‘Westminster’. By taking this stance towards the EU, the participants perform their identities as left-leaning ‘Remainers’.

These two Remain-supporting stories problematise the dominant political narrative of Remain voters as those who have benefitted from globalisation (Andreouli, 2020). While some quantitative research about Brexit has associated feelings of economic neglect with a *pro-Leave* stance (Goodwin and Heath, 2016), Participants A and H invoke the spatial imaginary of left-behind Britain (Sykes, 2018) in their Orientations to support a discursive construction of the EU as a saviour and Britain as socio-economically unequal. In contrasting politicians in ‘Westminster’ with their ‘poor’, ‘rural’ areas, the participants draw on the same cosmopolitan versus provincial distinction (Jennings and Stoker, 2016) that some academics invoke to distinguish between Remain and Leave voters. However, they undermine the homogenous equation of entire ‘out of town’ areas with a Leave stance by tying their pro-EU opinions explicitly to their youthful experiences of regional poverty. Through their stories, then,

Participants A and H contest a broader cultural interpretation of *Leave* voters as fuelled by economic deprivation.

Participants A and H privilege reason over emotion in their reactions to the stimulus exercise. Responding to Theresa May's vision for Global Britain to be a 'stronger, fairer, more united and outward-looking nation' (May, 2017: n.p.), Participant A is 'oppositional' (Hall, 1973: 18). She understands May's hegemonic construction of post-Brexit Britain as *united* but rebuts May's argument by claiming that the UK has 'become more polarised' and that Leave voters never enthuse about the internationalist potential of Brexit Britain. To support her arguments, she narrates two further stories: one about encountering swastikas painted on supported housing in her local town, and another about arguing with a pro-Global Britain Leave voter on Facebook who turned out to be 'somebody who lives on [...] typical meat and two veg' and 'has never left England'. She foregrounds logic and knowledge by arguing that there is not 'any reason' why EU membership 'blocks or inhibits' global trade in any way and decries May's 'hollow', 'bright, brave jingoism'. This focus on logic is significant given that within the EU referendum debate, Remain voters were often associated with reason and rationality (Manners, 2018). Participant A seems to reinforce this association through her self-presentation strategies. While Participant H is similarly sceptical of the government data, he adopts a more 'negotiated' position (Hall, 1973: 17) towards May's speech. He argues that May's vision 'does align with some of our best qualities that we had historically' but, in doing so, expresses 'the exact opposite of what Brexit represented'. He satirically recontextualises May's repeated clause 'I want Britain to' by adding 'come out of Brexit being the opposite of what it went in for'.

Echoing Participant A, Participant H claims that Britain is not more united than before the EU referendum. Indeed, when presented with an extract from *Telegraph Online* that states that Britain is completely divided, Participant H agrees that 'this is much more the reality of

the situation' albeit 'slightly exaggerated'. Participant A, in very similar words, contends that 'there is much more of a strand of reality' in the article 'than in Theresa May's gold-plated vision'.

In addition to stories about economic inequality in Britain, Remain-voting participants narrate stories in which Britain is polarised between Leave and Remain voters. In these stories, Leave voters are often labelled intolerant and xenophobic. One illustrative example is narrated by Participant A in a habitual Observation of Leave voters' supposedly discriminatory rhetoric:

I suppose (.) I experience it as a stereotype but also I think what happens for me in my own process is that I hear a few dog whistle kind of things and I kind of shut down and go oh they're all white van man Sun-reading (.) red-faced gammon types (laughs) you know so I kind of retreat into stereotype of them but (.) yeah you know (.) the amount of people that can't spell like really simple stuff and are going gah (.) we want our cuntwy back or I don't know where the country went so yeah a lot of kind of (.) stereotypical (.) or I'm perhaps I'm stereotyping them as you know poorly educated semi-literate (.) pretty xenophobic and I I don't think even whilst there are racists who are shouting about Brexit (.) and that's that's very prevalent and obvious (.) I think there's also people who (sighs) I don't know if it really comes as xenophobia but it's there's a sort've (.) something about a desperation to believe that that you know Britain is this great empire and or could be again and that we built the world and and you know all the rest of it and (sighs) yeah okay anyone who's studied anything like that knows (.) the racist and xenophobic elements of our past and and the terrible abuses but I don't think people are always thinking of it from that view I think I think there's something about hope and desperation being projected onto you know (lowers pitch) oh yeah we could be great again and (reverts to normal pitch) we could be going back to those

amazing days that never really existed you know so (.) so it's easy for me to sort've stereotype people as being gammons but I think there's there's just a lot of desperation and sadness and anger as well

What is most notable about Participant A's habitual Observation is the stereotypical characterisation of a Leave voter that she provides. Participant A introduces her Leave-voting protagonists to the story world, describing them through collectivisation (van Leeuwen, 1995) in the extended noun phrase 'white van man Sun reading (.) red-faced gammon types' and the repeated third-person pronoun 'them'. As the nouns 'types' and 'stereotypes' indicate, Participant A discursively constructs a general silhouette of Leave voters that is homogenous, gendered and racialised. In addition to the racial and gender markers, Participant A indexes a Conservative, anti-immigration ideology for Leave voters through the allusion to the pro-Brexit tabloid *The Sun*. Her repeated use of the informal political noun 'gammon' is particularly important, as it indirectly indexes her identity as a 'leftie' Remainer (as she refers to herself) who is critical of right-wing and pro-Brexit ideologies.¹¹ Through this single noun, then, Participant A produces a disparaging caricature of Leave voters and distances herself from the political and social views she assigns to them.

Equally important in the story is the pronoun use to index national identities: unlike the Leave-voting participants, who include themselves in a national collective in the past through the first-person pronoun 'we', Participant A only uses this pronoun when ventriloquating (Bakhtin, 1981) Leave voters in the clauses 'we could be great again' and 'we could be going back to those amazing days'. Through this shifting pronoun use, Participant A assigns to Leave voters a strong nationalist stance which she does not discursively associate with her pro-

¹¹ See Meredith and Richardson (2019) for a short commentary on the role of the word 'leftie' in citizens' discourses about Brexit.

Remain attitude. She further reinforces a distinction between Leave and Remain voters when she claims that the powerful British past Leave voters construct ‘never really existed’.

Participant A offers two explanations for the Leave vote. First, she argues that Leavers are nostalgic for the British Empire, drawing on a common representation of Leavers among Remain voters (Meredith and Richardson, 2019; Andreouli, Greenland and Figgou, 2019), and a dominant socio-political narrative of Leave voters as desiring a return to a British golden age (Calhoun, 2017). Second, she attributes the Leave vote to an oxymoronic expression of ‘hope’ and ‘desperation’, evoking another dominant narrative of Leave voters as economically left behind (Hobolt, 2016). Both reasons are rooted in discontent with the present state of the nation and a desire for change. In this sense, Participant A also captures some of the feelings expressed by my Leave-voting participants in their stories. However, her construction of the Leave voter aligns with the classicism that pro-Brexit outlets such as the *Telegraph* accuse Remain voters of exhibiting (see Chapter 4). There is a degree of educational superiority and belittlement in the ventriloquation of ‘cuntwy’ (Bakhtin, 1981), the shift to a lower pitch when voicing ‘hope’ and ‘desperation’, and the adjectival phrases ‘poorly educated’ and ‘semi-literate’ which contributes to a derogatory construction of Leave voters as incapable of rational debate and thought (see Meredith and Richardson [2019] for this construction in Remain voters’ comments on news websites). There is also a juxtaposition between knowledge (‘anyone who’s studied anything’) and Leave voters who glorify Britain’s ‘racist and xenophobic’ past which feeds into the broader idea of Remain voters as rational and Leave voters as emotional (Manners, 2018). Despite accusing Leave voters of discriminatory beliefs (xenophobia, racism), Participant A reproduces social exclusion through her story. In short, by representing Leave voters as nationalist, xenophobic and yearning for Empire, and performing her own identity as an intellectually superior, less patriotic Remain voter, Participant A both constructs and reifies polarisation within the imagined national community (Anderson, 2006).

As the analysis above reveals, participants tell stories about encounters they have had with discourses about Britain and Europe (such as signs about developments, products in shops, and flags) to justify their stances towards the nation, the EU, Brexit, and voters on the other side of the debate. It is through their stories that the participants perform their political identities as “Remainers” and “Leavers”. The older Leave-voting participants tell stories which are pervaded by nostalgia for a powerful British past and a subtle lamentation of a lost patriotism that has been replaced by a more ambivalent attitude towards the nation. In contrast, younger Remain voters tell stories about growing up in impoverished areas which depend on financial support from the EU because of the neglect of the national government.

In different ways and to different degrees, the stories express a sense of dissatisfaction with the current state of the nation or at the least a desire for change, be that through Brexit or through remaining in the EU. The attitudes towards Britain and Europe in the stories also underpin the participants’ reactions to stimulus extracts from government and media data. These responses sit on a spectrum from wholesale acceptance of political and media ideologies, through a negotiated position which accepts some aspects while contesting their application at the local level, to a complete rejection of dominant cultural narratives about Brexit (Hall, 1973).

6.3. National identities: Stories about being British in the time of Brexit

In addition to stories about Brexit, there are 70 stories that discursively construct British and European identities without specifically situating the actions within the contemporary socio-political context. A particularly dominant theme across these stories is the discursive contestation of Britishness along racial, linguistic, and national lines; there are fifteen stories

related to this topic. Much like the stories related to Brexit, the participants address macro-level questions about identity and belonging by relating stories of personal experience in highly localised contexts, such as conversations with friends or incidents they have witnessed in the street.

Five of the race-related stories are narrated by Participant G, a ‘non-white’, Remain-backing participant. In these tales, the racialised dynamics of Britishness are presented without foregrounding the temporal and political context. While the events in the stories typically take place against the backdrop of Brexit, identity contestation transcends the socio-political context to become an ongoing question of belonging in Britain. In other words, for the participant recounting these stories, as for Benson and Lewis’s (2019) minority ethnic interviewees, expressions of xenophobia in the time of Brexit cannot be separated from a longer history of racialised exclusion in the nation.

Participant G was born in London but moved to Nottingham as an undergraduate student in 2014, just months before the General Election that secured the EU referendum vote (see Chapter 1). At the time of interviewing, Participant G lived in Beeston in Nottinghamshire, a town that is part of the majority Leave-voting parliamentary constituency of Broxtowe. His grandparents are first-generation immigrants from India. Throughout the interview, Participant G repeatedly interprets the UK’s majority Leave vote as ‘strongly’ related to attitudes towards immigration. In particular, he argues that there is ‘quite a lot of segregation’ between ‘the non-white’ – specifically Pakistani immigrant – ‘and white communities in Nottingham’ due to ‘both sides segregating themselves from each other’. He posits that this ‘segregation’ leads to erroneous assumptions about what being a minority ethnic immigrant means. To support his argument, he compares what he sees as the socioeconomic ‘status’ of Pakistani immigrants in Nottingham – workers in the ‘service industry’ such as ‘taxi drivers’ – with the ‘wealthy’ Indian immigrants that live in northwest London, his birthplace. In doing so, the participant introduces

a geographical dimension to his interpretation of race relations in the UK, a dimension which proves to be ideologically meaningful in his stories.

Against a backdrop in which place and race intersect, Participant G tells a Recount and an Anecdote of occasions when his identification as 'British' has been contested by members of the 'non-white' and 'white' communities in Nottingham. In the first Recount, Participant G narrates a trajectory from growing up in multicultural London to moving to and living in a smaller city with a very high majority of white residents – 95.5% in the 2011 Census (ONS, 2011):

(0.5) erm (0.5) it's (.) it's kind of (0.5) I didn't (.) so I didn't think about it nearly as much until I came to (.) Nottingham (.) I don't know if that's like it's partly probably because of my age like erm you know being a teenager I didn't really think about (.) very many things (laughs) erm so erm but like also when I was at school my school was like (.) er (.) like fifty per cent (.) brown er like forty per cent (.) er like white Jewish and then like the rest was just like like Christian white so like it was like a minority like a small minority erm (.) so (.) I didn't ^think about it as much because it and also my school was very much (.) erm it was (.) accepted by everyone in the school and the teachers included that like everyone was a bit casually ^racist but in not in a in not in a derogatory way in like a an accepting way because (.) everyone (.) there was so much diversity to the point where it was like (.) people could people would make jokes that would (.) you know that (.) that weren't offensive and it was a bit there was a bit of a different like standard for it and but then it was generally also accepted like (.) don't continue that outside of this school (laughs) erm co you know erm cos like mates would be able to make these jokes and then was like you know outside of that just like don't do that erm (.) but yeah no erm (0.5) but coming to Nottingham it's (.) I've felt (sighs) (1.0) I've definitely felt like a (.) divide because (.) there's less (.) minority ethnic people

(.) erm I've often been like the only minority ethnic person in the room erm and like I've (.) and that it's more to do with that so if anything like (.) I've I've I it's not about my personal identity because I've still felt British but I've felt more like (.) scrutinised by others who might think I'm not

The story above is a coming-of-age Recount during which Participant G narrates a transition from ignorance of the exclusionary dynamics of Britishness to being conscious that white people contest his national identity because he is a 'minority ethnic person'. The story begins with a long Orientation during which Participant G introduces himself as a naïve, young character in the story world – a 'teenager' who 'didn't really think about (.) very many things'. This character is situated within the chronotope (Bakhtin, 1981; Blommaert, 2015) of 'my school', a space which, over the next forty lines, becomes symbolic of the ethnic diversity experienced during the participant's youth.

Participant G begins the Record of Events by discursively constructing the 'casually racist' behaviour that routinely takes place within the school. Throughout this part of the story, collectivisation (van Leeuwen, 1995) is used, discursively constructing the students and teachers in the school through generic pronouns and plural nouns such as 'everyone', 'people' and 'mates'. Alongside impersonal, passive declaratives such as 'it was accepted', and adverbs which connote generalisation ('generally'), this collectivisation constructs a sense of communality and solidarity, signalling a community of practice within which all members are aware of the rules that govern appropriate behaviour inside and outside of the shared space. The generic, impersonal language also allows the participant to avoid sole responsibility as an individual for what could be a face-threatening act – revealing that as a teenager, he partook in 'racist' communication practices. By distributing responsibility for the racism across many

dimly sketched characters, the participant mitigates the likelihood that the interviewer will position him as a racist in the storytelling world.

The moment of social awakening occurs with the repetition of the conjunction ‘but’, which marks a contrast between the previous action at the school and the upcoming action in Nottingham. The ideology conveyed in the free direct speech – that ‘outside of this school’ racial discrimination is unacceptable – forms the basis of the moral underpinning the story. After his character ‘com[es] to Nottingham’, the participant shifts from solidarity to isolation through the repeated first person singular personal pronoun ‘I’. The change in the discursive construction of social actors mirrors the character’s emotional trajectory in the story towards feeling ‘a divide’. The emotional effect of being ‘the only minority ethnic person in the room’ is performed by the participant at the interactional level through a sigh and eleven pauses, including one 0.5-second pause and one 1.0-second pause. The spatial vagueness of ‘the room’ in this segment contrasts with the specificity of the London private school to index the generality and habituality of the experience of being racially othered in Nottingham. In other words, as the definite article ‘the’ implies, being the only minority ethnic Briton in a room could happen *anywhere* in a city with over 90% of white residents (ONS, 2011).

Alongside an isolated self, the participant employs collectivisation (van Leeuwen, 1996), discursively constructing white Nottingham residents as a homogenous group of ‘others’. This group is constructed as performing the cognitive mental processes (Thompson, 2013) of ‘scrutinis[ing]’ the participant and ‘think[ing]’ that he is not British. The first verb connotes a microscopic interest in the participant’s racial identity and, relatedly, his national identity, which contrasts with the tacit acceptance of racial diversity in the London-based segment of the story. The verb also indexes an unequal power relationship in which white residents perceive themselves to be the typical, unmarked Briton and so assign themselves the right to judge Participant G’s claim to belong to the ingroup. It is the focalisation of events

through the eyes of white residents, alongside the prosodic emphasis on the possessive determiner ‘my’ in the negative clause ‘it’s not about my personal identity’, that frames the story as a tale of contested *belonging* (Anthias, 2008), or of ascribed identities (Blommaert, 2005), rather than an individual sense of identity. The participant reinforces this interpretation when he argues that he ‘still felt British’ despite facing scrutiny about his nationality. The use of the emotive mental process (Thompson, 2013) ‘felt’ constructs national identity as a subjective, lived experience that exists outside of others’ discursive contestations of it.

What the participant presents through this story is a highly regionalised and localised understanding of national identity where the lived experience of feeling British differs depending on the place and space that the participant occupies and the people with whom he interacts. Among friends from ethnic minority groups, questions of identity can be formulated through discriminatory language without posing a threat to the protagonist’s national identity. However, what signals solidarity and communality in the multicultural context of a London private school can be experienced as discrimination when the participant is the only minority ethnic Briton in the room in Nottingham. Although the experience of having white people think he is not British does not alter the participant’s *feeling* of being British, it does lead to the perception of a ‘divide’ between a white British ingroup and a minority ethnic British outgroup. In other words, the participant’s sense of identity, which he essentialises as an internal state, remains consistent in the story, but the sense of national *belonging* that he constructs is negatively affected. In Participant G’s story, the lived experience of being a Briton is constantly in flux; the dynamics of inclusion in and exclusion from a British ingroup depend on social context.

Participant G is not the only interviewee to construct the experience of living in London and moving to Nottingham as moving from communality and multiculturalism to a predominantly white society. Three other participants (A, J, and K) who grew up in London

talk about the ethnic plurality and diversity of the capital compared to the overwhelmingly white population of Nottinghamshire. However, Participant G is the only minority ethnic participant and so the only interviewee whose story of racial discrimination is experientially based. Importantly, Participant G makes clear that it is not only the white community in Nottingham that questions his claim to be British. Immediately following the story above, the participant narrates a second story (Arminen, 2004) during which an Indian person in a taxi assumes that he is Punjabi. Throughout the Anecdote, Participant G performs complex identity work which constructs and reproduces a position for himself between the ‘non-white and white communities’ in Nottingham that he identified earlier in the interview.

erm (.) and the ^other thing (.) is that (.) n minority ethnic (.) people who I’ve talked to for example people in like a taxi who I’ll talk to will gravitate ^towards me as like erm another (.) like Indian or punja Punjabi guy (.) and then try and speak to me in Punjabi and then like get really happy if I can like understand them and whatever and like and like but they will (.) you know (.) that’s a unique experience that I’ve had so like that community gravitated towards me erm which I thought was quite interesting

Participant G narrates the story above in response to the same question about instances in which his Britishness has been foregrounded. The participant opens his story with an Orientation that situates the events of the story world ‘in like a taxi’. The significance of this space is not clear if the story is decontextualised from the rest of the interview. However, the space is imbued with meaning when considered in relation to the participant’s previous construction of Pakistani immigrants in Nottingham as taxi drivers who are segregated from white communities. Although the first characters to be introduced – ‘non-white people who I’ve talked to for example people in like a taxi’ – are not necessarily *immigrants*, then, the previous

discussion in the interview allows the interviewer and interviewee to co-construct the taxi as a non-British domain. This interpretation is bolstered by the pre-modifier ‘non-white’ which is the same adjective that the participant employs earlier in the interview to describe a ‘community’ of Pakistani immigrants in Nottingham. In the specific context of this interview, then, the Orientation establishes that the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion are going to be racialised.

Following the Orientation, the main construction of social action unfolds in a Remarkable Event. It is during this Event that the participant introduces a second character into the story world: himself. Throughout the interview, the participant repeatedly and explicitly self-identifies as British, maintaining that he has a ‘strong British identity’. It is noteworthy, then, that the participant constructs himself in the story world as ‘another (.) like Indian or punja Punjabi guy’. The determiner ‘another’ is meaningful on two levels. First, it presupposes that the other person in the taxi is from the Punjab areas of India and Pakistan and identifies as Indian or Pakistani. Second, the determiner positions the participant as sharing this identity through its connotations of similarity. The juxtaposition between the discursive construction of the participant in the story world as ‘Indian or Punjabi’ and his construction in the storytelling world as ‘British’ indicates that the ethnic categorisation of the participant as Indian is imposed on him by the Punjabi character – it is an ascribed identity (Blommaert, 2005). In other words, the story is narrated through the eyes of the Indian person in the taxi, a character who has mistaken the participant for a fellow Indian because he is also ‘non-white’. Although the Indian character’s assumption is rooted in solidarity and a desire to include Participant G in an ingroup, its result is to *exclude* the participant from the national group with which he identifies: Britons. Underpinning the mistake, then, is the tacit association of Britishness with whiteness.

Within the story world, Participant G does not contest the presumption that he is a member of the Indian ingroup. However, in the interactional event of the interview, the participant problematises this categorisation in several ways. Firstly, he passivates his character through the repetition of the metaphorical verb ‘gravitate towards [me]’. Positioning himself as an object constructs the identification of similarity as a one-way process rather than a mutual expression of sameness. Secondly, the participant positions the ‘people in a taxi’ as Others through the third person plural personal pronouns ‘they’ and ‘them’, and the determiner ‘that’ in the noun phrase ‘that community’. Together, these lexical choices construct the Indian people as belonging to a single, homogenous group of non-Britons, of which the participant and the interviewer are not part. Thirdly, Participant G signals that he is not Indian by constructing for himself a limited proficiency in Punjabi: the verb ‘try’ in the metapragmatic descriptor ‘try and speak [to me in Punjabi]’ and the conditional clause ‘if I can like understand them’ index this lack of knowledge. Through this simultaneous positioning in the story world and the storytelling event, then, Participant G indexes his identity as a minority ethnic Briton.

Although positioning the taxi drivers as others could unite the interviewee and the white interviewer in a non-Indian (or British) ingroup, the Participant chooses to emphasise his difference from the interviewer throughout the storytelling event. This difference is accentuated lexically through the noun phrase ‘unique experience’ and prosodically through the emphasis on the personal pronoun ‘I’ in ‘I’ve’. Together, the adjective ‘unique’ and the prosodic emphasis on ‘I’ve’ recognise that as a white Briton and resident of Nottingham, the interviewer occupies a privileged social position that means that her identification as British is not challenged by others. As a result, the experience that Participant G describes cannot be fully understood by the interviewer, despite the participant’s vivid storytelling.

Through the two interrelated stories above, Participant G narrates a shift in his ethnic identity from being unmarked (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004) in the chronotype of the multicultural

London private school, to being marked and Othered in the generic spaces of the ‘room’ and ‘a taxi’ in the predominantly white city of Nottingham. Through his positioning in the storytelling event and the story world, Participant G reproduces a liminal identity for himself between minority ethnic immigrants and white British Nottingham residents (a group to which the interviewer belongs). This liminal position is reinforced later in the interview when Participant G states that he ‘wouldn’t identify with either of those groups.’ In reproducing this liminality, Participant G discursively constructs Britishness as inescapably intertwined with ethnicities and indicates that the lived experience of being a Briton depends on the spaces and places an individual occupies at any given point in time. In other words, even though Participant G essentialises national identity as an internal feeling, his performative storytelling constructs identities as *multiple* (a person can be minority ethnic and British), *discursively negotiated*, and *context dependent*.

How do these stories relate to the context of the UK’s withdrawal from the European Union? Participant G’s arrival in Nottingham as an undergraduate university student in 2014 coincided with the lead-up to the 2015 general election. As noted in the political context in Chapter 1, David Cameron’s promise to hold the referendum depended on a Conservative win in this general election. As such, Participant G’s lived experiences as a minority ethnic Briton in Nottingham have always taken place in the historical context of political contestations of what it means to be British and European. He explicitly notes this socio-political context when he states later in the interview that although he has experienced more racial hostility and othering in Nottingham than in London, he cannot empirically link this to the referendum context because he has no lived experience in Nottingham prior to this point. When prompted with three stimulus paragraphs from *Telegraph Online* which construct Britain as divided after the EU referendum, Participant G uses a medical metaphor to argue that ‘Brexit was a symptom’ of pre-existing and rising tensions that have been ‘brought to the forefront’ by the

referendum – an interpretation shared by Benson and Lewis’s (2019) minority ethnic British interviewees.

While Participant G is reluctant to link the racial contestation of his Britishness directly to the socio-political context of the EU referendum, Participant H, a white, Remain-voting man in his mid-twenties, narrates an Observation and an Exemplum of discrimination tied to the Brexit context. Participant H tells the stories below in response to a question about a speech delivered by Theresa May which is being used in the interview as a stimulus. The interviewer asks whether the participant has encountered any Leave voters saying, like Theresa May, that they want Britain to become a more tolerant nation after Brexit. Participant H claims that, on the contrary, people who voted to Leave embrace intolerance, a common charge levelled at Leave voters by Remain voters (Andreouli, 2020).

no tolerance was (.) the opposite they they of often embraced the intolerance erm I witnessed people that I ^knew shout at er:m people in the ^street (.) telling them to go back home and like I I witnessed a lot of the xenophobia erm it was really awful erm one of my friends erm who is again (.) he's of Pakistani descent so it's totally irrelevant anyway but he was actually (.) erm (.) punched and told to go back to where he came from erm (.) because (.) it's our country again now erm (.) so it's like yeah (.) tolerance is not (laughs) the experience that I heard or saw or witnessed

Participant H introduces his character into the story world by positioning the first-person personal pronoun ‘I’ as the Senser of two mental processes, ‘witnessed’ and ‘knew’ (Thompson, 2013). Although ‘I’ is the grammatical subject of these clauses, the social actions that the participant performs are passive; they forge a role for the character as an observer of others’ actions rather than an agent of change within the story world. In contrast to the

participant's passivity, the protagonists ('people that I knew') are collectivised, activated (van Leeuwen, 1995) and positioned as Sayers of the verbal processes 'shout at' and 'telling' (Halliday, 1985). The aggressive connotations of 'shout' provide a pejorative moral evaluation of the characters. However, their political leanings are not explicitly introduced into the story world; it is only through the interviewer's question, which asks for information about 'Leave voters', that the political affiliations of this social group become clear. Much like the protagonists, the third group of actors, the Receivers, are collectivised through plural pronouns ('them') and nouns ('people') (van Leeuwen, 1995). Once again, the participant provides no identifying information for these characters. By constructing both perpetrators and victims as generic silhouettes, the participant positions the verbal assault as a general event rather than an isolated incident. In other words, his story narrates what 'people that [he] knew' *habitually* did to others. Through the representation of verbal abuse as a recurrent event, Participant H cements intolerance as a core personality trait of the social group of Leave voters, rather than a behaviour specific to a single Leave-voting person in a particular context.

Although the participant refrains from providing explicit identifying factors for the characters in his first Observation, his recontextualisation of the speech acts of 'shouting' and 'telling to go back home' as 'xenophobia' permits the audience to infer some demographic information about the characters. As 'xenophobia' connotes prejudice against people from other countries, the participant indicates that the perpetrators assume their victims are immigrants. Their motivation for 'shouting', then, is ethnonationalism: the belief that only "native" citizens (who share a common ancestry) belong and have a right to be in a country (Le Bossé, 2021). While this ideology might be racially motivated, it can also underpin the social exclusion of white immigrants, providing an additional group of people whose belonging in the UK is contested. Through his story, then, Participant H indicates that the identity of

‘Briton’ is not just problematised in racial terms, but that there are some white people whose right to call the UK ‘home’ is also challenged.

Immediately after the first Observation, the participant narrates an Exemplum which, through the temporal proximity of its telling, is positioned as thematically and ideologically related to the first story. In this Exemplum, Participant H is not a character or an observer, but a heterodiegetic narrator who is distanced from the action (Carranza, 2015). He is involved in the story on an emotional level, though, because the main character is introduced as ‘one of my friends’. By indexing a close personal relationship with the main character, Participant H subtly prepares the interviewer for an alignment with the friend and a share in the effects of the events that happen to him. In contrast to Participant H’s previous story, in which the ethnicities of the characters are ambiguous, the narrator explicitly describes his friend as ‘of Pakistani descent’. The adjective ‘Pakistani’ serves as a racial marker, signalling that the character is part of an ethnic minority group. It is not, however, a *national* marker because, as the noun ‘descent’ indicates, the character’s non-whiteness does not equate to non-Britishness. The racial marker indexes *ancestry* rather than the birthplace of the character.

It is worth noting at this point that while there is an albeit vague perpetrator in the Observation, the participant discursively suppresses the actor in the Exemplum through passive agent deletion in the clauses ‘he was actually punched’ and ‘told to go back to where he came from’. Deleting the agent from both clauses precludes the interviewer and analyst from accessing any identifying information about the perpetrator (aside from the inference that they voted to Leave in the EU referendum). Nevertheless, the context and the racialisation of the *victim* allow for an interpretation of the *perpetrator* as a white British person.

The most significant aspect of the story for understanding the relationship between the EU referendum and constructions of Britishness is the direct speech: ‘because it’s our country again now’. Through this explanatory clause, the Participant indicates that what is in question

in the Exemplum is not just who can call themselves British, but also who can decide what ‘Britain’ means. In other words, the implicature in the reported speech, particularly the imperative ‘go back’ and the noun phrase ‘our country’, is that the EU referendum was not about remaining in or leaving the EU. Rather, it was about choosing which interpretation of ‘Britain’ should be hegemonic. In this story, the unnamed perpetrator argues that the referendum result imbued those who voted to leave with the right to decide who belongs in the country and what values are associated with it. For the perpetrator, the prevailing interpretation is a country from which minority ethnic people are excluded. The adverbials ‘again’ and ‘now’ tie the contestation of Britishness to the historical context of the EU referendum, recontextualising “Brexit Britain” as a return to a monoethnic nation that never existed (Bhambra, 2017). In this way, the stance indexed in the reported speech intertextually echoes the broader Vote Leave campaign slogan of ‘Take Back Control’, which also links the Leave vote to ‘decid[ing] who can come here – and who can’t’ (Vote Leave, 2016: n.p.).

The participant concludes the story by reasserting the stance the story justified: that he never ‘heard’, ‘saw’, or ‘witnessed’ tolerance from Leave voters. In associating Leave voters with prejudice and Remain voters (like himself) with tolerance, Participant H reproduces a dominant interpretation among Remain-voting Britons of the Brexit vote as caused by prejudice (Andreouli, 2020). His positions towards the political identity categories of Leaver and Remainer, and towards the broader socio-political context, are thus both locally rooted in personal experience and related to dominant political narratives being disseminated across the UK. In other words, there is an intermingling of bottom-up and top-down constructions of Brexit that enable the participant to make sense of political, national, and ethnic identities during the critical juncture (Capoccia, 2016) through which he is living.

In Participant H’s stories, the discursive construction of post-Brexit Britishness involves the social exclusion of minority ethnic Britons and white immigrants. As minority

ethnic and immigrant are the marked identities, the unmarked (and linguistically suppressed [van Leeuwen, 1995]) identity is a white, British-born person. Even though unmarked identities possess cultural privilege and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) – that is, accumulated prestige – Participant H argues that being a white, British-born male does not preclude him from the effects of the exclusion in his stories. After narrating the ethnic and racial abuse, Participant H laments that ‘it’s like the England I respect is being erased’, a position shared by Higgins’ (2018) pro-Remain British ex-pats. Even though Participant H occupies the same social position as the unmarked British identity in his stories, the appropriation of Englishness to signify the discursive and social exclusion of minority ethnic Britons and white non-Britons leads him to feel alienated and disorientated. What Participant H’s two stories indicate is that constructing national identity is an inherently political and ideological project, the effects of which extend beyond social groups that are explicitly Othered to exclude even those whose right to claim Britishness is not discursively challenged. Feeling alienated from the ideological project of post-Brexit Britishness, Participant H states that that ‘the best thing [he] could do for [England] would be to not be in it’. He plans to move abroad after completing his university education.

In addition to the discursive contestation of Britishness along racial and ethnic lines, interviewees tell stories in which regional or local identities interact with national identities to engender exclusion. For instance, Participant I narrates an experience in which her regional accent is used to question her claim to be English by an American who thinks she does not ‘sound posh’. Participant M tells a similar story of having his Northern identity ‘othered’, ‘alienated and denigrated’ at a university where southern people with ‘massive wealth and privilege’ redefine his sense of being posh. Participant M also tells a hypothetical narrative in which Scotland, the North-East and the Midlands break away from the South of England and create a new British identity that stands apart from a Southern-inflected Englishness. For him,

‘in this hypothetical world where the North of England is breaking off from something, it’s always breaking off from the South and London’. Similarly, Participant L tells a story of how her Scottish colleagues describe English people struggling to understand their dialect. She goes on to tell a second story in which Liverpudlians are entirely different to Londoners in their political stances. The Exemplum below, narrated by Participant K, a white, self-identifying ‘British’ man who voted Remain, encapsulates the dynamics of regional and national tensions that participants explore through their stories.

Participant K no longer lives in Nottinghamshire but was a student in the city at the time of the EU membership referendum in 2016. In the first half of the interview, he narrates an Exemplum to support his claim that coming from the South of England provides him with certain privileges to identify as British. In contrast to Participant I, whose Englishness is challenged on account of her Midlands accent, Participant K speaks in Estuary English, which, according to the participant, is a culturally recognisable index of Britishness. In the story, Participant K narrates becoming aware of how the symbolic capital of his regional identity and the linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) of his accent allow him and other people from Southeast England to define a culturally hegemonic idea of Britishness.

I think particularly being from the south of England which is probably the most (.) culturally and economically powerful part of the United Kingdom it’s very easy to say that I only see myself as British because (0.5) I guess (.) erm (.) to some extent these people have (.) been (.) instrumental in defining what Britishness is and it’s much easier to expect everyone else to step in line with that and say this is the hegemonic identity than to (.) I mean just as an (.) example I (.) one of my friends from Northern Ireland (.) teases me a lot (.) because I went out to (.) stay with her family for a few days (.) and (0.5) we were (laughs) (.) erm (.) o one of her aunties is an Ulster Scot

erm who have this quite thick accent and (.) w sometimes has difficulty being understood in Northern Ireland has difficulty being understood in England once asked in England if she speaks ^English and she said (puts on Irish accent) a:h [participant's name] can you understand my accent (reverts to own accent) and I was like (.) yeah I mean like I think the whole time I was there I missed maybe two words she says I sort of said (.) yes of course erm (.) can you understand mine and she laughed at me (puts on Irish accent) ach [participant's name] you sound like that man off the BBC (.) and one of her sisters (.) who (.) was erm (.) not even there (.) teased her about it a few weeks ago (.) erm (0.5) I mean it's not a particularly interesting story but the point is it's how obviously absurd they all found it that I thought they might not understand my accent because of the way I speak right and I tell that to my Northern Irish friends and they a:ll find it funny (.) erm (.) so I mean I'm not denying that it is perhaps easier for me to say well I'm (.) British and I don't really care about anything else

As an embedded story, Participant K's Exemplum does not begin immediately. First, the participant explores the ease with which he positions himself as British. He invokes the region of his birthplace ('from') through the predicate 'being from the South of England' and evaluates the region as 'probably the most culturally and economically powerful part of the United Kingdom'. Through this evaluation, Participant K imbues the English region with economic and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) and compares ('most') this sociocultural power with not just other regions in England, but other nations in the United Kingdom. In situating himself at once within a region, nation and kingdom, Participant K depicts the regional identity marker as the lens through which he experiences being British. In doing so, he puts forward the same argument as Participants G and H, that place affects both the lived experience of being British *and* the relationship a person has with the meanings of Britishness.

Explaining why he finds it easy to self-identify as ‘British’, Participant K states that ‘these people’ were ‘instrumental in defining what Britishness is.’ Through the shift from the first-person personal pronoun ‘I’ to the vague determiner ‘these’ (which has no antecedent), Participant K distances himself from the power to define the meaning of Britishness. In other words, he positions himself as a beneficiary of his region’s symbolic power but not personally culpable for the exclusionary, hegemonic meaning of Britishness. Through this implicit positive self-representation, the participant positions himself in the *storytelling* world as self-aware, moral, and tolerant. Participant K’s regional marker ‘South of England’ indicates that he is drawing on the broader cultural representation of the region as ‘almost quintessentially English’ (Bond and McCrone, 2004: 6).

The participant pits ‘these people’ and their region against a homogenous, personified image of ‘everyone else’. Through this binary construction of Southeast England and every other nation and region in the UK, the participant (re)produces a stereotype of the South(east) of England as a ‘very restricted territoriality that designates much of the country as being untypical’ (Bond and McCrone, 2004: 6). He posits that all other regions have been expected to accept and adjust to the imposition of a ‘hegemonic’ interpretation of Britishness which they have had no part in defining. In erasing the roles that institutions, groups, and individuals outside of the South have played in contributing to culturally dominant narratives of Britishness, the participant problematises his self-representation as an inclusive and tolerant individual. That is, he reproduces a narrative of the powerlessness of non-southern Britons even as he tries to perform his awareness of their exclusion from Britishness as hegemonically defined. The participant’s conception of the economic and symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991) to define Britishness as being contained within the South of England draws on broader cultural discourses in which the South is viewed as disproportionately well-funded, often at the expense of declining industrial towns (Jennings and Stoker, 2016).

Having established a contextual background in which the South of England has the symbolic power to force other UK nations and regions to perform its interpretation of Britishness, Participant K begins an Exemplum. He establishes through the Orientation that the events of the Incident take place on a 'visit' to a house of a 'friend from Northern Ireland'. Although 'my friend from Northern Ireland' is introduced first, she is not the protagonist of the story – that role is reserved for 'one of her aunties' who is described in precise ethnic terms as an 'Ulster Scot'. The defining characteristic of the aunt is her 'thick accent', the importance of which is foreshadowed through the elliptical, syntactically parallel clauses 'sometimes has difficulty being understood in Northern Ireland has difficulty being understood in England'. The syntactic parallelism, in conjunction with the prepositional phrases 'in Northern Ireland' and 'in England', emphasise the marginalisation of the Ulster Scot identity – it does not sit comfortably in the geographical and imagined periphery, or in the centre of the UK. The elliptical clause 'once asked in England if she speaks English' places the identity contestation within the realm of accent discrimination. Within the story, then, linguistic difference is constructed as problematic grounds for Britons to position the Ulster Scot as an Other.

Recognising that place and accent are central to the discursive contestation of Britishness and the politics of belonging surrounding it, Participant K performs the dialogic encounter between his character and the Ulster Scot auntie. Switching between a linguistically symbolic, hegemonic Estuary English accent and the Northern Irish accent he has already framed as incomprehensibly other for some, Participant K prosodically reinforces the character's otherness. In describing the auntie's laughter and ventriloquating (Bakhtin, 1981) her evaluation that the participant 'sounds like the man from the BBC', Participant K indicates that the protagonist internalises and reproduces otherness for herself. At the same time, he illuminates the linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) of his southern English accent and identity by discursively associating them with the national institution of the BBC. Even though the

story is intended to foreground Participant K's self-reflexivity and ambivalence towards his privilege, then, neither his characters nor his performance of their dialogue challenge the othering of the Ulster Scot. On the contrary, they place her at the fringes of Britishness and reinforce her difference. The conclusion that his Northern Irish friends 'all laugh' upon hearing the joke further cements the idea that Northern Irishness is peripheral and Southern England is central to British identity.

Participant K's ambivalence towards Britishness also undergirds his negotiated positions (Hall, 1973) towards the stimulus data. He interprets May's message positively but argues that her stance is only 'trivially true' and 'not terribly meaningful'. He disputes the idea that Britain has become more prosperous and tolerant but, notably, contends that it has not become more xenophobic since the EU referendum either – a stance which puts him at odds with Participants H and G. Participant K's negotiated position towards the government data also underpins his reaction to the representation of British division in the *Telegraph Online* article. The participant posits that there is still a unionist sentiment in Britain despite indicating through his story that certain nations within the UK have less power than smaller English regions to define what it means to be British. He does agree, however, with the claim that there is no single understanding of what the country is or could be after Brexit. Seemingly, then, while Participant K acknowledges that Britishness is contested and context-dependent, he does not position this as a threat to the British state or the integrity of the Union.

Participant J, a white, Remain-voting 'Londoner' who lives in Nottingham and is in his mid-twenties, also discursively constructs the South of England as a culturally dominant region in the United Kingdom. Whereas Participant K focuses on *national* differences, Participant J narrates a story centred on the dominant cultural narrative of the division of England into cosmopolitan and rural areas (Jennings and Stoker, 2016). The interviewer asks whether the participant felt like an outsider when living abroad, a question to which the participant responds

with a discussion of being an *intranational Other* – a topic he had previously introduced in the interview.

The participant's first mention of being Othered when living in the North of England forms part of an argument about the importance of people being mobile. Through a Recount, Participant J contrasts his adventurous mindset with people who live in a village in the Lake District where he used to work. He explains that the people there 'didn't move about at all' but were born, raised, 'lived in a village and died in a village'. He recognises the advantage of this set-up as providing a 'tightness to the community' but pejoratively evaluates the attitude of the village people as 'insular' in contrast to 'the guy from London who's moved here':

well when I was abroad I was the outsider as well but it was a differen completely different feeling of (.) being an outsider like when I was er (.) up north (.) erm (.) there was (.) definitely like a low level of suspicion that I was there like going into Greggs or whatever to get lunch and then like I open my mouth and I'm like it's clearly a southern coded accent in these kind of (.) small (.) Cumbrian towns and (.) and then you you know there's a (.) there's a mo there's a there's a slight tension whereas (.) in Germany or or and Austria as well (.) it helped (.) because I could speak (.) German I would just open my mouth and people would be like ^OH there's an English person or British person or you know wherever (.) from the north Atlantic (.) archipelago archipelago who (.) er speaks German who's learnt our language and is like a:h o:h (.) ^yes please so (.) it was er (.) yes also like you can (.) play the outsider card erm which is fun

Participant J prefaces his Exemplum with a comparison of two types of 'outsider' roles he has occupied during his mobile mid-twenties. Through the conjunctive phrase 'as well', the

participant discursively renders a likeness between being a Briton ‘abroad’ and being a Southerner ‘up north’ in England. However, he constructs the effect of being othered as a ‘completely different feeling’. It is the subjective experience of being the outsider that forms the plot of the Exemplum. The Participant’s Orientation begins with an emotional frame of reference for the plot through the claim that ‘there was definitely a low level of suspicion’ that the participant was living in, but not coming from, the north. The noun ‘suspicion’ frames the participant’s presence in Cumbria as unwelcome and out-of-place; its connotations elucidate a fear of the protagonist as an internal Other transgressing the border between the north and the south. What emerges out of the Orientation, then, is the sense that the relationship between the protagonist and the people in the northern village (and at the symbolic level, the relationship between the North and the South of England) is shrouded in an implicit, unspoken hostility or ‘tension’. Through his representation of a north-south divide, Participant J’s story of personal experience draws on a broader cultural narrative of Englishness in which those outside of the South of England express ‘hostility to the power and wealth of London and the Southeast’ (Kenny, 2012: n.p.).

The negative experience of the Londoner in Cumbria is compared to being a Briton in Germany or Austria. In this context, accent is replaced by language – the participant states that it ‘helped because I could speak (.) German’. Repeating the same verbal construction as he uses to situate the character in Greggs (‘I would just open my mouth’) the participant explicitly contrasts the ‘tension’ with the pleasant surprise that an ‘English person’ or ‘British person’ has gone to the effort to learn the language. Through the narrative comparison, the participant indicates that in England, knowing the language and being from the same country are not sufficient to be included in the ingroup – a person also needs the right accent to fit in. In other words, in Participant J’s narrative rendering, European countries such as Germany and Austria are more welcoming of non-nationals than English people are of their fellow citizens. In

England, inhabitants are not only suspicious of each other but are also hostile towards one another. A person is ascribed an identity as an Other, whereas in Germany and Austria, a Briton who knows the language is welcomed and can *choose* to ‘play the outsider card’ if they wish.

Participant J’s discursive construction of Britain as divided also pervades his responses to the government and media stimuli. When presented with the *Telegraph Online*’s image of a public that does not agree on what the country is or should be, Participant J asserts that ‘we are not a united United Kingdom’. However, he accuses the *Telegraph* of ‘handwringing’ and obscuring its role in contributing to divisions. Examining May’s speech, Participant J adopts a similar negotiated position (Hall, 1973), claiming that he would like to live in a ‘stronger, fairer and more united nation’ but that when these adjectives are contextualised, they appear to be ‘completely disingenuous’. To describe the state of Britain as he sees it, Participant J adopts the metaphor that ‘we’re up the creek without a paddle, lost, but we’re telling ourselves we’re on the right path’. Expressing complete dissatisfaction with the state of the UK, Participant J concludes the interview by saying that the UK is ‘on the precipice’ and that he hopes to avoid it by moving back to Germany.

In the stories above, Britishness is contested along racial, ethnic, linguistic, and spatial lines. The lived experience of “being British” and the meanings that participants associate with Britishness shift depending on the places and spaces that their characters occupy. For instance, in Participant G’s stories, a minority ethnic British character experiences solidarity in a multicultural London school but discrimination in rooms and taxis in the predominantly white city of Nottingham. In these stories, Britishness is tacitly associated with whiteness, which leads to the discursive and social exclusion of the minority ethnic Briton even in cases of attempted inclusion. In Participant H’s story, the effects of the discursive and social exclusion of minority ethnic people extend beyond the social group that is othered to alienate a participant whose whiteness affords him the privilege of not having to defend his right to claim to be

British. Similarly, in Participant J's story, a man with linguistic and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) is othered when he enters an eatery in Northern England because of his accent. In these stories, then, what is in question is not just *who* can call themselves British but what Britishness means, and who gets to decide its meanings. While the five stories are diverse, they share the discursive construction of a divided nation in which even characters with social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991) are marginalised at times.

6.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I demonstrated that interviewees tell stories in response to interview questions for two principal reasons. First, they use stories to legitimise their stance towards the European Union and justify the way they voted in the 2016 EU membership referendum. Second, they navigate the contested meanings and lived experiences of “Britishness” by narrating stories about nostalgia, inequality, discrimination, and difference. Through their stories, participants make sense of the effects of Brexit on their national identities and explore what it means to be British more generally. In their explorations, the participants unite personal experiences with interrogations of broader cultural narratives, revealing that identity construction takes place at the intersection between ‘individual experiences [and] collective visions’ (Krzyżanowski, 2010; Zappettini, 2018: 18). For some participants, Brexit, at the time of interviewing in 2020 and 2021, affords optimism and hope for the future. For others, it signals a descent towards (or an enhancement of existing) prejudices and exclusion in an already largely divided imagined community (Anderson, 2006).

In the first part of the chapter, I explored three stories during which older Leave-voting participants narrate stories of symbols of British trade in the past (New Zealand butter in the

shops; ensigns in ports; displays in schools). In expressing nostalgia for a global trading nation identity that Britain, in their eyes, no longer possesses, the participants lend credence to Calhoun's (2017) suggestion that Leave voters felt nostalgic for a golden age of British influence. There is, however, diversity in the participants' attitudes towards post-Brexit Britain. While Participant C imagines Britain's post-Brexit future optimistically, hoping that Britain will once again trade widely, Participants D and E are doubtful that the UK will reinvigorate its internationalist reputation. In Participant C's language use, there is a strong echo of the UK Government's contradictory metaphors of Brexit as both progress and continuation (see Chapter 5).

Following the nostalgic tales, I analysed three stories during which Remain-voting participants discursively construct Britain as politically unequal and divided. There is a remarkable similarity between the lexical choices and plots told by Participants A and H. Through their stories, these interviewees indicate that their attitudes towards the EU are rooted in personal experiences that contributed to the formation of their political opinions from an early age. It is through these personal experiences that the participants make sense of their responses to broader cultural narratives about the EU. Growing up in underdeveloped towns and counties where government funding is scarce, the two participants interpret the EU's funding for regional developments as saving Britons from the neglect of their national governments. The participants claim that having 'seen' the EU's heroism in action, they could not ignore it and vote Leave. In drawing on the spatial imaginary of left-behind Britain (Sykes, 2018), Participants A and H problematise the broader cultural interpretation of *Leave* voters as those who have been disadvantaged by globalisation (Goodwin and Heath, 2016). Their experiences in 'polarised' communities lead the participants to accept more readily the mediated discursive construction of Britain as divided than the governmental projection of post-Brexit Britain as 'united at home' (May, 2017).

At first glance, there is little to unite the stories I examined in the first half of this chapter. After all, three stories are rooted in a deep pride in British history, while two express distrust of British politicians and a sense of being economically neglected by Westminster. However, a close linguistic analysis illustrates that the stories share a sense of dissatisfaction with what the participants interpret to be the present state of British politics and what they imagine their nation to be. In the first three stories, the pervasive nostalgia for a British golden age expresses a desire for a time when the participants could be proud of their nation's international influence. The sense of loss surrounding the narratives of British decline indicates a desire for change in the present which is most clearly encapsulated by Participant C's claim that Britain will 'be able to do it [trade widely] again'. In two of the stories told by younger, Remain-voting participants, British politics is characterised by a disinterest in rural counties and northern towns; hope exists only in the EU and its willingness to fund those areas that have been economically left behind. As the five participants make sense of their attitudes towards Britain and the EU through their stories, they reveal that there is no single interpretation of the EU or the membership referendum: one person's hero is another's villain.

The second unifying factor in these three stories is the way that the participants make sense of higher-level international relationships through highly localised contexts and mundane activities such as shopping, driving, or going on holiday. Through their stories, participants interpret what the EU is and what it does through recourse to personal encounters with earlier discourses (such as signs saying, 'funded by the EU' or butter labelled as coming from 'New Zealand'). According to the participants and what they make relevant during our interviews, these previous, individual encounters influence political decision-making and interpretations of media and political discourses. Of course, the generalisability of this observation would require a much larger sample and different methods to prove.

In the second part of the chapter, I explored a slightly larger set of stories through which participants interrogate questions of identity and belonging in Britain that transcend the socio-political context of Brexit. Some stories reveal an implicit association of Britishness with whiteness, despite the diversity of Britons and the fact that Britain has never been a monoethnic nation (Bhambra, 2017). In other stories, the region is the lens through which the nation is interpreted; what it means to be British is questioned through stories of regional accent discrimination, for instance. What unites the stories is the sense that the meanings of Britishness shift constantly, depending on space, place, and time, as well as the context of the interaction. In this way, we might say that there is no single imagined community but multiple communities which co-exist, contradict, include, and exclude simultaneously. ‘Britain’ and ‘Briton’, like ‘EU’ and ‘Europe’, then, are floating signifiers. That is, they mean something different to every participant and at different times for the same participant. That does *not* mean that they are void of meaning. On the contrary, as much as ascribed identities (Blommaert, 2005) of Britishness are open to contestation, almost all participants still identify as ‘British’ and for them, “being British” is a source of pride (Participants C, D, E, F and G) or shame (Participants I and L).

What, then, do these stories indicate about national identities in post-Brexit Britain? The eleven stories I examined in this chapter discursively construct national identities as flexible, multiple, discursive, and context dependent. Participants carefully distinguish between ascribed identities (Blommaert, 2005) and internal feelings of belonging to their nation. In distinguishing between what they, as participants, understand as ‘British’, and what their characters interpret to be British, the participants indicate that there is no single collective understanding of what Britain is or could be among citizens. Nevertheless, to be British means something and for these participants, the Brexit process is about determining what.

As the responses to the stimuli indicate, participants, with their multiple, conflicting representations of Britain, often do not uncritically accept either media or government representations of the nation. Indeed, to paraphrase Kenny's (2012) approach to Englishness and apply it to this limited qualitative study on *Britishness*: there are tensions between coexisting ideas of Britishness. As a result of these contestations, 'generic appeals to patriotism by politicians [...] miss the mark' because the politics of *Britishness* 'is now defined by the struggles in which these contending accounts are engaged' (Kenny, 2012: 158). That is not to say, however, that narratives of division are accepted wholesale either. When presented with a media article questioning whether Britain 'as we know it still exists', all participants adopt at least a negotiated position (Hall, 1973) towards the data – even those who tell stories of division in Britain throughout the interview. For these fifteen participants with connections to Nottinghamshire, then, 'Britain' as a collective entity still means something, even if that meaning is polysemic and phantasmagorical.

7 Concluding Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This is the first thesis of its kind to analyse the discursive construction of Britain and Europe in pro-Brexit newspapers, UK government documents, and semi-structured interviews with individual Leave and Remain voters. It uses a novel combination of corpus linguistics, critical discourse analysis, and discourse analysis of narratives told in oral interviews to uncover a consistent narrative of national division and decline in Brexit Britain at a tumultuous time in British politics. Beyond a methodological contribution, the thesis expands upon a sizeable body of literature that explores identity mobilisation in relation to Brexit, such as Zappettini and Krzyżanowski (2020), through a focus on *national* identities. In this final chapter, I consider points of commonality and difference in the representation of Britain and Europe across the three data sets. I go on to reflect on the methodological challenges of the thesis, as well as the advances it has made. I address my position as a researcher undertaking an emotive, political project. Finally, I outline where there is scope for future research.

7.2 Shared representations of Britain and EU-rope

7.2.1 *A discourse of difference*

A representation that pervades all three data sets is Britain as a nation that is distinct from continental Europe. This depiction was common in pre-referendum Eurosceptic discourses and was also prevalent in political discourses during the EU referendum campaign (Cap, 2019; Spiering, 2014; Wenzl, 2019). In the pro-Brexit media (Section 4.2.2), it appears when *The*

Express accuses Remain voters of wanting to ‘make our country more European, more continental’ (Ex. 19). This geographical argument presupposes that Britain is not fully (culturally) European because it is not part of the mainland (a view commonly referred to as “British exceptionalism”). I argue that the discursive differentiation between Britain and Europe in the pro-Brexit media forms part of a Churchillian argument that Britain is ‘with Europe but not of it’ (Roberts, 2018: n.p.) and therefore should be free from the legal and political directives issued from Brussels. In the government data, the British Island Nation imaginary (Sykes, 2018) is adopted to argue that Britain should engage with different ‘circles of influence on a “transactional” basis’ (Gaskarth, 2013: 67) and so should not be trading only with the EU (Section 5.2.2). Theresa May and the then Polish prime minister both discursively differentiate between Britain and Europe; their grammatical strategies, such as syntactic parallelism, underpin a discursive construction of the UK and Europe as allies in defence. Despite the shared representation, the governmental construction of the British Island Nation is adopted to support a future UK-EU relationship, whereas the pro-Brexit media use it to argue against continued EU membership.

While the stories told by participants do not draw on geographical arguments, they too distinguish Britain from EU-rope (see particularly Sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2). For instance, Participant H, a Remain voter, compares a European ‘them’ who look ‘quite nice’ to ‘the actual government’. The discursive distinction between Britain and EU-rope thus underpins both Eurosceptic and Europhile representations of the UK-EU relationship. This finding supports Wodak’s (2018) uncovering of a discourse of difference in Remainer David Cameron’s so-called Bloomberg speech, by demonstrating that the British Island Nation imaginary is versatile and can be mobilised to different ends: to disparage the EU and encourage readers to vote Leave, to persuade European political officials to be defence allies with Britain, and to justify a Remain vote in the EU referendum.

7.2.2 British decline

A further point of comparison between the data sets is the discursive construction of British decline. A narrative of British decline is not new to the British media – retellings of the Second World War have long been mobilised by tabloids to compare contemporary Britain unfavourably with the past (Conboy, 2006). It is also not a new theme in British political discourse, where the Suez crisis is often evoked as the catalyst for British post-imperial decline (Maccaferri, 2019; Peden, 2012). The representation of decline is subtle in my early media data. It emerges in Priti Patel’s argument that there are increasingly limited resources in the UK’s health service, the housing market and schools (Ex. 1), and the *Telegraph Online*’s claim that political officials have done damage to the nation’s reputation by refusing to accept a Brexit deal (Ex. 12 & 13). The sense of decline is more obvious in the later years when *Telegraph Online* and *The Express* argue that May’s Withdrawal Agreement has been a national humiliation on the scale of the Suez crisis (Ex. 23-25). These examples from the No Respect semantic domain take further the earlier suggestion that the UK’s international reputation is at risk by implying that national humiliation has already occurred. In the government corpus, decline seeps through in the Alive semantic domain in Theresa May’s argument that the future Union needs to be as strong as it was in the past (which subtly implies weakness in the present), and through the assertion that Britain needs to regain its global trading nation reputation (Ex. 43). Both institutional outlets therefore subscribe to the view that Britain needs positive change, and that Brexit *should* be the means through which transformation is achieved.

The narrative of national decline is strongest in my interview data. Leave and Remain voters express dissatisfaction with the present state of the UK due to a lack of global trade (Participants C, D, E and O), and multiple incidents of discrimination (Participants G, H and

J). Participant C's desire to trade widely 'again' after Brexit implies a return to a previous period of global trade. Meanwhile, Participant D's assertion that there would not be British trading ships in ports now, unlike in the 1960s, implies that Global Britain is not, at the time of interviewing, a tangible concept for some citizens despite governmental discourses. For Leave-voting participants who have noticed a loss of international trade, departing from the EU is an opportunity to regain control and bolster Britain's global trading influence. This finding lends some credence to Calhoun's (2017) argument that Leave voters wanted to return to an influential British past. It also supports Participant A's characterisation of Leave voters as people who hope for the UK to 'be great again'. Despite Brexit being sold by the Vote Leave campaign as a panacea for British political ills that would return the UK to its former status as a global trading nation, the presence of a narrative of decline in interviews I conducted *after* the UK left the EU suggests that leaving did not resolve the malaise with the present state of the nation. In other words, Brexit did not achieve the sense of national reinvigoration it was promised it would. The consequences of this broken promise in the long term are likely to be political alienation (or at least disenchantment) and a weaker sense of belonging to the nation among Leave voters. A similar outcome is likely for those Remain voters who are disillusioned by discrimination; several participants expressed an intention to move to mainland Europe after Brexit.

7.2.3 British division

By far the most widely shared representation of Britain across the later years of the media, government, and interview data sets is of a divided nation. In the media outlets, this representation is constructed through the No Respect semantic domain, which includes images of divisions between British politicians and the public, and between Remain and Leave voters.

Divisions are represented lexically through verbs such as ‘humiliate’ and ‘jeer’, and nouns such as ‘scorn’, ‘contempt’ and ‘disdain’. The Eurosceptic media alleges that politicians increasingly view the electorate with contempt. The UK’s intranational divisions are framed as a source of national humiliation the likes of which have never been experienced (a manipulation of British history to serve a Leave-backing agenda). Through this representation of British humiliation, journalists weave an anti-elite, populist discourse of national crisis (Moffit, 2017). They also cultivate a fear of the loss of the UK’s international standing. By blaming politicians and members of the public for divides, the newspapers obfuscate the role that their discursive constructions of tensions play in reinforcing and inciting divisions. At the same time as these divisive representations pervade pro-Brexit newspaper articles, the UK Government openly acknowledges in a North American newspaper that MPs cannot agree on a Brexit deal through the weather metaphor of ‘clash and thunder’ (Ex. 52), a representation which I argue exposes political weakness and depicts the UK as an unstable ally because it points to a lack of direction and consensus within Parliament.

With such a pervasive media narrative of a nation divided between politicians and the public, it is hardly surprising that some of my interviewees communicate distrust of the political class and dissatisfaction with the contemporary state of the nation. For example, Participant A laments that ‘we cannot rely on our government’, Participant H implies that ‘what the actual government is doing’ is not ‘nice’ in comparison to the EU, and Participant J labels Theresa May’s vision of post-Brexit Britain ‘completely disingenuous’. The media narrative of politicians’ contempt towards the electorate likely captures and reinforces a sense of political scepticism. Indeed, 50% of people surveyed in 2019 felt MPs did not care about people like them (Hansard Society, 2019). Some participants do not find the pro-Brexit media any more trustworthy than politicians; Participant J, for instance, accuses the *Telegraph* of ‘hand-wringing’ over political divisions. The media’s attempt to construe a national public that

consists of journalists and “ordinary” citizens is therefore not accepted uncritically by some participants. These findings point towards the potential alienation of members of the British public from so-called media and political “elites”.

Seventeen stories feature divisions between individuals, many of which include pejorative descriptions of voters on the other side of the EU referendum debate. Participant A, for example, caricatures Leave voters as ‘white van man, *Sun*-reading, red-faced gammon types’ who are ‘poorly educated, semi-literate’ and ‘pretty xenophobic’. Similarly, Participant H argues that Leave voters ‘often embraced intolerance’ by shouting at people in the street. These expressions of distrust and judgement, together with the media narratives of intolerance and division, paint a picture of Brexit Britain as a deeply politically fractured nation. While emerging studies have documented representations of political division in the UK media the day after the EU referendum vote (Koller and Ryan, 2019), this thesis demonstrates that the narrative of political division goes beyond just the media data to pervade the construction of British society in both political and personal contexts even after the UK has left the EU.

The discursive construction of national divisions in the interview data also extends beyond the political realm. In the participants’ stories, there are socio-economic, geographic, and racial divides between Britons. For example, Participant A relates a story of economic stagnation in which mid-Wales is simultaneously ‘very poor’ and ‘quite wealthy’. This representation points to a construction of the UK as a financially unequal society. There are echoes of this description in the *Telegraph*’s representation of Remainers as ‘metropolitan elites’ and ‘trendy London society’ and Leave voters as disadvantaged out-of-towners (Ex. 29-30). However, the *Telegraph* envisions economic inequality along Remain/Leave lines, whereas Participant A discusses geographical differences that existed before Brexit. Either way, representations of British inequality could lead to greater resentment between social groups, precipitating further polarisation between those who have and those who have not.

Participant G narrates two stories that highlight the different experiences of being a minority ethnic Briton in London and Nottinghamshire. His stories indicate that racial and geographical differences can intertwine – multicultural solidarity exists in some spaces but not in others. Further geographical divisions appear in a story narrated by Participant J, who faces ‘suspicion’ because he is a southerner living in a small northern town. This narrative points to a North-South regional divide. The images of cultural and socio-economic fracture in the stories are not necessarily precipitated by Brexit: two interviewees argue that Brexit is a ‘symptom’ of existing divides in the UK, rather than the cause. Whichever way the disunity is interpreted, there is a widespread consensus that divisions are rife in Brexit Britain.

As the above sections indicate, the institutional and lay constructions of Brexit Britain largely align in their negative constructions of the nation. There is a sense at all levels of discourse that there are problems within the nation state (and with its relationship with the EU) that need to be rectified. For the pro-Brexit media, the pro-Brexit government, and Leave-voting participants, Brexit presents an opportunity for transformation – but, crucially, that transformation is yet to occur. Presumably, Brexit has not reached its full potential for Leave voters by the time of data collection, which is why dissatisfaction with the nation still exists among Leave-backing participants. That sense of discontent among Leave voters is only likely to be exacerbated if a Global Britain foreign policy is not taken forward. For Remain-voting interviewees, Brexit represents a worsening of the most negative aspects of British national identity, leaving the UK ‘on the precipice’. This intertwined narrative of division and decline is significant because it suggests that despite what pro-Brexit campaigners, newspapers, and politicians promised in the pre- and early post-referendum years, Brexit led not to national reinvigoration but to a greater awareness of socio-political divisions and feelings of economic decline in the later post-referendum years.

There is little chance of an amelioration of feelings in the short term: since the interviews were conducted, there have been further examples of economic decline and division between the UK's constituent countries. For example, the Office for Budget Responsibility has concluded that Brexit will have a worse long-term effect on the UK economy than the Covid-19 pandemic (BBC, 2021c). There have been international shortages of workers in industries like haulage and butchery, due partly to Brexit and partly to '1.3 million foreign born workers [having] left the UK as the result of a pandemic' (Financial Times, 2021: n.p.). There has also been widespread political instability in Westminster, as the UK has lurched from prime minister to prime minister throughout 2022, with Conservative MP Liz Truss remaining in office for only 49 days. Meanwhile, the UK and the EU have clashed over the Northern Ireland protocol, which has disrupted trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Edgington and Morris, 2021). Perhaps unsurprisingly given these political events, an Opinium research poll from December 2021 found that 44% of the 1,904 adults surveyed thought Brexit had had a negative impact on the UK economy (Opinium, 2021).

7.3 Differences in representations of Britain and EU-rope

7.3.1 British victims and EU bullies, or best friends and allies? The UK-EU relationship

Representations of Britain and Europe are inextricably linked in all three data sets: EU-rope is the dominant British Other. One key relational representation in the media corpora, which relies on personification and metaphor, is the UK as a victim of EU interference. The UK-as-victim representation is dominant across all years of the pro-Brexit media articles, which employ an Invaded Nation frame (Charteris-Black, 2019) to position the EU as a radical Other (Gibbins, 2014). In the early post-referendum years, the UK's victimisation is realised through

the Alive semantic domain in the discursive representation of the EU's interference in British life. Material processes (Halliday, 1985) such as 'interferes', 'invade', 'restrict', 'tighten' and 'seized' are used by journalists and politicians who are quoted in newspaper articles to render tangible the EU's legislative dominance over the UK (see Dugalès and Tucker, 2012). These representations, in addition to the metaphor of the EU as the 'Brussels machine' (Ex. 16), draw on an existing Eurosceptic discourse of the EU as an untransparent, interfering, bureaucratic super-state (Oberhuber et al., 2005; Wenzl, 2019). In the later years, the EU's effect on the UK is represented through the No Respect domain as akin to bullying. The EU's behaviour is depicted lexically through the verb 'deride', the phrasal verb 'pour scorn', and the nominalisation 'humiliation'. This disparaging construction of the EU as a bully only appears in the pro-Brexit media, which is not surprising: I contend that the main purpose of the early articles is to persuade readers to vote Leave in the EU referendum by selling Brexit as an opportunity for British emancipation from a quasi-imperial EU (see also Hawkins, 2012).

While the pro-Brexit press constructs the UK-EU relationship as one that victimises the UK, the government documents in the early post-referendum years envision a secure relationship between equal allies. The discursive construction of equality comes through in the syntactic parallelism and linguistic differentiation used by Theresa May and Beata Szydło, when they portray Britain and Europe as friendly Others (Gibbins, 2014) who face the shared threats of death in war, terrorism, and illegal (extra-European) migration. The grammatical strategies that the leaders employ position the UK and Europe as two independent but equal allies. Across the early examples, history is evoked not to discursively differentiate between the UK and the EU, as Wenzl (2019) finds in parliamentary debates, but to unite them. This representation is undoubtedly strategic, as it reflects the Government's desire for bilateral trade and defence relationships between the UK and European countries.

Government documents in the early post-referendum years also employ a range of personifying kinship terms, such as ‘relationship’, ‘friendship’, and ‘ally’ to envision positive relations between the UK and the EU. The kinship terms problematise Siles-Brügge’s (2019) claim that there is no emotive underpinning to the Government’s discourses about the UK-EU relationship. The adjectives used alongside the kinship terms – ‘sovereign’, ‘mature’ and ‘cooperative’ – do, however, support the view that pragmatism is at the core of the UK’s approach towards the EU (Mautner, 2001). As Section 5.2.2 illustrates, kinship terms are used to obscure increasing tensions during UK-EU negotiations as the years progress. Eventually, the EU is side-lined and reduced to only one potential (but not necessary) post-Brexit partner, but the kinship terms remain prevalent, providing a superficially positive construction of UK-EU relations. Although the UK government does not use the hard Eurosceptic terminology of victims and villains, or explicitly formulate the construction of the EU as faceless and bureaucratic, the shift towards subtle negative Other representation in the later years brings the institutional narratives of the UK-EU relationship closer together. There are consequences to this negative Other representation for the UK’s post-Brexit vision: it is questionable to what degree the UK government can claim to be a global trading nation when it subtly disparages its closest trading partners. Similarly, the antagonistic approach towards the EU is unlikely to result in a positive, fruitful environment when it comes to international trade, something which the UK relies on not just to project a global image but for its economic survival (Bogdanor, 2020).

As the stories told by my interviewees tend to focus on personal experiences, participants seldom discursively construct Britain and Europe as higher-level entities. Where they do, representations differ depending on the attitude of the participant towards the EU. For example, Participants A and H (both Remain voters) represent the EU as a funding alternative to a neglectful national government. For them, leaving the EU inevitably means more

stagnation for underfunded or overlooked areas of the UK. In contrast, Participant C implies that Britain's membership of the European Union prevented the nation from trading globally in her assertion that 'coming out of Brexit', the UK will be able to 'trade with any country we want to'. In sum, there is no single way of discursively constructing the UK-EU relationship between press, politics, and public opinion and in the latter case, representations differ between individuals, depending on their attitudes towards their nation's foreign and national policies.

7.3.2 The nation and national identity

Media and government discourses homogenise Britain through the discursive construction of a British way of life (see Sections 4.2.2 and 5.2.2). Their similar representations of the nation align with Smith's (1992) definition of a human population that shares a historical territory, memories, culture, and laws; they draw on instances of British history (the Suez crisis, the Second World War) and point to a singular British culture that is distinct from continental Europe. The British society that the journalists and politicians construct is largely civic (in contrast to Rowinski [2017] who argues for increasing ethnonationalism in the British press); there is a focus on democratic institutions such as the National Health Service and Parliament in Theresa May's unionism speech, which is reproduced in full without editing in both *Express Online* and *MailOnline* (see Section 4.2.2, Ex. 5 & 6). The focus on institutions is retrospective, through the present perfect tense of 'we have built'; this lexicogrammar foregrounds a shared, historical, civic identity between England and Scotland that undermines Scottish nationalist claims that Scotland is fiscally and politically peripheral to England (Whigham, 2019). There is a sense of timelessness to the representations, as journalists and politicians elaborate a shared past and provide a vision of a collective future (Bennett, 2018). The nation is frequently flagged through deixis and metonymy (see Billig [1995] for banal flagging of nationalism and Wodak

et al. [2009] for micro-linguistic strategies for constructing the nation). Despite the similarities between the media and government data, the media's construction of the nation often excludes Remain voters, depicting an entirely Leave-voting coalition of media professionals and citizens as the national public.

The constructions of the nation and national identity produced by citizens are radically different from those produced by journalists and politicians. The language used by participants constructs the imagined communities (Anderson, 2006) of the nation as multiple, context dependent, and discursive. Britishness and Europeanness, in the stories which centre on difference, are constantly problematised, contested, negotiated and recontextualised. For example, for Participants G and K, what it means to be British differs depending on place and space. In one of Participant G's stories, he explains that he 'still [feels] British' even though others living in Nottingham contest his Britishness by ascribing to him an Indian identity. This story relates an experience of ethnonationalism that contradicts the civic Britishness constructed in the media and government data. Rather than discursively constructing higher-level relationships between UK and EU officials, participants tend to privilege localised, mundane personal experiences that they use to explain and justify their political attitudes. In other words, as Davies (2021) also finds, higher-level relationships in the Brexit context are worked out at the local, personal level.

Importantly, in participants' stories, Britain and EU-rope are floating signifiers that have different meanings for people at different times. There is no one vision of what Britain is or should be within or across the stories, and media and government constructions of a homogenous Britishness are frequently rejected by interviewees. Indeed, in response to the media and government data in the stimulus task, participants sit on a spectrum between acceptance and wholesale rejections of media and political ideologies. A key contribution of this thesis, then, is that identity construction in relation to Brexit Britain is found to emerge at

the intersection between top-down discourses and cultural narratives, and bottom-up constructions of national identity based on individual experiences (Krzyżanowski, 2010; Zappettini, 2018).

7.3.3 The myth of the tolerant Briton

As Sections 4.3.1 and 5.2.2 reveal, journalists and politicians draw on the myth of the decent Briton (Bennett, 2018) in the early post-referendum years, while interview participants construct (other) Britons as intolerant and xenophobic. In the media data, the tolerant Briton construction manifests itself through the Polite semantic domain, which consists of a range of value-laden nouns including ‘fair-mindedness’ and ‘civility’. British civility, marked through the symbol of the queue, is marvelled at by journalists who have lived in Europe (Ex. 10). The decent Briton representation is used not only to claim British exceptionalism, but also to shield Leave-voting participants from accusations of xenophobia (Ex. 9). The image is more subtle in the government data, where it is enmeshed in a pro-immigration argument that EU migrants make the UK more ‘inclusive’ and ‘diverse’ (Ex. 38). In the media during the later post-referendum years, the image of British civility is problematised: *Telegraph Online* claims that politicians’ inability to agree on a Brexit deal has damaged ‘the famous civility and fair mindedness of British life’ (Ex. 11) and ‘tested to their limits’ the ‘great national virtues of reason and decency’ (Ex. 12). Given that decency is a core characteristic of Britishness in the dominant national identity narrative (Bennett, 2018; Holmes, 1991), this representation implies that a collective Britishness is in crisis due to the Brexit-related decisions of political officials.

In line with the diachronic shift towards images of intolerance in the media data, the stories told by Participants A, H, and G (Sections 6.2 and 6.3) reveal a lay construction of

Britain as beset by racial, linguistic, and xenophobic discrimination (see also Andreouli, 2020). In other words, my participants contest the institutional myth of the tolerant Briton (Bennett, 2018). While interviewees generally position *themselves* as tolerant (by evaluating the stories they tell and the characters within them), they focus on incidents of racism and xenophobia they have witnessed or experienced to argue that Britain is a fractured and intolerant nation. In one case, a participant refers to Leave voters as ‘poorly educated’ and ‘semi-literate’. This expression of educational superiority lends some credence to the critique of an alleged intellectual division between Remain and Leave voters in the *Telegraph* (Ex. 29-31). In another example, Participant H explicitly labels tolerance ‘the opposite’ of what Leave voters display. Arguably, in participants’ rejection of the tolerant Briton myth and in their perception that Brexit has strengthened or triggered a new crisis of intolerance, there is also a rejection of the media’s early discourses of unity and a reinforcement of a narrative of decline.

7.3.4 *A great global trading nation?*

The discursive construction of Brexit Britain as a global trading nation is the core national identity narrative in UK government documents (see Chapter 5). This representation is not new; Teubert (2001) identified a similar discursive construction over twenty years ago. The representation of the global trading nation intertextually relates to (sanitised) historical understandings of Britain’s place in the world, as Zappettini (2019) finds in a document published by the Department for International Trade. In other words, the post-Brexit Global Britain vision draws on historical discourses of Britishness to project an influential future identity for the nation (Zappettini, 2019; Eaton and Smith, 2020). Although the government remains committed to a Global Britain narrative up to the end of the data collection period, the rising sense of uncertainty and antagonism in the discourses surrounding the UK-EU

relationship suggests a contradiction, or unravelling, of the early promise to reinvigorate Britain's global trading nation status as the years progress. That is, the increasingly antagonistic approach towards the UK-EU relationship reflects tensions between negotiators, but it also reinforces them; the UK government, through its language use, renders less probable its own future-oriented national identity narrative.

Given the similar ways in which the government and the media use language and history to construct a civic British national identity, it is notable that the representation of Britain as a trading nation does not appear prominently in the media data. Indeed, while the government discursively constructs the UK-EU relationship, pro-Brexit media outlets focus on narrating intranational divisions between politicians and the public. These different representations indicate a divergence in socio-political agendas in the media and government, with the former turning against the latter despite them both supporting Brexit.

In contrast to the pro-Brexit media, many of my Leave-voting interviewees *do* construct a global trading nation identity in their stories and respond favourably to the government's construction, such as Participant C's claim that Brexit will enable the UK to trade with any country again. Participants D and E, though more ambivalent about what Brexit means for the trading nation identity, state that Britain's influence in the past was a source of pride for them. Participant O also articulates a desire for British trading success when he argues that the country needs to 'roll up our sleeves and get into the fight' for a place in the world. The alignment between the governmental and Leave-voting citizen narratives suggests a future-oriented globalist national identity discourse has the potential to be convincing but has yet to be reified through foreign policy. In other words, Leave-voting participants find the internationalist vision appealing, but do not seem to think it reflects post-Brexit Britain at the time of interviewing. It is conceivable that if, long-term, the UK does not achieve the promised global influence, these voters will feel cheated out of the Brexit they were promised (indeed,

Browning [2018] suggests some already do). Whether this sentiment will translate into an increased sense of disillusion towards politicians and politics remains to be seen, but I suspect it is not unlikely given the current low levels of trust in politicians (Curtice and Montagu, 2020).

7.4 Conceptualisations of Brexit

In addition to representations of Britain and Europe, the three data sets include discursive constructions of Brexit. In the pro-Brexit newspaper articles, Brexit is subtly framed as a panacea for British political ills. For instance, in Example 1, Britain's EU membership is portrayed as causing uncontrollable levels of immigration that put pressure on public services. It follows from this representation that leaving the EU would reduce immigration levels and ease the pressure on the British health service, housing, and schools. In Example 5, Theresa May frames post-Brexit Britain as 'stronger' than pre-Brexit Britain, which implies that membership of the EU led to national weakness. Although the newspapers remain committed to Brexit over the years, they discursively construct Theresa May's version of the Withdrawal Agreement as a national 'humiliation' on the scale of the Suez crisis. In this representation, a *specific kind* of Brexit is constructed as a national crisis (see Bennett, 2019; Krzyżanowski, 2019), but the idea of leaving the EU to solve British political problems remains present in the antagonistic representation of UK-EU relations.

As is the case with the media data, the UK government represents Brexit contradictorily. The government simultaneously envisions Brexit as a departure from an existing UK-EU relationship through the metaphor of onward movement ('step out' in Ex. 43), and as a continuation of existing relations in the verb 'stay' and the verb phrase 'carry on' (Ex. 41). A further contradiction in the UK government's construction of Brexit is its representation

as simultaneously progress ('race to the top') and a return to the past ('for the first time in more than forty years'). I argue that the inconsistent conceptualisation of Brexit in the UK government documents renders unclear the institutional vision for post-Brexit Britain, which in turn could send the message to future international partners that Britain is unsure of its post-Brexit place in the world. The discursive tensions likely exist not by choice, but as a reflection of the competing pressures that the government faces to maintain a trading relationship with the EU while delivering on the Vote Leave rhetoric of becoming a global nation once again.

Much like the media and political data sets, there is no single conceptualisation of Brexit among my interviewees. For Participant C, who voted Leave, Brexit is an opportunity to trade widely again. For Leave-voting Participants D and E, Brexit is unlikely to return to its global trading past, but it remains the most attractive option for the UK. In contrast, for several Remain-voting participants, Brexit indicates that prejudice has prevailed in the country. For example, Participant H's ventriloquation (Bakhtin, 1981) of a Leave voter saying, 'it is our country again now' implies that the EU referendum was about defining what Britishness means and who can claim to be British. The Leave vote, the story implies, means that an ethnonationalist conceptualisation of the UK has prevailed, which has alienated non-British white people, and British minority ethnic people. For some of the Remain-supporting interviewees, post-Brexit Britain is a country that is 'on the precipice' and the solution is to leave the UK (Participants K and J). The multiple different representations of 'Brexit' suggest it is an empty signifier that can be used to mean different things according to different socio-political agendas. This emptiness is, of course, politically useful because it allows politicians like Theresa May to repeat 'Brexit means Brexit', seemingly confirming that whatever individuals understand Brexit to mean will be delivered.

7.5 A shared narrative?

As the above section indicates, there are important differences and contradictions within and between the data sets: the pro-Brexit media openly disparages the EU as an interfering bully while the UK government frames EU-rope as a friend, partner, and ally. The press represents the UK as a victim, while government officials position it as an international powerhouse. Political officials homogenise Britain while citizens speak of multiple ways of being British. There are also shared ways of talking about Britain and Europe. Britain and Europe are positioned as distinct entities, often because Britain is framed as geographically and culturally separate from the continent. Journalists and politicians both talk about a British way of life, as the keyness of the Alive semantic domain in both data sets elucidates. What the diachronic analysis in the previous chapters reveals is a convergence between public, press, and political constructions of Britishness in the later post-referendum years towards a narrative of widespread division. The image of Brexit Britain that emerges towards the end of the data collection period is of a politically, socio-economically, and geographically divided nation.

I would argue that the representations of Britain as divided do not constitute a *shared* national identity narrative, but a *complementary* one. That is, the nature of the decline and division is different in each of the data sets. In the media data, division is constructed between politicians and the public and between members of the public. In the government data, division is largely envisioned between the UK and the EU, or British political officials – there is understandably no talk of politicians viewing citizens with contempt! In the stories told by citizens, politicians and the higher-level entities of the UK and the EU seldom appear, but divisions between individuals are rife. Place the three datasets side by side and the images reinforce one another to construct a deeply fractured nation. This representation of Britain is not only a direct contradiction of the great global trading nation narrative that the Vote Leave

campaigners – and later the UK government – promised, but it is also at odds with what one might expect given the purposes of the institutional texts. That is, even though the government and the pro-Brexit press seek to persuade Britons that Brexit is the best option for the nation, neither journalists nor politicians provide a *positive* national identity narrative to support their post-Brexit vision.

To be more explicit, the pro-Brexit media seeks to persuade readers that they should vote to leave the EU and remain committed to their vote amid calls for Scottish independence and a second referendum. Based on this purpose, one might expect journalists to construct Brexit Britain as unified and thriving outside of the EU. However, this optimism is limited to the early post-referendum years, generally before negotiations with the EU begin. The closer the UK gets to its withdrawal from the EU, the more pejorative and divided the national identity narrative becomes. This descent into division might well suggest that the reality of Brexit negotiations was different from what the pro-Brexit media outlets initially expected. That is, May's Withdrawal Agreement did not align with the Brexit the news outlets supported and constructing divisions between politicians and the public enabled the newspapers to persuade readers that May was not the ideal person to deliver Brexit. However, by undermining Britain's status as a parliamentary democracy – which is a cornerstone of the British identity narrative (Marcussen et al., 1999) – the newspapers threatened to destabilise a collective Britishness.

The same argument can be made about the UK government documents. These documents are prepared not only for national readers (whom the government hopes to convince of national stability) but also for European officials whom the government seeks to engage in trade and defence deals. In other words, like the pro-Brexit press, the government seeks to persuade its audiences that Brexit is a positive foreign policy decision for all involved. Despite this goal, the later UK government documents discursively construct Britain as divided and (implicitly) distrustful of supposedly antagonistic EU negotiators. The result, I argue, is that

the government, like the pro-Brexit media, fails to provide British readers and prospective international partners with an image of a strong and stable union. This failure threatens the government's reputation for 'competent governance' (UK in a Changing Europe, 2020a: 55) and negatively affects its international standing. A weakened international reputation is, of course, not helpful for a government that is trying to 'build relationships with old friends and new allies alike' (Ex. 46). Nonetheless, the government's foreign policy approach since the publication of these documents – trying to renege on international agreements such as the Brexit withdrawal agreement with Northern Ireland (Walker, 2021) – is clearly a continuation of the counterintuitive discourse I identify in this thesis.

If there is truth in Theresa May's 2017 claim that the 'strength and stability of our union will become even more important' after Brexit (Ex. 5), then the complementary trajectory towards national division across the three data sets suggests that Brexit Britain is not what it was first envisioned to be. At the time of writing, trust in politicians is at a record low (Curtice and Montagu, 2020), the English are feeling the need to reassert themselves amid anxieties over increasing devolution (Henderson and Wyn Jones, 2021), Scottish support for the domestic Union is reportedly weaker than ever (Eardley, 2021), and *The Irish Times* reported in August 2022 that more than half of voters in Northern Ireland supported a united Ireland within the next 15 to 20 years (McClements, 2022). The foreign aid budget has been cut, and politicians are now stating that an early trade deal with the US is unlikely (BBC News, 2021b). As alluded to above, then prime minister Boris Johnson considered reneging on international agreements the UK signed at the time that it left the EU, leading to questions about the place of Northern Ireland in the new UK-EU relationship. These incidents support the narrative of national disarray and suggest that a global post-Brexit British identity is in crisis.

7.6 A new national identity narrative? Brexit as a destabilising force

The foregoing discussion has revealed that the early political, media and public conceptualisations of Brexit Britain are largely interdiscursive continuations of existing discourses about Britain as a nation. In other words, as Maccaferri (2019: 390) puts it, early ‘Brexit discourse was actually an ongoing recontextualisation of traditional historical narratives’ in many ways. For instance, Theresa May’s focus on civic British institutions such as ‘Parliamentary democracy’ is part of an existing Eurosceptic discourse that foregrounds British Parliamentary history as a source of differentiation from continental Europe (Cap, 2019; Maccaferri, 2019). What is different about its use in my data is that the focus is on constructing British unity amid calls for a second Scottish independence vote, rather than solely undermining the relationship between the UK and the EU. Similarly, the narrative of post-imperial decline that underpins the discourse in the three data sets was initiated by the Suez crisis (Maccaferri, 2019; Peden, 2012), and so, although then Conservative MP Jo Johnson argues that May’s Brexit humiliation could be ‘on the scale of Suez’ (Ex. 25), it is not the first time Britain has been said to be in decline. On the contrary, May’s Brexit deal is framed as further evidence of an ongoing, historical decline. Meanwhile, the global trading nation discourse harkens back to the British Empire even if it is framed as a new post-Brexit opportunity (Zappettini, 2019; Eaton and Smith, 2020). Europe is positioned as a British Other, which has long been the case in Eurosceptic discourses (Spiering, 2014) and has been found in pro-Remain discourses (Wodak, 2018), as well as in this thesis. The linguistic and discursive strategies that underpin these identity narratives – deixis, metonymy, metaphor, collectivisation (van Leeuwen, 1996) and so on – are also a continuation of existing discursive strategies used to construct Britishness (see, for example, Wenzl, 2019). In other words, a new national

identity narrative did not emerge for Britain in the early post-referendum years, as I originally hypothesised when I began this thesis.

Drawing on existing discourses provides a sense of timelessness to the early institutional British identity narratives, as though, as Wenzl (2019) puts it, there is a long-enduring, homogenous, and stable Britishness. In other words, it shows an attempt by journalists and politicians – at least in the early post-referendum years – to foster a collective sense of belonging to Britain. After all, the repeated use of familiar frames for Britishness provides a stable sense of shared values and history which are important for building a collective identity (Henderson and McEwan, 2005). The emerging discourse of division in the later post-referendum years destabilises this familiar, British national identity narrative. I do not suggest that it is the *intention* of media outlets (or indeed the government, which relies on a construction of national unity in its vision of ‘the public’) to undermine a collective sense of national identity in the long term. It is more likely, I think, that the discursive construction of a divided Britain, particularly in the media, is strategic. That is, for pro-Brexit journalists – who have less investment in national unity than UK government officials – discursively constructing divisions helps to undermine Theresa May’s Withdrawal Agreement and shift the balance of power towards a different type of Brexit. Editors and proprietors of newspapers would likely be invested in this different type of Brexit for commercial reasons (see Daddow [2012] for a consideration of “the Rupert Murdoch effect” on Euroscepticism in the British press). For the UK government, the antagonising approach to negotiations allows political officials to convince a national audience that the EU is to blame for a lack of progress. That the interview data reveals representations of individual, personal divisions between Leave and Remain voters, white and minority ethnic people, “natives” and immigrants, however, suggests that the institutional narratives of division *reinforce* and *exacerbate* personal divisions and feelings of national crisis that people are experiencing in their lives. At the same time, the

narratives continue a rhetoric of division found in other aspects of the British media (for example, between workers and “benefits scroungers”, or between “natives” and immigrants). While the intention might not have been to challenge the stability of existing discourses of Britishness, then, the emerging post-Brexit narrative of widespread division does just that.

Seemingly cognisant of the prevailing tensions and the fact that a nation cannot sustain a long-term narrative of division, politicians appear to be trying to heal divides. Within the last two years, measures for national unity include an albeit brief weekly national clap for NHS and key workers on a Thursday evening, a governmental call for ‘distinctively British’ shows to be aired on television (Kanter, 2021: n.p.), and a new national flagship to promote the ‘best of British’ trade and industry (BBC, 2021d: n.p.). These symbolic political gestures exist alongside an increasingly polarising media rhetoric about “culture wars” (Duffy et al., 2021), which encapsulates divisions about free speech in academia and the moral status of statues of historical figures involved in the slave trade. The number of UK newspaper articles focusing on culture wars rose from 21 in 2015 to 534 in 2020 (Duffy et al., 2021) suggesting a substantial increase in discourses of *cultural* division in addition to the political and national tensions uncovered in this thesis. Whether the governmental efforts to instil pride in the UK’s soft power will be sufficient to heal such a prolonged period of widespread division remains to be seen. However, if the present high level of distrust in political officials is anything to go by, it will be a profoundly difficult task for the UK government. Indeed, the reactions of my participants towards the media and political stimuli suggest people on both sides of the Brexit debate are sceptical towards contemporary institutional narratives of Britishness.

What are the possible effects of the practice of polarising opinion? As Duffy (2021: n.p.) argues, there is always the possibility that an increased sense of division could lead to ‘intractable conflict where compromise is extremely difficult to achieve’ and distrust in people we perceive to be “Others” is high. If individuals are already experiencing personal divisions

around Brexit, as my research suggests, then polarising rhetoric in the media and politics – even if it is strategic – is only likely to amplify that sense of division. In fact, it could overstate the degree to which longer-term divisions exist while increasing the already high levels of distrust in politicians and journalists (Curtice and Montagu, 2020). If the public continues to be distrustful of politicians and journalists, this will, of course, have negative implications for democracy, alienating potential voters and making a reality Conservative MP Michael Gove’s claim that the public has had enough of experts.

7.7. Methodological reflections

Having considered the similarities and differences between the datasets and the possible consequences of the narrative of division I have uncovered, I turn now to the methodological advances this thesis has made. Through the corpus-assisted (critical) discourse analytical approaches, and the collation and confident analysis of three different data sets, this thesis has achieved greater holistic coverage than any existing study of national identity construction in the Brexit context (e.g., Wenzl, 2019; 2020). In other words, its findings are more wide-ranging than previous studies because of the consideration of intertextuality between the texts produced by the three main social actors involved in Brexit: politicians, journalists, and citizens. Considering the texts both separately and in relation to one another, over a period of three years, has allowed me to produce a panoptic vision of how national identity discourses developed as the Brexit process extended. The innovative, top-down diachronic approach (Marchi, 2018) to media and political texts allowed for a close mapping between text and socio-political context, enabling me to consider the social consequences of polarising rhetoric. The corpus linguistic tool of key semantic domain analysis helped me to identify both consistent and diverging discursive patterns that would have been unidentifiable through manual

linguistic analysis. I overcame a core limitation of (corpus-assisted) critical discourse analysis – seldom measuring the *reception* of discourses among the public – through semi-structured interviews which included a stimulus task. This thesis therefore contributes not only to the literature that attempts to make sense of Brexit as a socio-political phenomenon from a discursive perspective (e.g., Buckledee, 2018; Koller, Kopf and Miglbauer, 2019), but also work on corpus-assisted critical discourse analytical methods.

An important methodological decision I made early on in my research was to employ key semantic domain analysis instead of the more traditional corpus approaches of keyword and collocation analysis. This method allowed me to identify semantic fields which were salient in my data, but which were comprised of lexical items that were not used frequently enough to be considered key by themselves. Through this approach, I found semantic fields such as No Respect which I would not have intuitively associated with national identity, but which have been proven throughout this thesis to be central to the discursive construction of the state of the nation and its international relationships. A *keyword* comparison with the same reference corpus would not have identified the same discourses: ‘humiliat*’, ‘deride’, ‘scorn’ and ‘disdain’ are not keywords by themselves in any of the four subcorpora (although ‘respect’ is a keyword in the 2019 subcorpus). Undoubtedly, then, the key semantic domain analysis allowed me to access subtler discourses surrounding national identity than other corpus approaches. In combination with concordance analysis, the key semantic domain approach was successful in achieving breadth through diachronicity and depth through micro-linguistic analysis. The approach was novel: to my knowledge, existing linguistic studies of national identity discourse that employ semantic tagging, such as Prentice (2010), are not diachronic.

One of the biggest potential challenges to completing this thesis was the Covid-19 pandemic, which affected the interview design. Ethical approval was awarded in February 2020, just weeks before the first lockdown in the UK restricted travel. As a result, interview

recruitment had to be conducted online. This proved difficult, partly because with a pandemic raging, people were less concerned about Brexit (Davies and Carter, 2021), and partly because it restricted the pool of available participants to those who had the socio-economic and technological privilege to use social media. This inevitably had a knock-on effect, as older participants were not only less likely to use social media but also unfamiliar with the video conferencing software through which the interviews were conducted. Consequently, there was a clear younger, Remain-voting self-selection bias and snowball sampling was required to reach older Leave voters. I also had to conduct some interviews via telephone rather than video conferencing software, to enable older people to participate. This restriction meant that I could not comment on paralinguistic features in most of the Leave-voting interviews, which was a loss in terms of the richness of the data in comparison to face-to-face interviews.

Despite these challenges, there were clear benefits to conducting interviews via video conferencing software. As Hanna and Mwale (2017: 260) argue, software such as Skype, which enables participants to be interviewed from their homes, ‘provides a space for interviews that in some sense is both “public” and “private”’ which can ‘lessen feelings of intimidation for participants’. This consideration was especially important in my project as discourses about Brexit are highly emotive (Davies and Carter, 2021; Patel and Connelly, 2019) and some Leave-voting participants expressed concerns about the intentions of the project. Joining from their homes placed a degree of distance between the researcher and the interviewee that potentially helped participants to share “controversial” opinions.

It is also important to consider the time-lapse between the data used in the stimulus task and the interviews. Many of the interviewees rejected the narratives in the government and media data, expressing scepticism of discourses of unity and division despite often reproducing them in their own stories. One possible explanation for these contradictions – beyond the fact that contradictions are inherent in discourse – is that the interviewees had the benefit of

accessing the data in retrospect. They were able to comment on the outcome of Theresa May's promises, for instance, as she had resigned by the time participants were interviewed. It is entirely possible that had the interviews been conducted at the time of the media and government data production, the participants would have approached the institutional narratives differently. Nevertheless, there is value in the time lapse: it illustrates the extent to which Brexit continues to permeate the thoughts and lives of British citizens despite the UK having officially left the EU. It attests to the effects of Brexit on feelings of belonging in the UK and indicates that international relationships are worked out at the local level even after they have been reconfigured at the higher level (Davies, 2021).

Like Davies and Carter (2021), I decided to adopt as much of a "value-free" position as possible during the interviews I conducted for this thesis. This means that I informed participants when seeking consent that I was interested in the language they used to talk about their national identity and that it did not matter how they voted or what their opinion of Brexit was. As a result of this commitment, there were moments, like those described by Davies and Carter (2021: 175), when I chose not to challenge particular views because 'the research [was] not actually on the interrogation of people's political views', but their language choices when talking about national identity. This approach was, at times, uncomfortable and challenged my identity as a liberal Remain voter. However, I found upon analysing the interviews that I tended to engage in more laughter and backchannels with Remain-voting participants than Leave-voting participants, so I was not as "value free" in my approach as I had intended to be. Future research might consider, reflexively, the performance of *interviewers'* political identities through questions, laughter, and other paralinguistic features.

Despite the challenges inherent in gathering and analysing this study's third dataset, I would not choose to forego the public opinion section of the thesis. Not only does it provide an understanding of how media and political narratives are engaged with and reproduced by

individuals, but the interviewing process was a lesson in tolerance for me. I voted to Remain in the 2016 referendum and wanted to understand why some members of my family so passionately voted to Leave, and why others were more likely to favour Scottish independence after the referendum. This personal investment in the subject matter, while crucial for sustaining my interest in the thesis over three years, meant that I had preconceptions about what constituted a Leave or Remain voter. It was through talking to people who voted differently from me that I was able to understand that there is more common ground between Leave and Remain voters than I had anticipated (see also Davies and Carter, 2021). CDA research that foregoes interviewing may well prevent analysts from this transformative research experience. It inevitably also relies solely on the perspective of the analyst which this thesis does not do; through the interviewing experience, I have been able to make concrete, evidence-based assertions about the effects of institutional discourses. Talking to citizens also forced me to acknowledge that the critical discourse analytical approach of identifying a sociological problem and deconstructing it becomes more nuanced when the researcher works with real people, whose motivations are often more complex than faceless media outlets with socio-political power. In working through these discursive and social problems – repeatedly encountering discourses with which I disagreed – I have matured as a researcher and learnt to be reflexive about my positions and preconceptions.

Beyond the effect on my progression as a researcher, Chapter 6 has carved a new methodological path in its analysis of stories to understand how individuals position themselves in relation to a political event. While research into lay attitudes towards Brexit has been conducted previously, often the analysis has been thematically structured or has considered broader patterns in the data (e.g., Andreouli, 2020; Davies, 2021). This thesis has been the first to examine the phenomenon of Brexit-related national identity construction through a micro-linguistic analysis of stories. It has revealed the ways in which individual personal experiences

interact with broader cultural narratives about Britain and about the political identities of “Remainer” and “Leaver”. By privileging the individual, it has problematised some of the homogenising quantitative research findings about Brexit, such as the argument that Leave voters were often people who felt economically left behind or disadvantaged by globalisation (Goodwin and Heath, 2016). My approach was also, in comparison to other CDA studies which tend not to consider the *reception* of discourses via interviews, methodologically innovative in exploring participants’ responses to the media and government data analysed in the thesis. The stimulus task allowed me to elucidate the contradictions in national identity construction. It demonstrated that even participants who told stories about contestations of national identity and divisions within the UK were unwilling to accept wholesale media narratives of British division. This shows that contrary to my initial preconceptions, neither Leave- nor Remain-voting individuals accepted institutional discourses uncritically.

7.8. Avenues for future research

As any novel research does, this thesis encourages further questions. A natural follow-up study would examine how the recent media constructions of “culture wars” depict the state of the nation and consider whether this divided representation damages emerging efforts by the UK government to construct a post-Brexit national identity narrative rooted in British soft power. Exploring how discourses about the Covid-19 pandemic intersected with representations of Brexit Britain, for example, would also be interesting. It could be, for instance, that the measures taken to instil national unity during the pandemic – such as the national clap for key workers on a Thursday, or the daily briefings given by cabinet ministers – led to a slightly ameliorated institutional narrative of Britishness in the media in 2021. It would be especially fruitful to consider within this the position of the National Health Service as an institution often

cited as a symbol of British national identity (see Antosa and Demata [2021] for a study on NHS discourses in the context of Brexit and Covid-19). Similarly, it would be insightful to examine the political and media references made during the pandemic to the unity of the British public throughout the Second World War. It could be interesting to consider how Britain was discursively constructed by Britons on Twitter during the pandemic when citizens shared photos of empty supermarket shelves. Perhaps these top-down and bottom-up discourses could be compared. Finally, it would be fascinating to consider how more recent political developments, such as Boris Johnson's resignation and the installation of two other prime ministers without a general election, might have affected the national identity crisis I uncover in this thesis – particularly from the citizens' perspective.

There is also scope for further analysis of the data already collected, particularly the role of stories as a locus for political and national identity constructions. Analysing at macro- and micro-linguistic levels the 128 stories I collected, I would like to create a taxonomy of story types and linguistic and discursive strategies through which political identities are enacted, performed, and contested in lay talk about political events. I would also be interested in expanding the types of identities I examine through stories, potentially by analysing how different socio-cultural identities are performed at the same time within a particular context (for instance, working class, Leave voter and anti-vaxxer identities). This research could be more ethnographic in nature, considering the different story types that emerge in different contexts (i.e., outside of the research interview). At its core, this research would consider how stories contribute to the positioning of individuals as political actors.

7.9. Concluding comment

This thesis has shown that the transition from pre- to post-Brexit Britain was a crucial period of destabilisation for institutional and lay national identity narratives. It has also illustrated that the next few years are likely to be just as important – if not more so. With a widespread narrative of division and decline, post-Brexit Britain has faced a pandemic, a shortage of HGV drivers causing a “petrol crisis” (Tidman, 2021), increasing devolution anxiety in England (Henderson and Wyn Jones, 2021), and calls for a second Scottish independence referendum. It has also faced friction with the European Union over trade deal negotiations, Covid-19 vaccines, and the Northern Ireland protocol. While the UK government seemingly seeks to perpetuate a narrative of British soft power focused on British television shows and flagships, the media – across the left-right spectrum – continues to perpetuate a belief in “culture wars”. The mid-2020s are thus likely to be a tumultuous time for Britain, and a strong and stable national identity narrative will undoubtedly be important to political officials to fend off threats to the domestic Union and to attract international partners. The question will be if, and how, the UK can progress from a widespread narrative of national disunity and decline to one of unity and influence.

Of course, it is entirely possible that a media narrative that foregrounds unionism and a stronger internationalist foreign policy narrative could help to bolster a feeling of unity and influence in post-Brexit Britain (although it appears not to be forthcoming). It is equally possible that the Covid-19 pandemic could heal some of the personal divisions within the UK expressed by my research participants, as two of the interviewees initially hoped (although with the so-called Partygate scandal, public perceptions of politicians are unlikely to improve). However, up to the final interviews in mid-2021, there seemed to be only one complementary narrative of Britishness and it was profoundly negative. For all the promises of Brexit as an

opportunity to restore Britain's historical legacy as a global trading nation with ties both to the EU and extra-EU countries, then, the reality of post-Brexit Britain seems to be much more complex and divisive.

References

- Acheson, D. (1962). Dean Acheson 1893–1971 American politician. In: Ractliffe, S. (ed.) *Oxford Essential Quotations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Adler-Nissen, R., Galpin, C. and Rosamond, B. (2017). Performing Brexit: How a post-Brexit world is imagined outside the United Kingdom. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 19(3): 573–591.
- Adler, K. (2019). Jean-Claude Juncker: “I’ve had enough Brexit”, outgoing EU chief says. *BBC News*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-50308647>. (Accessed: 15th December 2021).
- Allen, K. (2016). IMF says Brexit would trigger UK recession. *The Guardian*, 18 June. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/jun/18/imf-says-brexit-would-trigger-uk-recession-eu-referendum> (Accessed: 15 December 2021).
- Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised Edition. London: Verso.
- Andreouli, E. (2020). Lay Rhetoric on Brexit. In: Demasi, M.A., Burke, S. and Tileaga, C. (eds.) *Political Communication*. Switzerland: Palgrave Studies in Discursive Psychology, pp. 63–87.
- Andreouli, E., Greenland, K. and Figgou, L. (2019). Lay discourses about Brexit and prejudice: “Ideological creativity” and its limits in Brexit debates. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 50(2): 309–322.
- Anthias, F. (2008). Thinking through the lens of translocal positionality: an intersectionality frame for understanding identity and belonging. *Translocations: Migration and Social Change*, 4(1): 5–20.

- Antonsich, M. (2008). The Narration of Europe in “National” and “Post-national” Terms: Gauging the Gap between Normative Discourses and People’s Views. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 11(4): 502–522.
- Antosa, S. and Demata, M. (2021). Get Covid Done: Discourses on the National Health Service (NHS) during Brexit and the Coronavirus Pandemic. *Textus*, 34(2): 47–65.
- Arminen, I. (2004). Second stories: The salience of interpersonal communication for mutual help in Alcoholics Anonymous. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 36(2): 319–347.
- Ashcroft, L. (2016). *How the United Kingdom voted on Thursday... and why*. Available at: <https://lordashcrofthpolls.com/2016/06/how-the-united-kingdom-voted-and-why/> (Accessed: 15 December 2021).
- Ashcroft, R. and Bevir, M. (2016). Pluralism, National Identity and Citizenship: Britain after Brexit. *The Political Quarterly*, 87(3): 355–359.
- Atkins, J. (2022). Rhetoric and audience reception: An analysis of Theresa May’s vision of Britain and Britishness after Brexit. *Politics*, 42(2): 216–230.
- Aughey, A. (2007). *The politics of Englishness*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Bachmann, V. and Sidaway, J.D. (2016) Brexit geopolitics. *Geoforum*, 77: 47–50.
- Baker, P. (2006) *Using corpora in discourse analysis*. London: Continuum.
- Baker, P., Gabrielatos, C., KhosraviNik, M., et al. (2008). A useful methodological synergy? Combining critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics to examine discourses of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK press. *Discourse & Society*, 19(3): 273–306.
- Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Bamberg, M. and Georgakopoulou, A. (2008). Small stories as a new perspective in narrative and identity analysis. *Text & Talk*, 28(3): 377–396.
- BBC News (2016a). Brexit vote: Nicola Sturgeon statement in full. 24 June. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-36620375> (Accessed: 21 June 2021).

BBC News (2016b). Brexit: David Cameron to quit after UK votes to leave EU. 24 June. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-36615028> (Accessed: 15 December 2021).

BBC News (2016c). Reality Check: What role do unelected EU officials play? Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-36429482>. (Accessed: 15 December 2021).

BBC News (2018a). Brexit Secretary David Davis resigns. *BBC News*, 9 July.

BBC News (2018b). Juncker: “Those who reject Brexit deal will be disappointed.” *BBC*, 25 November. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-politics-46334316>.

BBC News (2020). Brexit: What are problem issues in UK-EU trade talks? *BBC News*, 8 September 2020. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-politics-54073996> (Accessed: 28 April 2021).

BBC News (2021a). EU referendum: The result in maps and charts. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-36616028> (Accessed: 15 February 2022).

BBC News (2021b). Covid: What is happening with the EU vaccine rollout? 27 April. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/explainers-52380823> (Accessed: 28 April 2021).

BBC News (2021c). Impact of Brexit on economy “worse than Covid.” *BBC News*, 27 October. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-59070020> (Accessed: 15 December 2021).

BBC News (2021d). Joe Biden plays down chances of UK-US trade deal. *BBC News*, 22 September. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-58646017>.

Bednarek, M. (2009). Corpora and Discourse: A Three-Pronged Approach to Analyzing Linguistic Data. In: Haugh, M. (ed.) *Selected Proceedings of the 2008 HCSNet Workshop on Designing the Australian National Corpus*. MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project, pp. 19–24.

- Bednarek, M. (2016). Voices and values in the news: News media talk, news values and attribution. *Discourse, Context and Media*, 11: 27–37.
- Bednarek, M. and Caple, H. (2017). *The Discourse of News Values: How News Organizations Create Newsworthiness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bellucci, P., Sanders, D. and Serricchio, F. (2012). Explaining European Identity. In: Sanders, D. Bellucci, P., Toka, G. et al. (eds.) *The Europeanisation of National Politics? Citizenship and Support in Post-enlargement Union*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 61–90.
- Benhabib, S. (1998). *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bennett, S. (2018). *Constructions of migrant integration in British public discourse: Becoming British*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Bennett, S. (2019). “Crisis” as a discursive strategy in Brexit referendum campaigns. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 16(4): 449–464.
- Benson, M. and Lewis, C. (2019). Brexit, British People of Colour in the EU-27 and everyday racism in Britain and Europe. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 42(13): 2211–2228.
- Benson, M., Zambelli, E. Craven, C. and Sigona, N. (2022). British Citizens in the EU after Brexit, *MIGZEN Research Brief*, 1. [Online] Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6515640>.
- Benwell, B. and Stokoe, E. (2006). *Discourse and identity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Bhambra, G.K. (2017). Brexit, Trump, and “methodological whiteness”: On the misrecognition of race and class. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68(S1): 214–232.
- Billig, M. (1995). *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage.

- Blommaert, J. (2005). *Discourse: A critical introduction*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Blommaert, J. (2007). Sociolinguistics and Discourse Analysis: Orders of Indexicality and Polycentricity. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 2(2): 115-130.
- Blommaert, J. (2015). Chronotopes, Scales, and Complexity in the Study of Language in Society. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 44: 105–116.
- Bogdanor, V. (2020). *Britain and Europe in a Troubled World*. USA: Yale University Press.
- Bolt, M. (2022). Britain, Britishness, and exceptionalism within the rhetoric of David Cameron. *British Politics*, 0(0): 1-19.
- Bond, R. and McCrone, D. (2004). The growth of English regionalism? Institutions and identity. *Regional & Federal Studies*, 14(1): 1–25.
- Booth, R. (2019). Racism rising since Brexit vote, nationwide study reveals. *The Guardian*, 20 May. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/20/racism-on-the-rise-since-brexit-vote-nationwide-study-reveals> (Accessed: 27 April 2020).
- Bouko, C. and Garcia, D. (2019). Citizens’ reactions to Brexit on Twitter: a content and discourse analysis. In: Koller, V., Kopf, S. and Miglbauer, M. (eds.) *Discourses of Brexit*. London: Routledge, pp. 171–190.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Brezina, V. (2018). *Statistics in Corpus Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- British Nationality Act*. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/61> (Accessed: 5 December 2019).
- Bromley-Davenport, H., MacLeavy, J. and Manley, D. (2018). Brexit in Sunderland: The production of difference and division in the UK referendum on European Union membership. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 37(5): 795–812.

- Brown, G. and Yule, G. (1983). *Discourse analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Browne, I. (2017). Neo-liberalism, identity and Brexit. *Romanian Review of Political Sciences & International Relations*, 14(1): 89–110.
- Browning, C. S. (2018). Brexit populism and fantasies of fulfilment. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 32(3): 222-244.
- Brusenbauch Meislová, M. (2019a). Brexit Means Brexit---or Does It? The Legacy of Theresa May's Discursive Treatment of Brexit. *The Political Quarterly*, 90(4): 681-689.
- Brusenbauch Meislová, M. (2019b). All things to all people? Discursive patterns on UK–EU relationship in David Cameron's speeches. *British Politics*, 14: 681-689.
- Brusenbauch Meislová, M. (2022). Discursive construction of affective polarization in Brexit Britain: Opinion-based identities and outgroup differentiation. In: Pérez-Escolar, M. and Noguera-Vivo, J. M. (eds.) *Hate Speech and Polarization in Participatory Society*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, pp. 98-112.
- Brusenbauch Meislová, M., Koller, V., Kopf, S., et al. (2021). Recontextualizing Brexit: Discursive Representations from Outside the UK. *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines*, 13(1): 1–11.
- Bucholtz, M. and Hall, K. (2004). Language and Identity. In: Duranti, A. (ed.) *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 369–394.
- Bucholtz, M. and Hall, K. (2005). Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach. *Discourse Studies*, 7(4-5), 585-614.
- Bucholtz, M. and Hall, K. (2010). Locating identity in language. In: Llamas, C. and Watt, D. (eds.) *Language and Identities*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Buckledee, S. (2018). *The Language of Brexit: How Britain Talked Its Way Out of the European Union*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Burr, V. (2015). *An Introduction to Social Constructionism*. London: Routledge.

- Cabinet Office. (2020). *Integrated Review: Call for Evidence*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/909008/Integrated_Review_call_for_evidence.pdf (Accessed: 28 April 2021).
- Cabinet Office. (2021). *Global Britain in a competitive age. The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975077/Global_Britain_in_a_Competitive_Age-the Integrated Review of Security Defence Development and Foreign Policy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975077/Global_Britain_in_a_Competitive_Age-the_Integrated_Review_of_Security_Defence_Development_and_Foreign_Policy.pdf) (Accessed: 15 December 2021).
- Cabinet Office. (2022). *Global Britain: delivering on our international ambition*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/global-britain-delivering-on-our-international-ambition>. (Accessed: 2 May 2022).
- Calhoun, C. (2017). Populism, nationalism and Brexit. In: Outhwaite, W. (ed.) *Brexit: Sociological Responses*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 55–76.
- Cameron, D. (2013). *EU speech at Bloomberg*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/eu-speech-at-bloomberg> (Accessed: 4 December 2019).
- Cap, P. (2019). “Britain is full to bursting point!”: Immigration themes in the Brexit discourse of the UK Independence Party. In: Koller, V., Kopf, S. and Miglbauer, M. (eds.) *Discourses of Brexit*. Oxford: Routledge, pp. 69–85.
- Capdevila, R. and Callaghan, J. (2008). “It’s not racist. It’s common sense”. A critical analysis of political discourse around asylum and immigration in the UK. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 18(1): 1–16.
- Capoccia, G. (2016). Critical Junctures. In Fioretos, O., Falleti, T. and Sheingate, A. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Historical Institutionalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Carey, S. (2002). Undivided Loyalties: Is National Identity an Obstacle to European Integration? *European Union Politics*, 3(4): 387–419.
- Carl, N., Dennison, J. and Evans, G. (2019). European but not European enough: An explanation for Brexit. *European Union Politics*, 20(2): 282–304.
- Carless, D. and Douglas, K. (2008). Narrative, identity and mental health: How men with serious mental illness re-story their lives through sport and exercise. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 9(5): 576–594.
- Carranza, I. (2015). Narrating and Arguing: From Plausibility to Local Moves. In: de Fina, A. and Georgakopoulou, A. (eds.) *The Handbook of Narrative Analysis*. New Jersey: Wiley Blackwell, pp. 57–75.
- Carrell, S. (2019). Sturgeon demands Scottish independence referendum powers after SNP landslide. *The Guardian*, 13 December. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/dec/13/nicola-sturgeon-to-demand-powers-for-scottish-independence-referendum> (Accessed: 17 April 2020).
- Carter, R. and Nash, W. (1990). *Seeing through language: A guide to styles of English writing*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Chabe, T. (2016). Brexit will allow Britain to embrace the Commonwealth. *The Telegraph*. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/eureferendum/12193101/Brexit-will-allow-Britain-to-embrace-the-Commonwealth.html> (Accessed: 15 January 2020).
- Charteris-Black, J. (2019) *Metaphors of Brexit - No Cherries on the Cake?* Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chernobrov, D. (2019). Who is the modern “traitor”? “Fifth column” accusations in US and UK politics and media. *Politics*, 39(3): 347–362.

Cinque, S., Nyberg, D. and Starkey, K. (2021). 'Living at the border of poverty': How theater actors maintain their calling through narrative identity work. *Human Relations*, 74(11): 1755-1780.

Clifton, J. and Van De Mierop, D. (2010). 'Doing' ethos—A discursive approach to the strategic deployment and negotiation of identities in meetings. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 42(9): 2449-2461.

Cochrane, A. (2020). From Brexit to the break-up of...England. Thinking in and beyond the nation. In: Guderjan, M., Mackay, H. and Stedman, G. (eds.) *Contested Britain. Brexit, Austerity and Agency*. Bristol: Bristol University Press, pp. 161–173.

Cockburn, P. (2018). Brexit Britain is facing a deep crisis of self-confidence. It will only end in tears – and rising nationalism. *The Independent*, 7 December. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/brexit-britain-nationalism-racism-class-religion-leave-remain-identity-a8672691.html> (Accessed: 17 April 2020).

Colley, L. (1992). *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*. London: Yale University Press.

Collins, P.H. and Bilge, S. (2020). *Intersectionality*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Commonwealth Secretariat. (2021). *The Commonwealth*. Available at: <https://thecommonwealth.org> (Accessed: 15 December 2021).

Conboy, M. (2006). *Tabloid Britain: Constructing a Community Through Language*. Oxford: Routledge.

Condor, S. (2000). Pride and Prejudice: Identity Management in English People's Talk about "this Country." *Discourse & Society*, 11(2): 175–205.

Cook, G. (2011). British Applied Linguistics: impacts of and impacts on. In: Angouri, J., Daller, M. and Treffers-Daller, J. (eds.) *The Impact of Applied Linguistics Proceedings of the 44th Annual Meeting of the British Association for Applied Linguistics 1-3 September 2011 University of the West of England*. University of the West of England.

- Coupland, N. (2008). The delicate constitution of identity in face-to-face accommodation: A response to Trudgill. *Language in Society*, 37(2), 267-270.
- Cross, S. (2008). Hippoglossus hippoglossus and chips: Twice please love? Adventures in the underbelly of Euromyths. In Keeble, R. (ed.) *Communication Ethics Now*. Leicester: Troubador Publishing Ltd, pp. 52-57.
- Culpeper, J. (2009). Keyness: words, parts-of-speech and semantic categories in the character-talk of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 14(1): 29-59.
- Curtice, J., Hudson, N., & Montagu, I. (eds.). (2020). *British Social Attitudes: The 37th Report*. The National Centre for Social Research.
- Da Silva Marques, J. (2020). "We've been told we've overstayed our welcome," EU Citizens in UK still fear discrimination. *Euronews*, 31 January. Available at: <https://www.euronews.com/2020/01/31/we-ve-been-told-we-ve-overstayed-our-welcome-eu-citizens-in-uk-still-fear-discrimination> (Accessed: 27 April 2020).
- Daddow, O. (2006). Euroscepticism and the culture of the discipline of history. *Review of International Studies*, 32(2): 309-328.
- Daddow, O. (2012). The UK Media and "Europe": From Permissive Consensus to Destructive Dissent. *International Affairs*, 88(6): 1219-1236.
- Daddow, O. (2015). Interpreting the Outsider Tradition in British European Policy Speeches from Thatcher to Cameron. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 53(1): 71-88.
- Daddow, O. (2019). GlobalBritainTM: the discursive construction of Britain's post-Brexit world role. *Global Affairs*, 6(1): 6-22.
- Daily Express. (2016). We're out of the EU. *Daily Express*, 25 June.
- Daily Mail. (2016). *Lies. Greedy elites. Or a great future outside a broken, dying Europe ... If you believe in Britain vote Leave.*

Daily Mail. (2019). PARLIAMENT IN PARALYSIS. PUBLIC TRUST IN PIECES. BUT MPS HAVE ONE LAST CHANCE TO STOP THIS BEING THE DAY BREXIT - AND FAITH IN OUR DEMOCRACY - DIES. *Daily Mail*, 29 March. Available at: <https://www-pressreader-com.ezproxy.nottingham.ac.uk/uk/daily-mail/20190329/281870119792948> (Accessed: 4 December 2020).

Daily Star. (2016). *Cam quits, BoJo favourite for PM. Now let's make Britain great again.*

Davies, K. (2021). Sticking Together in “Divided Britain”: Talking Brexit in Everyday Family Relationships. *Sociology*, 56(1): 97–113.

Davies, K. and Carter, A. (2021). Research relationalities and shifting sensitivities: doing ethnographic research about Brexit and everyday family relationships. *Families, Relationships and Societies*, 10(1): 169–177.

De Cillia, R., Reisigl, M. and Wodak, R. (1999). The Discursive Construction of National Identities. *Discourse & Society*, 10(2): 149–173.

De Fina, A. (2003). *Identity in Narrative: A study of immigrant discourse*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

De Fina, A. (2009). Narratives in interview. The case of accounts: For an interactional approach to narrative genres. *Narrative Inquiry*, 19(2): 233–358.

De Fina, A. (2015). Narrative and Identities. In: De Fina, A. and Georgakopoulou A. (eds.) *The Handbook of Narrative Analysis*. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, pp. 351-368.

De Fina, A. and Georgakopoulou, A. (2012). *Analyzing Narrative. Discourse and Sociolinguistic Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

De Fina, A. and Perrino, S. (2011). Introduction: Interviews vs. ‘natural’ contexts: A false dilemma. *Language in Society*, 40(1): 1–11.

Dearing, J. and Rogers, E. (1996). *Agenda-Setting*. London: Sage.

Delanty, G. and Rumford, C. (2005). *Rethinking Europe: Social theory and the implications of Europeanization*. London: Routledge.

Demmen, J., Semino, E., Demjén, Z., et al. (2015). A computer-assisted study of the use of Violence metaphors for cancer and end of life by patients, family carers and health professionals. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 20(2): 205–231.

Department for International Trade (2017). *Preparing for our future UK trade policy*.

Available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/654714/Preparing_for_our_future_UK_trade_policy_Report_Web_Accessible.pdf

(Accessed: 5 December 2019).

Di Masso, A., Dixon, J. and Durrheim, K. (2013). ‘Place attachment as discursive practice’.

In: Manzo, L. and Devine-Wright, P. (Eds). *Place Attachment: Advances in Theory, Methods and Applications*. London: Routledge.

Diez Medrano, J. (2003). *Framing Europe: Attitudes to European Integration in Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Don, Z. M., Knowles, G. and Fatt, C. K. (2010). Nationhood and Malaysian identity: a corpus-based approach. *Text & Talk*, 30(3): 267–287.

Drummond, R. and Schlee, E. (2016). ‘Identity in variationist sociolinguistics’. In: Preece, S. (ed.) *The Routledge handbook of language and identity*. London: Routledge, pp. 50-65.

Du Bois, J.W. (2007). The stance triangle. In: Englebretson, R. (ed.) *Stancetaking in Discourse: Subjectivity, evaluation, interaction*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins, pp. 139–182.

Duchesne, S. and Frogner, A. (2008). National and European Identifications: a Dual Relationship. *Comparative European Politics*, 6(2): 143–168.

Duchesne, S., Frazer, E., Haegel, F. and Van Ingelgom, V. (2013). *Citizens’ Reactions to European Integration Compared. Overlooking Europe*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Duffy, B. (2021). *UK's "culture war" risks leading to US-style divisions – but we're not there yet*, 29 June. Available at: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/uks-culture-war-risks-leading-to-us-style-divisions-although-not-there-yet>.

Duffy, B., Hewlett, K., Murkin, G., et al. (2021). *"Culture wars" in the UK*.

Dugalès, N. and Tucker, G. (2012). Representations of representation: European institutions in the French and British press. In: Bayley, P. and Williams, G. (eds.) *European Identity: What the Media Say*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 21–54.

Eardley, N. (2021). Scottish independence: What is behind the shake-up in No 10? *BBC News*, 5 February. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-55942354> (Accessed: 15 December 2021).

Eaton, M. and Smith, A. (2020). The Use of Historical Analogy in the 2017 Parliamentary Debates on the Future of Post-Brexit Commonwealth Trade. *Political Studies Review*, 18(4): 591–610.

Eckert, P. and McConnell-Ginet, S. (1992). Think practically and look locally: Language and gender as community-based practice. *Annual review of anthropology*, 21(1), 461–488.

Edgington, T. and Morris, C. (2021). Brexit: What's the Northern Ireland Protocol? *BBC News*, 8 November. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/explainers-53724381> (Accessed: 15 December 2021).

Eldridge, J., Kitzinger, J. and Williams, K. (1997). *The Mass Media and Power in Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Elphicke, C. (2019). The ghost of Project Fear is back again, but Britain stands ready for Brexit. *BrexitCentral*, 8 July. Available at: <https://brexitcentral.com/the-ghost-of-project-fear-is-back-again-but-britain-stands-ready-for-brexit/>.

EUNAVFOR, MED. (2015). *About Us*. Available at: <https://www.operationsophia.eu> (Accessed: 15 October 2020).

- European Commission. (2019a). *EU Single Market*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/factsheet_single_market.pdf (Accessed: 16 November 2020).
- European Commission. (2019b). *Special Eurobarometer 493: Discrimination in the European Union*. 493. European Commission.
- European Commission. (2021). *Common European Asylum System*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum_en (Accessed: 15 October 2020).
- European Commission. (2021). *The EU values*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/component-library/eu/about/eu-values/> (Accessed: 15 December 2021).
- European Union. (2019). *EU citizenship*. Available at: https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/eu-citizenship_en (Accessed: 5 December 2019).
- Eurostat. (2019). *Glossary: Extra-EU*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Extra-EU> (Accessed: 5 December 2019).
- Evans, C. (2019). Investigating ‘care leaver’ identity: A narrative analysis of personal experience stories. *Text & Talk*, 39(1): 25-45.
- Express Online. (2019). Joy that turned to anger over big Brexit betrayal, EXPRESS COMMENT. *Express Online*, 30 March.
- Fabbrini, S. (2019). Constructing and de-constructing the European political identity: the contradictory logic of the EU’s institutional system. *Comparative European Politics*, 17(4): 477–490.
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and Power*. London: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Media Discourse*. London: Hachette Livre.
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. London: Routledge.

Fairclough, N. (2010). *Critical Discourse Analysis. The Critical Study of Language*. London: Routledge.

Fairclough, N. (2011). Critical discourse analysis. In: Gee, J. P. and Handford, M. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. London: Routledge, pp. 9–20.

Fairclough, N. (2015). *Language and Power*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Routledge.

Farage, N. (2013). *Nigel Farage's speech at the UKIP conference--full text and audio*.

Available at: <http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/coffeehouse/2013/09/nigel-farages-speech-full-text-and-audio> (Accessed: 9 December 2019).

Farage, N. (2014a). *Address at the UKIP spring conference*. Available at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6JgyJp_QJw (Accessed: 6 December 2019).

Farage, N. (2014b). *Speech to European Parliament*. Available at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=hkYO6hApXd8 (Accessed: 6 December 2019).

Fenton, S. (2012). Resentment, class and social sentiments about the nation: The ethnic majority in England. *Ethnicities*, 12(4): 465–483.

Filsinger, M., Wamsler, S., Erhardt, J., et al. (2021). National identity and populism: The relationship between conceptions of nationhood and populist attitudes. *Nations and Nationalism*, 27(3): 656–672.

Financial Times (2016). *Britain has had enough of experts, says Gove*. Available at:

<https://www.ft.com/content/3be49734-29cb-11e6-83e4-abc22d5d108c> (Accessed: 31 March 2022).

Financial Times (2021). *Labour shortages must not be seen as simple case of business vs*

Brexit. Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/7c8bf648-dd0a-4558-9544-f77bde4798b2> (Accessed: 15 December 2021).

Flowerdew, L. (2011). Corpus-based discourse analysis. In: Gee, J. P. and Handford, M. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. London: Routledge, pp. 174–187.

- Foreign and Commonwealth Office. (2018). *Global Britain: delivering on our international ambition*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/global-britain-delivering-on-our-international-ambition> (Accessed: 2 May 2022).
- Foucault, M. (2002 [1969]). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Translated by A.M Sheridan-Smith. London: Routledge.
- Friedland, L.A., Hove, T. and Rojas, H. (2006). The networked public sphere. *Javnost-the public*, 13(4): 5-26.
- Full Fact (2017). *£350 million EU claim “a clear misuse of official statistics.”* Available at: <https://fullfact.org/europe/350-million-week-boris-johnson-statistics-authority-misuse/> (Accessed: 15 December 2021).
- Gabrielatos, C. (2018). Keyness analysis: Nature, metrics and techniques. In: Taylor, C. and Marchi, A. (eds.) *Corpus Approaches to Discourse: A Critical Review*. Routledge: London, pp. 225–258.
- Gabrielatos, C. and Baker, P. (2008). Fleeing, Sneaking, Flooding: A Corpus Analysis of Discursive Constructions of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK Press, 1996-2005. *Journal of English Linguistics*, 36(1): 5–38.
- Gamble, A. and Wright, T. (2009). Introduction. In: Gamble, A. and Wright, T. (eds.) *Britishness: Perspectives on the British Question*. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons.
- Garside, R. and Smith, N. (1997). A hybrid grammatical tagger: CLAWS4. In: Garside, R., Leech, G. and McEnery, A. (eds.) *Corpus Annotation: Linguistic Information from Computer Text Corpora*. London: Longman, pp. 179–193.
- Garton-Ash, T. (2001) Is Britain European? *International Affairs*, 77 (1): 1–13.
- Gaskarth, J. (2013). *British Foreign Policy: Crises, Conflicts and Future Challenges*. Cambridge: Polity.

- Gaskarth, J. (2014). Strategizing Britain's role in the world. *International Affairs*, 90(3): 559–581.
- Gaston, S. (2020). *UK Public Opinion on Foreign Policy and Global Affairs Annual Survey – 2020*. London: British Foreign Policy Group.
- Geddes, A. (2017). The referendum and Britain's broken immigration politics. In: Jackson, D., Thorsen, E. and Wring, D. (eds.). *EU Referendum Analysis 2016: Media, Voters and the Campaign*. Available at: <http://www.meandeurope.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/EU-Referendum-Analysis-2016-Jackson-Thorsen-and-Wring-v2.pdf> (Accessed: 28 April 2020).
- Gee, J.P. (2001). *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis*. London: Routledge.
- Georgakopoulou, A. (2007). *Small stories, interaction and identities*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- George, S. (1990). *An Awkward Partner: Britain in the European Community*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gibbins, J. (2014). *Britain, Europe & National Identity: Self and Other in International Relations*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gifford, C. (2016). Brexit: the destruction of a collective good. In: Jackson, D., Thorsen, E. and Wring, D. (eds.). *EU Referendum Analysis 2016: Media, Voters and the Campaign*. Poole: Bournemouth University, p. 15.
- Glencross, A. (2016). The great miscalculation: David Cameron's renegotiation and the EU Referendum campaign. In: Jackson, D., Thorsen, E. and Wring, D. (eds.). *EU Referendum Analysis 2016: Media, Voters and the Campaign*. Poole: Bournemouth University.
- Good, C. (2001). The European Debate in and between Germany and Great Britain. In: Musolff, A. Good, C., Points, P. et al. (eds.) *Attitudes Towards Europe: Language in the unification process*. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 151–178.
- Goodman, S. and Speer, S. (2007). Category Use in the Construction of Asylum Seekers. *Discourse Studies*, 4(2): 165–185.

- Goodwin, M.J. and Heath, O. (2016). The 2016 Referendum, Brexit and the Left Behind: An Aggregate-level Analysis of the Result. *The Political Quarterly*, 87(3): 323–332.
- Government Digital Service (2020). *Content design: planning, writing and managing content*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/content-design/content-types> (Accessed: 15 December 2021).
- Gramsci, A. (2006). Hegemony, intellectuals and the state. In: Storey, J. (ed.) *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*. 3rd ed. Essex: Pearson, pp. 85–91.
- Green, C. (2017). Mapping the Brexit vote. Available at: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/news-and-events/oxford-and-brexit/brexit-analysis/mapping-brexit-vote> (Accessed: 15 February 2022).
- Greenfeld, L. and Eastwood, J. (2009). National Identity. In: C. Boix and C. Stokes (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 256–272.
- Guma, T. and Dafydd Jones, R. (2018). “Where are we going to go now?” European Union migrants’ experiences of hostility, anxiety, and (non-)belonging during Brexit. *Population, Space and Place*, 25(1): 1–10.
- Gumperz, J. J. and Cook-Gumperz, J. (1982). ‘Introduction: Language and the communication of social identity’. In: Gumperz, J. (ed.) *Language and Social Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–21.
- Habib, B. (2019). The success of Brexit Britain has left Project Fear on its deathbed. *Telegraph Online*, 20 September. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2019/09/20/success-brexit-britain-has-left-project-fear-deathbed/> (Accessed: 16 April 2020).
- Hall, S. (1973). *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse*. Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham.

- Hall, S. (1996). Introduction: Who Needs “Identity”? In: Hall, S. and Du Gay, P. (eds.) *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage, pp. 1–17.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1985). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Halliday, M.A.K. and Matthiessen, C. (2004). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. 3rd ed. London: Hodder Arnold.
- Handford, M. (2014). Cultural identities in international, interorganisational meetings: a corpus-informed discourse analysis of indexical we. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 14(1): 41-58.
- Hanna, P. and Mwale, S. (2017). “I’m Not with You, Yet I Am...” Virtual Face-to-Face Interviews. In: Braun, V., Clarke, V. and Gray, D. (eds.) *Collecting Qualitative Data*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 235–255.
- Harcup, T. and O’Neill, D. (2017). What is News? News values revisited (again). *Journalism Studies*, 18(12): 1470–1488.
- Hardie, A., Koller, V., Rayson, P., et al. (2007). Exploiting a semantic annotation tool for metaphor analysis. In: Davies, M., Rayson, P., Hunston, S., et al. (eds.) *Proceedings of the Corpus Linguistics 2007 Conference*.
- Hardman, R. (2017). ROBERT HARDMAN: Why the EU’s hypocrite-in-chief is a prime example of the hubris that could tear it apart. *Daily Mail*, 3 January.
- Hardt-Mautner, G. (1995). ‘Only Connect.’ Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics. In: *UCREL Technical Paper 6*. Lancaster: Lancaster University.
- Harmesen, R. and Spiering, M. (2004) (eds.) *Euroscepticism: party politics, national identity and European Integration*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Hatoss, A. (2012). Where are you from? Identity construction and experiences of ‘othering’ in the narratives of Sudanese refugee-background Australians. *Discourse & Society*, 23(1): 47–68.

- Hawkins, B. (2012). Nation, Separation and Threat: An Analysis of British Media Discourses on the European Union Treaty Reform Process. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 50(4): 561-577.
- Hearn, J. (2017). Vox Populi: Nationalism, Globalisation and the Balance of Power in the Making of Brexit. In: Outhwaite, W. (eds) *Brexit: Sociological Responses*. London: Anthem Press, pp. 19–30.
- Henderson, A. and McEwen, N. (2005). Do Shared Values Underpin National Identity? Examining the Role of Values in National Identity in Canada and the United Kingdom. *National Identities*, 7(2): 173–191.
- Henderson, A. and Wyn Jones, R. (2021). *Englishness: the political force transforming Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Henkel, I. (2018). How the laughing, irreverent Briton trumped fact-checking: a textual analysis of fake news in British newspaper stories about the EU. *Journalism Education*, 6(3): 87–97.
- Higgins, K. (2018). National Belonging Post-Referendum: Britons Living in Other EU Member States Respond to “Brexit.” *Area*, 51(2): 277–284.
- Hobolt, S. B. (2016). The Brexit vote: a divided nation, a divided continent. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 23(9): 1259–1277.
- Holmes, C. (1991). *A Tolerant Country? Immigrants, Refugees and Minorities in Britain*. London: Routledge.
- Home Office. (2019). *Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2018/2019*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/839172/hate-crime-1819-hosb2419.pdf (Accessed: 27 April 2020).
- Hroch, M. (2019). The nation as the cradle of nationalism and patriotism. *Nations and Nationalism*, 26(1): 5–21.

- Hug, A. (2020). *Finding Britain's role in a changing world: The principles for Global Britain*. London: The Foreign Policy Centre. Available at: <https://fpc.org.uk/publications/the-principles-for-global-britain/> (Accessed: 18 November 2020).
- Ichijo, A. (2008). *The Balancing Act: National Identity and Sovereignty for Britain in Europe*. Exeter: Societas.
- Ifversen, J. (2019). A Guided Tour into the Question of Europe. In: Brolsma, M., Bruin, R. and Lok, M. (eds.) *Eurocentrism in European History and Memory*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Iqbal, L., Ahmad, A. and Ullah, I. (2020) Narrative Style: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Oral Personal Experience Narratives. *Sir Syed Journal of Education & Social Research*, 3(1): 41–47.
- Islentyeva, A. and Dunkel, D. (2022). National Myth in UK-EU Representations by British Conservative Prime Ministers from Churchill to Johnson. *Societies*, 12(14): 1-17.
- ITV Central. (2020). People in the Midlands see themselves as more “English” than “British.” *ITV Central*, 6 January. Available at: <https://www.itv.com/news/central/2020-01-06/people-in-the-midlands-see-themselves-as-more-english-than-british/>.
- Jahedi, M., Abdullah, F. and Mukundan, J. (2014). An Overview of Focal Approaches of Critical Discourse Analysis. *International Journal of Education & Literary Studies*, 2(4): 28–35.
- Jaworska, S. (2018). Change But no Climate Change: Discourses of Climate Change in Corporate Social Responsibility Reporting in the Oil Industry. *International Journal of Business Communication*, 55(2): 194–219.
- Jennings, W. and Stoker, G. (2016). The Bifurcation of Politics: Two Englands. *The Political Quarterly*, 87(3): 372–382.

- Johnson, B. (2016). Please Vote Leave on Thursday, because we'll never get this chance again. *The Telegraph*, 19 June. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/19/please-vote-leave-on-thursday-because-we-ll-never-get-this-chance/> (Accessed: 18 May 2020).
- Johnson, B. (2019). Boris Johnson: "Let's get Brexit done. Let's bring our country together." Full text of his conference speech. Available at: <https://www.conservativehome.com/parliament/2019/10/boris-johnson-lets-get-brexit-done-lets-bring-our-country-together-full-text-of-his-conference-speech.html> (Accessed: 28 April 2021).
- Jones, R. H. (2020). (Inter)visibility: A rejoinder to 'Collecting qualitative data during a pandemic' by David Silverman. *Communication & Medicine*, 17(2): 187-190.
- Julios, C. (2008). *Contemporary British Identity. English Language, Migrants and Public Discourse*. Hampshire: Ashgate.
- Jump, C. and Michell, J. (2021). *Educational attainment alone can correctly classify over 90% of local authorities by voting outcome in the EU referendum*. Available at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/educational-attainment-brexit/> (Accessed: 15 February 2022).
- Kang, B. (2018). Collocation and word association. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 23(1): 85-113.
- Kanter, J. (2021). We want more Britishness on TV, John Whittingdale tells broadcasters. *The Times*, 16 September.
- Kapoor, N. (2011). The advancement of racial neoliberalism in Britain. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 26(6): 1028–1046.
- Keith, J. (2019). 'Polish go home' — Racist messages appear in public areas in Dundee. *The Courier*, 14 March. Available at:

<https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/local/dundee/847130/polish-go-home-racist-messages-appear-in-public-areas-in-dundee/> (Accessed: 27 April 2020).

Kelley, N. (2019). *British social attitudes survey: Britain's shifting identities and attitudes*.

36. National Centre for Research.

Kenny, M. (2012). The many faces of Englishness. Identity, diversity and nationhood in England. *Public Policy Research*, 19(3): 152–159.

Kenny, M. and Pearce, N. (2016). After Brexit: The Eurosceptic dream of an Anglosphere. *Juncture*, 22(4): 304-307.

Khabaz, D. (2018). Framing Brexit: The role, and the impact, of the national newspapers on the EU Referendum. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 39(4): 496–508.

Khalili, L. (2017). After Brexit: Reckoning with Britain's racism and xenophobia. In: *The Brexit crisis: A Verso report*. London: Verso, pp. 31-48.

KhosraviNik, M. (2010). Actor descriptions, action attributions, and argumentation: towards a systematization of CDA analytical categories in the representation of social groups. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 7(1): 55–72.

Kitzinger, J. (1995). The Face of Aids. In: Marcova, I. and Farr, R. (eds.) *Representations of Health and Illness*. Chur: Harwood Academic Publishers, pp. 49–66.

Koegler, C., Malreddy, P. K. and Tronicke, M. (2020). The colonial remains of Brexit: Empire nostalgia and narcissistic nationalism. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 56(5): 585-592.

Koller, V. (2012). How to Analyse Collective Identity in Discourse – Textual and Contextual Parameters. *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines*, 5(2): 19–38.

Koller, V. and Ryan, J. (2019). A nation divided: Metaphors and scenarios in the media coverage of the 2016 British EU referendum. In: Hart, C. (ed.) *Cognitive linguistic*

approaches to text and discourse: From poetics to politics. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 131–156.

Koller, V., Kopf, S. and Miglbauer, M. (eds.) (2019). *Discourses of Brexit*. Oxford: Routledge.

Kopf, S. (2019). ‘Get your shyte together Britain’: Wikipedians’ treatment of Brexit. In Koller, V., Kopf, S. and Miglbauer, M. (eds.) *Discourses of Brexit*. London: Routledge, pp. 155–170.

Koven, M. (2002). An analysis of speaker role inhabitation in narratives of personal experience. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 34(2): 167-217.

Krzyżanowski, M. (2010). *The discursive construction of European identities: a multilevel approach to discourse and identity in the transforming European Union*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Kuhn, R. (2017). *Politics and the Media in Britain*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Labov, W. (1966). *The social stratification of English in New York City*. Washington, DC: Cent. Appl. Ling.

Labov, W. (1972). *Language in the Inner City. Studies in the Black English Vernacular*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Lahuerta, S. and Iusmen, I. (2019). *The impact of Brexit on EU nationals’ vulnerability: the case of Polish nationals*. Available at:

https://blogsmedia.lse.ac.uk/blogs.dir/107/files/2019/06/Polish_Vulnerability_report_v6-screen_pages.pdf (Accessed: 15 December 2021).

Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Law, A. (2001). Near and far: banal national identity and the press in Scotland. *Media, Culture & Society*, 23(3): 299–317.
- Lawler, S. (2002). Narrative in social research. In: May, T. (ed.) *Qualitative research in action*. London: Sage.
- Le Bossé, M. (2021). Ethnonationalism. In: *Oxford Bibliographies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leave, V. (2016) *Why Vote Leave*. Available at: http://www.voteleavetakecontrol.org/why_vote_leave.html (Accessed: 5 December 2019).
- Leech, G. (1992). Corpora and theories of linguistic performance. In: Svartvik, J. (ed.) *Directions in Corpus Linguistics. Proceedings of Nobel Symposium 82, Stockholm, 4-8 August 1991*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Leith, M. S. and Sim, D. (2022). Indifference or hostility? Anti-Scottishness in a post-Brexit England. *Identities*, 0(0): 1-19.
- Leith, M. S. and Soule, D. (2011). *Political Discourse and National Identity in Scotland*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Lennon, H. W. and Kilby, L. (2020). A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of ‘Brexit’: Flagging the Nation in Political Cartoons. In Demasi, M. A. et al. (eds.) *Political Communication. Discursive Perspectives*. Palgrave Studies in Discursive Psychology, pp. 115-146.
- Levy, D., Aslan, B. and Bironzo, D. (2016). *UK PRESS COVERAGE OF THE EU REFERENDUM*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.
- Lutzky, U. and Kehoe, A. (2019). ‘Friends don’t let friends go Brexiting without a mandate’: changing discourses of Brexit in The Guardian. In: Koller, V., Kopf, S. and Miglbauer, M. (eds.) *Discourses of Brexit*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Maccaferri, M. (2019). Splendid isolation again? Brexit and the role of the press and online media in re-narrating the European discourse. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 16(4): 289–402.

- Machin, D. and Mayr, A. (2012). *How to do critical discourse analysis: a multimodal introduction*. London: Sage.
- Macnab, S. (2019). Nicola Sturgeon to talk up independent Scotland's EU status in Brussels visit. *The Scotsman*, 11 June. Available at: <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/scottish-independence/nicola-sturgeon-to-talk-up-independent-scotland-s-eu-status-in-brussels-visit-1-4944888> (Accessed: 4 December 2019).
- Mair, C. (2019) Brexitness: The Ebbs and Flows of British Eurosceptic Rhetoric since 1945. *Open Library of Humanities*, 5(1): 1–26.
- Malkki, L. (1992). National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity Among Scholars and Refugees. *Cultural Anthropology*, 7(1): 24–44.
- Manners, I. (2018). Political Psychology of European Integration: The (Re)production of Identity and Difference in the Brexit Debate. *Political Psychology*, 39(6): 1213–1232.
- Marchi, A. (2018). Dividing up the data: Epistemological, methodological and practical impact of diachronic segmentation. In: Marchi, A. and Taylor, C. (eds.) *Corpus Approaches to Discourse: A Critical Review*. London: Routledge.
- Marchi, A. and Partington, A. (2012). Does “Europe” have a common historical identity? In: Bayley, P. and Williams, G. (eds) *European Identity: What the Media Say*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 118–148.
- Marcussen, M., Risse, T., Engelmann-Martin, D., et al. (1999). Constructing Europe? The evolution of French, British and German nation state identities. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 6(4): 614–633.
- Marquand, D. (1995). After Whig imperialism: Can there be a new British identity? *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 21(2): 183–193.
- Marshall, P.J. (1996). *Cambridge Illustrated History: British Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Martin, G. (1996). Euromythology and Britain in Europe. *European Business Journal*, 8(2): 26-31.
- Martin, J. and Rose, D. (2008). *Genre Relations: Mapping Culture*. London: Equinox.
- Martin, J.R. and Plum, G. (1997). Construing Experience: Some Story Genres. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 7(1-4): 299-308.
- Mautner, G. (2001). British National Identity in the European Context. In Musolff, A. Good, C., Points, P. et al. (eds.) *Attitudes Towards Europe: Language in the unification process*. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 3-22.
- May, T. (2017). *The government's negotiating objectives for exiting the EU: PM speech*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-governments-negotiating-objectives-for-exiting-the-eu-pm-speech> (Accessed: 28 April 2021).
- McClements, F. (2022). NI survey shows half of voters support a united Ireland within 15-20 years. Available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/2022/08/21/ni-survey-shows-half-of-voters-support-a-united-ireland-within-15-20-years/>. (Accessed: 24th October 2022).
- McCrone, D. (1997). Unmasking Britannia: The Rise and Fall of British National Identity. *Nations and Nationalism*, 3(4): 579-596.
- McCrone, D. and Kiely, R. (2000). Nationalism and Citizenship. *Sociology*, 34(1): 19-34.
- Mckenzie, L. (2017). "It's not ideal": Reconsidering "anger" and "apathy" in the Brexit vote among an invisible working class. *Competition & Change*, 21(3): 199-210.
- McKinney, C. (2016). *Who can vote in the EU referendum?* Available at: <https://fullfact.org/europe/who-can-vote-eu-referendum/> (Accessed: 11 May 2020).
- Meredith, J. and Richardson, E. (2019). The use of the political categories of Brexiter and Remainer in online comments about the EU referendum. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 29(1): 43-55.

- Miglbauer, M. and Koller, V. (2019). 'The British people have spoken': voter motivations and identities in vox pops on the British EU referendum. In: Koller, V., Kopf, S. and Miglbauer, M. (eds.) *Discourses of Brexit*. London: Routledge.
- Mills, S. (1997). *Discourse*. London: Routledge.
- Ministry of Defence (2020). *Defence secures largest investment since the Cold War*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/defence-secures-largest-investment-since-the-cold-war> (Accessed: 23 November 2020).
- Moffitt, B. and Tormey, S. (2014). Rethinking Populism: Politics, Mediatization and Political Style. *Political Studies*, 62: 381–397.
- Moore, E. and Podesva, R. (2009). Style, indexicality, and the social meaning of tag questions. *Language in Society*, 38(4), 447-485.
- Morris, D. (2021). *Skilled Worker Visa*. Available at: <https://www.davidsonmorris.com/skilled-worker-visa/> (Accessed: 15 December 2021).
- Morrison, J. (2019). *Essential Public Affairs for Journalists*. 6th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Morrison, J. (2019). Re-framing free movement in the countdown to Brexit? Shifting UK press portrayals of EU migrants in the wake of the referendum. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 21(3): 594-611.
- Morton, G. (2001). National identity: the Victorian and Edwardian era. In: Lynch, M. (ed.) *The Oxford Companion to Scottish History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mulderrig, J. (2003). Consuming education: a critical discourse analysis of social actors in New Labour's education policy. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, 1(1): 96–123.
- Mulderrig, J. (2011). Manufacturing Consent: A corpus-based critical discourse analysis of New Labour's educational governance. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 43(6): 562-578.

- Musolff, A. (2017). Truths, lies and figurative scenarios: Metaphors at the heart of Brexit. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 16(5): 641–657.
- Mycock, A. and Hayton, R. (2012). The Party Politics of Englishness. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 16(2): 251–272.
- Nortio, E., Jasinskaja-Lahti, I., Hämäläinen, M., et al. (2022). Fear of the Russian bear? Negotiating Finnish national identity online. *Nations and Nationalism*, 0(0): 1–16.
- O’Doherty, K. and Le Couteur, A. (2007). “Asylum seekers”, “boat people” and “illegal immigrants”: Social categorisation in the media. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 59(1): 1–12.
- O’Keeffe, A. (2012). Media and discourse analysis. In: J. Gee and M. Handford (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. London: Routledge, pp. 441–454.
- Oberhuber, F., Barenreuter, C., Krzyżanowski, M., et al. (2005). Debating the European Constitution: On representations of Europe/the EU in the press. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 4(2): 227–271.
- Ochs, E. (1992). Indexing gender. In: Duranti, A. and Goodwin, G. (eds.) *Rethinking context: Language as an interactive phenomenon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 335–358.
- Ochs, E. and Capps, L. (2001). *Living narrative: Creating lives in everyday storytelling*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Oelsner, A. and Koschut, S. (2014). A Framework for the Study of International Friendship. In: Koschut, S. and Oelsner, A. (eds.) *Friendship and International Relations*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 3–33.
- Ofcom (2017). *News consumption in the UK: 2016*. Ofcom. Available at: https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/103570/news-consumption-uk-2016.pdf (Accessed: 15 December 2021).

Ofcom (2018). *News Consumption in the UK: 2018*. Ofcom. Available at:

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0024/116529/news-consumption-2018.pdf

(Accessed: 15 December 2021).

Ofcom (2019). *News Consumption in the UK: 2019*. Available at:

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0027/157914/uk-news-consumption-2019-report.pdf (Accessed: 15 December 2021).

Ofcom (2021). *Section five: Due impartiality and due accuracy*. Available at:

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/broadcast-codes/broadcast-code/section-five-due-impartiality-accuracy> (Accessed: 13 May 2021).

Office for National Statistics (2011). *2011 Census. Who we are. How we live. What we do*.

Available at:

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20160129062745/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/index.html> (Accessed: 15 December 2021).

Office for National Statistics (2015). *Migration Statistics Quarterly Report: November 2015*.

ONS. Available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/migrationstatisticsquarterlyreport/november2015> (Accessed: 28 April 2020).

Office for National Statistics (2021). *Immigration statistics, year ending September 2021*.

Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-september-2021>.

Orwell, G. (1941). *THE LION AND THE UNICORN: SOCIALISM AND THE ENGLISH*

GENIUS. Available at: <https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell->

[foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/the-lion-and-the-unicorn-socialism-and-the-english-genius/](https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/the-lion-and-the-unicorn-socialism-and-the-english-genius/) (Accessed: 15 December 2021).

- Oteíza, T. and Pinto, D. (2008). Agency, responsibility and silence in the construction of contemporary history in Chile and Spain. *Discourse & Society*, 19(3): 333–358.
- Parekh, B. (2011). Defining British National Identity. *The Political Quarterly*, 80(1): 251–262.
- Parnell, T. (2016). The influence of socio-political ideology on discursive migrant, refugee and asylum seeker representations in *The Express*. *Innervate*, 9: 1-21.
- Partington, A. (2004). Corpora and discourse, a most congruous beast. In: Partington, A., Morley, J. and Haarman, L. (eds.) *Corpora and Discourse*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, pp. 9–18.
- Partington, A., Duguid, A. and Taylor, C. (2013). *Patterns and Meaning in Discourse: Theory and practice in corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS)*. Studies in Corpus Linguistics 55. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Patel, T. G. and Connelley, L. (2019). “Post-race” racisms in the narratives of “Brexit” voters. *The Sociological Review*, 67(5): 968–984.
- Peden, G. C. (2012). Suez and Britain’s decline as a world power. *The Historical Journal*, 55(4): 1073-1096.
- Pérez-Paredes, P., Aguado Jiménez, P. and Sánchez Hernández, S. (2016). Constructing immigrants in UK legislation and Administration informative texts: A corpus-driven study (2007–2011). *Discourse & Society*, 28(1): 81–103.
- Perkowski, N. (2016). Deaths, Interventions, Humanitarianism and Human Rights in the Mediterranean ‘Migration Crisis’. *Mediterranean Politics*, 21(2): 331–335.
- Philo, G. (2007). Can Discourse Analysis Successfully Explain the Content of Media and Journalistic Practice? *Journalism Studies*, 8(2): 175–196.
- Poberezhnyi, D. (2021). Stance-taking on Brexit in small stories on Facebook. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 11(9): 998-1006.

- Pojanapunya, P. and Watson Todd, R. (2018). Log-likelihood and odds ratio: Keyness statistics for different purposes of keyword analysis. *Corpus Linguistics and Linguistic Theory*, 14(1): 133-167.
- Potts, A. (2015). Filtering the Flood: Semantic Tagging as a Method of Identifying Salient Discourse Topics in a Large Corpus of Hurricane Katrina Reportage. In: Baker, P. and McEnery, T. (eds.) *Corpora and Discourse Studies - Integrating Discourse and Corpora*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 285–304.
- Preece, S. (2016). ‘Introduction: Language and identity in applied linguistics’. In: Preece, S. (ed.) *The Routledge handbook of language and identity*. London: Routledge, pp. 1-16.
- Prentice, S. (2010). Using automated semantic tagging in Critical Discourse Analysis: A case study on Scottish independence from a Scottish nationalist perspective. *Discourse & Society*, 21(4): 405–437.
- Prentice, S., Rayson, P. and Taylor, P. (2012). The language of Islamic extremism: Towards an automated identification of beliefs, motivations and justifications. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 17(2): 259–286.
- Pritchard, A.E. (2016). Brexit vote is about the supremacy of Parliament and nothing else. *The Telegraph*, 13 June. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2016/06/12/brexit-vote-is-about-the-supremacy-of-parliament-and-nothing-els/> (Accessed: 18 May 2020).
- Raab, D. (2019). *A truly global future awaits us after Brexit: article by Dominic Raab*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/a-truly-global-future-awaits-us-after-brexit-dominic-raab> (Accessed: 15 December 2021).
- Räikkönen, J. (2019). At the heart and in the margins: Discursive construction of British national identity in relation to the EU in British parliamentary debates from 1973 to 2015. *Discourse & Society*, 30(4): 412-431.

- Räikkönen, J. (2022). Are ‘we’ European? We and us in British EU-related newspaper articles in 1975–2015. *Journal of Corpora and Discourse Studies*, 5(1): 1–25.
- Rankin, J. (2020). Britain’s EU citizens ‘at risk of discrimination’ after Brexit, say MEPs. *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/jan/15/eu-citizens-in-uk-risk-discrimination-in-jobs-and-housing> (Accessed: 27 April 2020).
- Rayson, P. (2008). From key words to key semantic domains. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 13(4): 519–549.
- Rayson, P., Archer, D., Piao, S., et al. (2004). The UCREL Semantic Analysis System. In *proceedings of the workshop on Beyond Named Entity Recognition Semantic labelling for NLP tasks in association with 4th International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation (LREC 2004)*, pp. 7–12.
- Ridley, L. (2016). Which Newspapers Support Brexit In The EU Referendum? *Huffington Post*, 21 June.
- Riessman, C. K. (2003). Performing identities in illness narrative: masculinity and multiple sclerosis. *Qualitative Research*, 3(1): 5–33.
- Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*. London: Sage.
- Ringeisen-Biardeaud, J. (2017). “Let’s take back control”: Brexit and the Debate on Sovereignty. *French Journal of British Studies*, 22(2): 1-17.
- Risse, T. (2004). European Institutions and Identity Change: What Have We Learned? In Herrmann, R., Brewer, M. and Risse, T. (eds.) *Identities in Europe and the Institutions of the European Union*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Roberts, A. (2018). *With Europe, but not of it*. 17 February. Available at: <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/with-europe-but-not-of-it> (Accessed: 31 August 2021).
- Rone, J. (2022). Instrumentalising sovereignty claims in British pro- and anti-Brexit mobilisations. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 0(0): 1-18.

- Roshchin, E. (2011). Friendship of the enemies: Twentieth century treaties of the United Kingdom and the USSR. *International Politics*, 48: 71–91.
- Rowinski, P. (2017). *Evolving Euroscepticisms in the British and Italian Press: Selling the Public Short*. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Schiffrin, D. (1996). Narrative as self-portrait: Sociolinguistic constructions of identity. *Language in Society*, 25(2): 167–203.
- Schlesinger, P. (1991). Media, the political order and national identity. *Media, Culture & Society*, 13(3): 297–308.
- Schrøder, K. C. (2018). Audience Reception Research in a Post-broadcasting Digital Age. *Television & New Media*, 20(2): 155–169.
- Scott, M. (1999). *WordSmith Tools Help Manual*. Oxford: Mike Scott and Oxford University Press.
- Scottish Government (2017). *Scotland must have choice over future*. Available at: <https://news.gov.scot/news/scotland-must-have-choice-over-future> (Accessed: 6 July 2020).
- Searle, J. R. (1979). *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Seo, S. (2013). Hallidayean transitivity analysis: The Battle for Tripoli in the contrasting headlines of two national newspapers. *Discourse & Society*, 24(6): 774–791.
- Shackleton, M. (2016). Britain in Brussels after the Referendum: Insider or Outsider? *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, 12(4): 816–823.
- Shoemaker, P., Lee, J. H. Han, G., and Cohen A. A. (2007). Proximity and Scope as News Values. In: Devereux, E. (ed.) *Media Studies: Key Issues and Debates*. London: Sage.
- Siles-Brügge, G. (2019). Bound by Gravity or Living in a “Post Geography Trading World”? Expert Knowledge and Affective Spatial Imaginaries in the Construction of the UK’s Post-Brexit Trade Policy. *New Political Economy*, 24(3): 422–439.

- Sinclair, J. and Coulthard, M. (1975). *Towards an Analysis of Discourse: The English Used by Teachers and Pupils*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Skey, M. (2011). ‘Sod them, I’m English’: The changing status of the ‘majority’ English in post-devolution Britain. *Ethnicities*, 12(1): 106–125.
- Skills for Care (2020). *Workforce nationality figures*. Available at: <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/adult-social-care-workforce-data/Workforce-intelligence/publications/Topics/Workforce-nationality.aspx> (Accessed: 24 October 2020).
- Slembrouck, S. (2001). Explanation, interpretation and critique in the analysis of discourse. *Critique of Anthropology*, 21: 33–57.
- Smith, A. (1991). *National Identity*. Reno: University of Nevada Press.
- Smith, A. (1992). National identity and the idea of European unity. *International Affairs*, 68(1): 55–76.
- Smith, F. (2016). Britishness and Brexit. In: Jackson, D. and Thorsen, E. (eds.) *EU Referendum Analysis 2016: Media, Voters and the Campaign. Early reflections from leading UK academics*. Bournemouth: Bournemouth University, p. 64.
- Sobolewska, M. and Robert, F. (2020). *Brexitland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Society, H. (2019). *Audit of Political Engagement 16: The 2019 Report*. 16. London: Hansard Society. Available at: <https://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/publications/reports/audit-of-political-engagement-16> (Accessed: 7 December 2020).
- Spiering, M. (2014). *A Cultural History of British Euroscepticism*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Stamou, A. (2001). The representation of non-protesters in a student and teacher protest: a Critical Discourse Analysis of news reporting in a Greek newspaper. *Discourse & Society*, 12(5): 653–680.

- Stanyer, J. (2007). *Modern Political Communications: Mediated Politics in Uncertain Terms*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Stanyer, J. and Mihelj, S. (2016). Taking time seriously? Theorizing and researching change in communication and media studies. *Journal of Communication*, 66(2): 506–527.
- Stubbs, M. (2001). British traditions in text analysis: From Firth to Sinclair. In: Baker, M., Francis, F. and Tognini-Bonelli, T. (eds.) *Text and Technology: In Honour of John Sinclair*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, pp. 1-36.
- Sumner, W. G. (1906). *Folkways: A study of the sociological importance of usages, manners, customs, mores, and morals*. Boston, MA: Ginn and Company.
- Swales, K. (2016). Understanding the Leave vote. London: NatCen Social Research.
- Sykes, O. (2018). Post-geography worlds, new dominions, left behind regions, and ‘other’ places: unpacking some spatial imaginaries of the UK’s ‘Brexit’ debate. *Space & Polity*, 22(2): 137–161.
- Tabachnik, M. (2019). Untangling liberal democracy from territoriality: from ethnic/civic to ethnic/territorial nationalism. *Nations and Nationalism*, 25(1): 191–207.
- Taylor, C. and Marchi, A. (2009). Establishing the EU: The representation of Europe in the press in 1993 and 2005. In: Juncker, A., Schreier, D. and Hundt, M. (eds.) *Corpora: pragmatics and discourse*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, pp. 201-224.
- Telegraph, T. (2016). The EU bureaucrats cannot cope with democracy. *The Telegraph*, 27 May. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/2016/05/27/the-eu-bureaucrats-cannot-cope-with-democracy/> (Accessed: 18 May 2020).
- Teubert, W. (2001). A Province of a Federal Superstate, Ruled by an Unelected Bureaucracy - Keywords on the Euro-Sceptic Discourse in Britain. In: Musolff, A., Good, C., Points, P. et al. (eds.) *Attitudes Towards Europe: Language in the unification process*. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 45–86.

Teubert, W. (2005). My version of corpus linguistics. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 10(1): 1–13.

Thatcher, M. (1988). *Speech to the College of Europe (“The Bruges Speech”)*. Available at: <https://www.margarethatcher.org/document/107332> (Accessed: 15 December 2021).

The Sun (2016). It’s The Sun wot swung it. Our paper led the fight against the EU and had the strongest influence on people voting for Leave.

The Telegraph (2016). If this Thursday’s referendum is a choice between fear and hope, then we choose hope.

Thomas, R. J. and Antony, M. G. (2015). Competing constructions of British national identity: British newspaper comment on the 2012 Olympics opening ceremony. *Media, Culture & Society*, 37(3): 493–503.

Thompson, G. (2013). *Introducing functional grammar*. 3rd ed. Routledge.

Thornborrow, J. and Coates, J. (eds.) (2005). *The Sociolinguistics of Narrative*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Thornborrow, J., Haarman, L. and Duguid, A. (2012). Discourses of European identity in British, Italian, and French TV news. In: Bayley, P and Williams G. (eds.) *European Identity: What the Media Say*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 84–116.

Tidman, Z. (2021). Petrol shortages: No10 says ‘hard to put specific date’ on return to normal as army delivers fuel. *The Independent*, 4 October. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/petrol-shortage-uk-fuel-station-news-b1931706.html> (Accessed: 15 December 2021).

Toynbee, P. and Walker, D. (2020). *The Lost Decade: 2010–2020, and What Lies Ahead for Britain*. London: Guardian Books.

Tranter, B. and Donoghue, J. (2021). Embodying Britishness: National identity in the United Kingdom. *Nations and Nationalism*, 27(4): 992–1008.

Triandafyllidou, A. (1998). National identity and the “other.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 21(4): 593–612.

Trudgill, P. (1974). *The social differentiation of English in Norwich*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

UCL (2021). *Brexit driven by cultural values and national identity more than social class*. Available at: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/news/2021/feb/brexit-driven-cultural-values-and-national-identity-more-social-class> (Accessed: 11 December 2021).

UCREL (1998). *The British National Corpus Sampler Corpus: Explanatory documentation*. Available at: <http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/bnc2sampler/sampler.htm> (Accessed: 28 April 2021).

UK in a Changing Europe (2020a). *What would no deal mean?* London: King’s College London. Available at: <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/UKICE-What-would-no-deal-mean.pdf> (Accessed: 16 November 2020).

UK in a Changing Europe (2020b). *What is a Hard Brexit?* Available at: <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/the-facts/what-is-hard-brexit/>. (Accessed 16 May 2022).

UK Parliament (2021). *White Papers*. Available at: <https://www.parliament.uk/site-information/glossary/white-paper/>.

UK Parliament (2022). *The ‘meaningful vote’: A user’s guide*. Available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/the-meaningful-vote-a-users-guide/>. (Accessed: 2 May 2022).

UK Parliament. (2020). *Parliament’s authority*. Available at: <https://www.parliament.uk/about/how/sovereignty/> (Accessed: 18 May 2020).

UK Parliament. (2021). *Emergency debates*. Available at: <https://www.parliament.uk/about/how/business/debates/application-for-emergency-debates/> (Accessed: 9 July 2021).

UNESCO (n.d.) *The soft power of culture*. Available at:

http://www.unesco.org/culture/culture-sector-knowledge-management-tools/11_Info%20Sheet_Soft%20Power.pdf. (Accessed: 22 November 2022).

Van Dijk, T. (1997). What is Political Discourse Analysis? *Political Linguistics*, 11: 11–52.

Van Dijk, T. (1998). *Ideology and Discourse: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. London: Sage.

Van Dijk, T. (2003). *Ideology and discourse. A Multidisciplinary Introduction*. Barcelona:

Teun Van Dijk.

Van Dijk, T. (2006). Ideology and discourse analysis. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 11(2): 115-140.

Van Dijk, T. (2015). Critical Discourse Analysis. In: Tannen, D., Hamilton, H. and Schiffrin, D. (eds.) *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. 2nd ed. John Wiley & Sons, pp. 466–485.

Van Dijk, T. (ed.) (1997). *Discourse as Structure and Process*. London: Sage.

Van Leeuwen, T. (1995). The representation of social actors. In: Caldas-Coulthard, C.R. and Coulthard, M. (eds.) *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Routledge.

Van Leeuwen, T. (2008). *Discourse and Practice. New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Van Leeuwen, T. and Wodak, R. (1999). Legitimizing Immigration Control: A Discourse-Historical Analysis. *Discourse Studies*, 1(1): 83–118.

Vathi, Z. and Trandafoiu, R. (2022). A post-national EU diaspora? Political mobilization of EU citizens in the UK post-Brexit. *Global Networks*, 0(0): 1-14.

Vessey, R. (2013). *Language ideologies and discourses of national identity in Canadian newspapers: A cross-linguistic corpus-assisted discourse study*. Queen Mary, University of London. Available at:

https://qmro.qmul.ac.uk/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/8763/Vessey_R_PhD_final.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (Accessed: 2 June 2020).

Vine, S. (2016). ONCE I'D HAVE VOTED REMAIN. NOW I'D RATHER BURN MY BALLOT PAPER THAN BACK THOSE BULLIES AND SCAREMONGERS. *Daily Mail*, 22 June. Available at: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3653588/SARAH-VINE-d-voted-Remain-d-burn-ballot-paper-bullies-scaremongers.html> (Accessed: 4 December 2020).

Virdee, S. and McGeever, B. (2018). Racism, Crisis, Brexit. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 41(10): 1802-1819.

Vote Leave (2016). *Why should I vote Leave*. Available at: http://www.voteleavetakecontrol.org/why_vote_leave.html (Accessed: 23 July 2021).

Walker, N. (2021). *Brexit timeline: events leading to the UK's exit from the European Union*. 7960. London: House of Commons Library.

Walker, P. (2020) *Reneging on Brexit deal would strengthen case for breaking up UK, government told*, 7 September. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/sep/07/reneging-on-brexit-deal-would-strengthen-case-for-breaking-up-uk-government-told> (Accessed: 14 December 2021).

Walter, S. (2019). Better off without You? How the British Media Portrayed EU Citizens in Brexit News. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 24(2): 210-232.

Ward, M. (2020). *Statistics on UK-EU trade*. Available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7851/>.

Watkins, J. (2015). Spatial Imaginaries Research in Geography: Synergies, Tensions and New Directions. *Geography Compass*, 9(9): 508–522.

Wellings, B. (2010). Losing the Peace: Euroscepticism and the Foundations of Contemporary English Nationalism. *Nations and Nationalism*, 16(3): 488-505.

- Wenzl, N. (2019). “This is about the kind of Britain we are”: National identities as constructed in parliamentary debates about EU membership. In: Koller, V. Kopf, S. and Miglbauer, M. (eds.) *Discourses of Brexit*. Oxford: Routledge, pp. 32–47.
- Wenzl, N. (2020). “There is a wonderfully contrary spirit among the British people”: Conservative MPs’ (un)successful branding of the British nation in the Brexit debate. In: Theodoropoulou, I. & Tovar, J. (Eds.), *Research Companion to Language and Country Branding*. Taylor & Francis, pp. 72–89.
- Whigham, S. (2019). Nationalism, party political discourse and Scottish independence: comparing discursive visions of Scotland’s constitutional status. *Nations and Nationalism*, 25(4): 1212–1237.
- Williams, G. and Piazza, R. (2012). Nation and supnation: A tale of three Europes. In: P. Bayley and G. Williams (eds.) *European Identity: What the Media Say*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 55–83.
- Wincott, D. (2019). Brexit and the state of the United Kingdom. In: Diamond, P., Nedergaard, P. and Rosamond, B. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of the Politics of Brexit*. London: Routledge, pp. 15–26.
- Winder, R. (2018). After Brexit, England will have to rethink its identity. *The Guardian*, 8 January. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jan/08/brexit-england-rethink-identity-nation> (Accessed: 17 April 2020).
- Witteborn, S. (2007). The Expression of Palestinian Identity in Narratives About Personal Experiences: Implications for the Study of Narrative, Identity, and Social Interaction, *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 40(2-3): 145-170.
- Wodak, R. (2001a). The discourse historical approach. In: Wodak, R. and Meyer, M. (eds.) *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage, pp. 63–94.

Wodak, R. (2001b). What CDA is about - a summary of its history, important concepts and its developments. In: Wodak, R. and Meyer, M. (eds.) *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage, pp. 1–13.

Wodak, R. (2018). “We have the character of an island nation”: A discourse-historical approach to David Cameron’s “Bloomberg speech” on the European Union. In: Kranert, M. and Horan, G. (eds.) *Doing Politics: Discursivity, performativity and mediation in political discourse*. Netherlands: John Benjamins, pp. 27–58.

Wodak, R., De Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., et al. (2009). *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*. 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Woollen, C. (2022). The space between leave and remain: archetypal positions of British parliamentarians on Brexit. *British Politics*, 17: 97-116.

Wortham, S. (2001). *Narrative in Action – A Strategy for Research and Analysis*. London: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Yang, K. Y. (2018). A Comparative Analysis of the Two Different Framing Strategies of Brexit: Exemplified by the Speeches of David Cameron and Theresa May. *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics*, 8: 71-86.

YouGov (2016). *How Britain voted at the EU referendum*. Available at:
<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2016/06/27/how-britain-voted>.

YouGov (2018). *Which do you feel is the greater threat to the West?* Available at:
<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/survey-results/daily/2018/02/23/2ba80/1>.

Zappettini, F. (2018). *European Identities in Discourse: A Transnational Citizens’ Perspective*. London: Bloomsbury.

Zappettini, F. (2019). The official vision for ‘global Britain’: Brexit as rupture and continuity between free trade, liberal internationalism and ‘values’. In: Koller, V., Kopf, S., and Miglbauer, M. (eds.) *Discourses of Brexit*. Oxford: Routledge, pp. 140–154.

- Zappettini, F. (2021a). The tabloidization of the Brexit campaign. Power to the (British) people? *Journal of Language and Politics*, 20(2): 277–303.
- Zappettini, F. (2021b). The UK as victim and heroin the Sun's coverage of the Brexit 'humiliation'. *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, 25(3): 645-662.
- Zappettini, F. and Krzyżanowski, M. (2019). The critical juncture of Brexit in media & political discourses: from national-populist imaginary to cross-national social and political crisis. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 16(4): 381–388.
- Zottola, A. (2021). *Transgender Identities in the Press: A Corpus-based Discourse Analysis*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Zürn, M. and de Wilde, P. (2016). Debating globalization: Cosmopolitanism and communitarianism as political ideologies. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 21(3): 280–301.

Appendix A: Corpora composition

Publication	Number of articles	Percentage of media corpus
<i>Express Online</i>	2,883	43.05%
<i>Telegraph Online</i>	1353	20.21%
<i>MailOnline</i>	893	13.34%
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	555	8.29%
<i>The Sun</i>	260	3.9%
<i>Daily Mail</i>	265	4.0%
<i>The Sun Online</i>	238	3.55%
<i>The Express</i>	165	2.47%
<i>Daily Star Online</i>	74	1.11%
<i>Daily Star</i>	12	0.18%

Table 1: Composition of overall media corpus

Publication	No. of articles (2016)	% of 2016 corpus	No. of articles (2017)	% of 2017 corpus	No. of articles (2018)	% of 2018 corpus	No. of articles (2019)	% of 2019 corpus
<i>Express Online</i>	262	35.74%	204	49.51%	135	38.03%	136	38.86%
<i>Telegraph Online</i>	166	22.65%	74	17.96%	55	15.49%	72	20.57%
<i>Mail Online</i>	124	16.92%	61	14.81%	50	14.08%	48	13.71%
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	65	8.87%	27	6.55%	33	9.3%	24	6.86%
<i>The Sun</i>	38	5.18%	17	4.13%	16	4.51%	18	5.14%
<i>Daily Mail</i>	27	3.68%	16	3.88%	19	5.35%	16	4.57%
<i>The Sun Online</i>	0	0%	0	0%	36	10.14%	22	6.29%
<i>The Express</i>	17	2.32%	5	1.21%	9	2.54%	8	2.29%
<i>Daily Star Online</i>	31	4.23%	8	1.94%	2	0.56%	4	1.14%
<i>Daily Star</i>	2	0.27%	0	0%	0	0%	2	0.52%

Table 2: Composition of annual subcorpora (media)

Appendix B: Transcription conventions

() Paralinguistic features such as laughter

(.) Indicates a pause that is less than 1.0 second

: Marks an extension of the sound it follows

^ Marks rising (upward) intonation

underlining Indicates emphasis

CAPITALS Indicate speech that is louder than the surrounding talk

Appendix C: Selected extracts for stimulus task

Extract 1: Prime Minister Theresa May's Speech (from January 2017)

‘I want this United Kingdom to emerge from this period of change stronger, fairer, more united and more outward-looking than ever before. I want us to be a secure, prosperous, tolerant country – a magnet for international talent and a home to the pioneers and innovators who will shape the world ahead.

I want us to be a truly Global Britain – the best friend and neighbour to our European partners, but a country that reaches beyond the borders of Europe too. A country that goes out into the world to build relationships with old friends and new allies alike.

I want Britain to be what we have the potential, talent and ambition to be. A great, global trading nation that is respected around the world and strong, confident and united at home.’

Extract 2: Telegraph Online article (published in 2016)

‘David Cameron used to talk about One Nation. The EU referendum shows Britain is not one nation but several: nations that don't understand each other and perhaps don't even want to try.

Old versus young. London versus the rest. Scotland versus England. The elites versus the working classes. They might as well live on different planets.

There is no common ground between the two sides about where we go from here. The gulf in understanding between Leavers and Remainers can be measured in the strength of the mutual contempt between them.

[...]

There is no shared understanding of what our country is or should be. Inner London voted to Remain with a majority of over 70 per cent. Londoners are reeling in horror and shock. In the shires and other cities, 50 to 60 per cent voted to Leave. Every region of Scotland - overall 62 per cent - voted to Leave*. Does Britain, as we know it, still exist?’

* [TP] This is a mistake in the original article. Scotland voted in the majority to Remain.

Appendix D: Example informed consent form

Informed Consent Form

1.1 Project title

This project is titled: 'Brexit Britain': Constructing Britain, Europe and the world in British politics, press and public opinion 2016-2020.

1.2 Brief description of study

This study examines the way in which British, European and global identities are defined and understood by people living in the East Midlands. It investigates similarities and differences in the way people talk about national and transnational identities in order to determine whether there are common ways of constructing national and global identities in Britain after the 2016 EU membership referendum. You will be asked questions about your sense of national identity and your perceptions of other national identities before being asked to reflect on representations of your nation and other nations in government documents and newspaper articles.

1.3 Informed consent

☒ Yes	☐ No	I confirm that the purpose of the study has been explained and that I have understood it
☒ Yes	☐ No	I have had the opportunity to ask questions and they have been successfully answered
☒ Yes	☐ No	I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason and without consequence
☒ Yes	☐ No	I understand that all data are anonymous and that there will not be any connection between the personal information provided and the data
☒ Yes	☐ No	I understand that there are no known risks or hazards associated with participating in this study
☒ Yes	☐ No	I confirm that I have read and understood the above information and that I agree to participate in this study
☒ Yes	☐ No	I confirm that I am over 16 years of age
☒ Yes	☐ No	I consent to my data being transcribed and being referred to anonymously in written forms of dissemination
☒ Yes	☐ No	I consent to an audio file of my participation to be used and being referred to anonymously in written forms of dissemination

Signed (researcher): trunnell Date: 28/09/2020

Signed (participant): plasee Date: 28/5/2020

Appendix E: Interview plan

Personal section

This section involves questions about the person's relationship with the local/national community – have they always lived here? Have they ever lived abroad? Are they part of any local community groups or national online groups? This section is about identifying potential influences on later responses (e.g. having lived in Europe might strengthen/weaken ties to European identity). It is also about relaxing the interviewee and helping them to feel settled before later questions.

Tell me about yourself and your relationship to the area you're currently living in. Did you always live here, or have you moved here recently?

Are you part of any face-to-face or online groups through which you interact with people in your area?

Would you say you feel a connection to the area in which you live?

Have you ever lived abroad for an extended period of time (either to study, work or for retirement)? If so, where did you live? If not, is this something you would consider?

Can you tell me which way you voted in the EU referendum?

Have you come across any other people who voted like you in Nottingham?

What about people who voted differently from you – have you had any encounters with people who voted to Leave?

Nottinghamshire voted in the majority to Leave the EU. Do you have any thoughts about why this might be?

National identity

This section will be about the person's conceptualisation of national identity, what it means to them, what characteristics they associate with their national identity and how much of a role national identity plays in their daily interactions.

What nationality or nationalities do you feel that you belong to?

What do you think makes you this nationality? Are there any things about you that make you X?

Are there any events or experiences you've had that have shaped the way you feel about your national identity? (Prompt: any times where you've felt particularly more X?)

Do you feel attached or connected to this identity emotionally?

Where, if anywhere, do you feel your attachment most strongly – your regional identity in Nottingham, England, Britain?

Would your national identity figure in how you define yourself as a person?

Do you think there are any characteristics of being a British national?

Do you think these characteristics are unique to your nation or do you think they are likely to be characteristics of other nationalities too?

Have you become more aware of your national identity since the EU referendum or is this something you haven't thought about?

What kind of attitudes towards national identity have you experienced in Nottingham?

European identity

This section will be about European identity, attitudes towards Europe and the European Union and what has potentially shaped those attitudes.

What does 'Europe' mean to you?

Do you think of Europe as different to the European Union?

Do you identify/have you ever on any level as European?

What is your attitude towards Europe as a geographical place?

Is that attitude different to or the same as your attitude towards the European Union?

Are there any particular events or experiences you've had that you think have shaped your view of Europe and the European Union?

What kinds of attitudes towards Europe have you experienced in Nottingham?

The EU membership referendum (for British/Irish/Commonwealth respondents)

This section will investigate the relationship between the vote cast by the respondent and their conceptualisations of national and European identity. It considers potential sources of information about the referendum that may have contributed to the vote, and about the extent to which 'Brexit' and national identity have become part of participants' daily interactions since the EU referendum.

You voted to X: to what extent did national identity play a part in how you decided to vote?

How did you make your decision to vote X? Did you consult any materials about the referendum?

Do you think the referendum made you think more about your national identity, European identities and other international identities than before?

Is the referendum/Brexit something you have talked to friends and family about? (If so, what kind of discussions have you had? Have they been positive or negative? If not, why not?)

What about national identity – have you talked to your friends and family about that?

What kind of ideas or arguments were important to you during the referendum campaign?

Here's an extract from a government document talking about British and European identities and the relationship between them. Take as long as you need to read it.

This section will involve asking the participant to read and respond to conceptualisations of national identity in government discourse. It asks them to reflect on the extent to which their own attitudes align with or diverge from those expressed by the government.

What are your thoughts on the way that Theresa May describes Britain?

Does this seem similar to the way you see Britain, or does it seem different?

Have these kinds of ideas of Britishness come up in your conversations with people you know/people you've met?

Do you think they're quite common or not very common attitudes based on your experience?

What are your thoughts on the way that the government represents Europe?

Does this seem similar to the way you see Europe, or does it seem different?

Have these kinds of ideas of Europeanness come up in your conversations with people you know/people you've met?

Do you think they're quite common or not very common attitudes based on your experience?

Here's an extract from an article published by The Telegraph newspaper, talking about British and European identities and the relationship between them. Take as long as you need to read it.

This section will involve asking the participant to read and respond to conceptualisations of national identity in media discourse. It asks them to reflect on the extent to which their own attitudes align with or diverge from those expressed by the pro-Brexit press.

What are your thoughts on the way that this newspaper represents British national identity?

Does this seem similar to the way you see Britain, or does it seem different?

Have these kinds of ideas of Britishness come up in your conversations with people you know/people you've met?

Do you think they're quite common or not very common attitudes based on your experience?

What are your thoughts on the way that this newspaper represents European identity?

Does this seem similar to the way you see Europe, or does it seem different?

Have these kinds of ideas of Europeanness come up in your conversations with people you know/people you've met?

Do you think they're quite common or not very common attitudes based on your experience?